

United States Department of Agriculture

 **NEWS RELEASE**

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Deadline for USDA Conservation Innovation Grant (CIG) Pre-proposals January 31

Washington, DC, January 4, 2012 - Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack today reminded applicants that January 31, 2012, is the last day to submit project pre-proposals for fiscal year 2012 Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Pre-proposals support large-scale demonstration projects that test and prove original approaches to conserving America's private lands.

"These conservation grants continue to generate exciting new ideas that help farmers and ranchers run sustainable and profitable operations and address high-priority natural resource concerns," said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. "We are proud to encourage the advancement of innovative conservation methods that will benefit producers, the public and the economy for years to come." This year's CIG projects focus on nutrient management, energy conservation, soil health, wildlife and CIG projects assessment. NRCS is especially interested in projects that demonstrate:

- Optimal combinations of nutrient source, application rate, placement and timing that improve nutrient recovery by crops.
- Procedures for refining the usefulness of the phosphorous index in reducing phosphorous losses.
- Suites of conservation practices that protect water quality.
- Renewable energy systems that reduce the use of fossil fuels and increase energy efficiency on farms.
- The impacts of cover crops, crop rotations, tillage and other conservation practices on soil health.
- Conservation practices that increase the water-holding capacity of soils.
- Decision tools that help producers assess their operations and conservation needs in order to improve wildlife habitat.
- Assess the technology transfer potential of completed CIG projects.

Results of successful projects will be included in NRCS policy, technical manuals, guides and references.

There are two types of eligibility for CIG – applicant eligibility and project eligibility. For applicant eligibility, an applicant must be located in one of the following areas: the 50 States, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa or the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. Also, an

applicant must be one of the following: a federally recognized Indian Tribe; a State or local government; a non-governmental organization; or a private individual.

For project eligibility, the proposed project or activity must encompass the development and assessment, evaluation and implementation of either of the following: conservation adoption approaches or incentive systems, including market-based systems; or promising conservation technologies, practices, systems, procedures or activities. Landowners must meet Environmental Quality Incentives Program eligibility requirements defined in 16 U.S.C. Section 3839aa-1 (<http://uscode.house.gov/download/pls/16C58.txt>).

CIG funds will be awarded through a competitive grants process. At least 50 percent of the total cost of CIG projects must come from non-Federal matching funds, including cash and in-kind contributions provided by the grant recipient.

To apply electronically, visit <http://www.grants.gov/> or contact a local NRCS office. To view the complete Announcement of Program Funding, visit <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/cig/>. For more information about NRCS conservation programs, visit <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov> or visit your local USDA service center.

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