

NRCS's Drought Resilience Improvement Project (D.R.I.P) Helps Producers Tackle Drought with Conservation

Application Deadline: April 19, 2013

DENVER – Producers in Colorado are facing one of the worst droughts in U.S. history. In 2012, over 50 percent of Colorado was in exceptional (D4) or extreme (D3) drought, and drought monitor indications show that this drought is continuing in 2013.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) will provide \$6 million in Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) funds to help producers address the impacts of current drought such as declined soil health on croplands, extreme soil erosion, water supply limitations that threaten cropping systems, and declined rangeland health. This effort is being referred to as the Drought Resilience Improvement Project (D.R.I.P).

“By being proactive, we can assist our producers in implementing practices that will increase the resilience to the prolonged impacts of drought,” said Phyllis Ann Philipps, NRCS State Conservationist, Denver. *“With conservation planning, improved management, and the willingness to try something different, producers can address and mitigate some critical resource concerns caused by the drought.”*

D.R.I.P for drought will provide producers and non-industrial private forest landowners the technical and financial assistance to implement conservation practices to assist them in mitigating the effects of the current drought and increasing their resilience in the event of prolonged drought conditions.

Producers eligible for EQIP will be granted a waiver to implement some practices immediately and will receive financial assistance once meeting eligibility requirements. D.R.I.P will focus on three land uses:

- **Cropland** – Protecting soil resources from erosion, improving soil health for long term benefits, and improving water use efficiency. Practices offered: *cover crops, no till, and irrigation water management.*

- **Rangeland** – Promoting rangeland recovery from drought and preparing for future drought needs. Practices offered: *deferred grazing with the development of a drought contingency plan and associated water developments.*

- **Forest Land** – Promoting healthy watersheds, forest land health and fire recovery. Practices include: *erosion control structures, forest thinning, fuel break, and brush control.* Non-industrial private forest landowners who are considered operators by the Farm Service Agency and who are eligible for EQIP will receive technical and financial assistance through D.R.I.P. to implement conservation practices that will help in recovery from the devastating 2012 forest fires as a result of very dry conditions. Implementation of practices that will improve the resilience of forests to withstand prolonged drought and improve the health of the watershed will also be available. Priority will be given to those areas impacting drinking water supplies, stream water quality, property, and/or life.

While producers statewide can apply for financial assistance, applications will be prioritized and ranked based on identified resource concerns, percent of the operation to be enrolled, and location of the operation in relation to the hardest hit drought areas. A map of the affected areas is attached.

Producers are encouraged to visit with their local USDA Service Center for assistance with drought-related issues. Applications will be accepted on an ongoing basis but must be received by **April 19, 2013**, the ranking cut-off date for this year.

Additional program requirements and information about D.R.I.P and EQIP is available on the Colorado NRCS website at www.co.nrcs.usda.gov.