

**New York Component
Conservation Innovation Grants
Fiscal Year 2008 Announcement of Program Funding**

USDA Agency: Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Commodity Credit Corporation

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 10.912

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: The New York Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) requests applications for Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) to stimulate the development and adoption of innovative conservation approaches and technologies. New York NRCS anticipates that the amount available for support of this program in Fiscal Year (FY) 2008 will be approximately \$250,000, with individual grants not to exceed \$75,000. Funds will be awarded through a statewide competitive grants process. There are two CIG categories available in FY 2008: "Natural Resource Concerns" and "Technology." Applications are requested from eligible organizations (government or non-government) or individuals for competitive consideration of grant awards for projects between one and three years in duration. This notice identifies the New York CIG program objectives and eligibility criteria for projects, and provides application instructions.

PROPOSAL DUE DATE AND ADDRESS: Proposals must be received in the New York NRCS State Office by 4:00 p.m., Eastern Standard Daylight Time (ESDT) on May 2, 2008.

The address for hand-delivered applications or applications submitted using regular, express mail, or overnight courier service is Ronald Alvarado, State Conservationist, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, 441 S. Salina St., Suite 354, Room 520, Syracuse, New York 13202.

To submit your application electronically, visit www.grants.gov/applicants/apply_for_grants.jsp and follow the instructions.

I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. Legislative Authority

CIG was authorized as part of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) (16 U.S.C. 3839aa-8) under Section 1240H of the Food Security Act of 1985, as added by Section 2301 of the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (Public Law 107-171). The Secretary of Agriculture delegated the authority for the administration of EQIP and CIG to the Chief of the NRCS, who is a vice president of the Commodity Credit

Corporation (CCC). EQIP is administered by the NRCS under the authorities of the CCC.

B. Overview

The purpose of CIG is to stimulate the development and adoption of innovative conservation approaches and technologies in conjunction with agricultural production while leveraging federal investment in environmental enhancement and protection. CIG projects are expected to lead to the transfer of conservation technologies, management systems, and innovative approaches (such as market-based systems) into NRCS technical manuals or guides or to the private sector. CIG does not fund research projects. Instead, it is a vehicle to stimulate the development and adoption of conservation approaches or technologies that have been studied sufficiently to indicate a likelihood of success and to be candidates for eventual technology transfer. The CIG program funds projects that target innovative on-the-ground conservation, including pilot projects and field demonstrations.

NRCS will accept applications for single or multi-year projects, not to exceed three years, submitted by eligible entities, including federally recognized Indian Tribes, state and local governments, and non-governmental organizations and individuals. New York component CIG projects must take place in New York; multi-state projects will not be considered. Complete applications will be screened for eligibility determination by appropriate NRCS staff. Applications determined eligible will be evaluated and scored by a sub-committee of the New York State Technical Committee (STC) and appropriate NRCS technical staff. (More information on the STC can be found at http://policy.nrcs.usda.gov/scripts/lpsiis.dll/M/M_440_501_B.htm or by calling the New York State Office at 315-477-6503). Scored applications will be forwarded to the State Conservationist for final selection and funding decisions.

C. Innovative Conservation Projects or Activities

For the purposes of CIG, the proposed innovative project or activity must encompass the development and field-testing, evaluation, and implementation of:

- Conservation adoption incentive systems, including market-based systems.
- Promising conservation technologies, practices, systems, procedures, or approaches.

To be given priority consideration, the innovative project or activity:

- Will have been studied sufficiently to indicate a good probability for success.
- Demonstrates, tests, evaluates, and verifies environmental (soil, water, air, plants, and animal) effectiveness, utility, affordability, and usability in the field.
- Adapts conservation technologies, practices, systems, procedures, approaches, and incentive systems to improve performance and encourage adoption.
- Introduces conservation systems, approaches, and procedures from another geographic area or agricultural sector.
- Adapts conservation technology, management, or incentive systems to improve performance.

D. CIG Components

For Fiscal Year 2008, two components of CIG will be offered in New York. Applications may address multiple components but will not receive more than one award per project.

1. Natural Resource Concerns Component

Applications must demonstrate the use of innovative technologies or approaches, or both, to address a natural resource concern or concerns. The five natural resource concerns for possible funding through Conservation Innovation Grants for fiscal year 2008 are:

Water Resources

The objective of this natural resource concern is to implement new technologies and/or approaches to maintain, restore, or enhance water quality and/or quantity in watersheds with predominantly agricultural land uses while sustaining productivity. Subtopics include:

1. Nutrient, pesticide, and pathogen transport to surface water and groundwater;
2. Sediment transport to surface water;
3. Irrigation management for water conservation;
4. Aquifer recharge/maintenance of groundwater supplies; and,
5. Increased water supplies/availability through alternative treatment, reduced system losses, monitoring or scheduling, or reuse strategies.

Soil Resources

The objective of this conservation concern is to implement new technologies and/or approaches to maintain, restore, or enhance soil resources associated with agricultural and forest land uses while sustaining productivity. Subtopics include:

1. Erosion reduction;
2. Accumulation of harmful levels of constituents in soils, including nutrients, metals, salts;
3. Overall soil quality and productivity.
4. Building organic matter in the soil, and,

Atmospheric Resources

The objective of this conservation concern is to implement new technologies and/or approaches to maintain, restore, or enhance air quality and atmospheric resources through agricultural and forest practices while sustaining productivity. Subtopics include:

1. Agricultural emissions of particulates, odors, volatile organic compounds, and greenhouse gases;
2. Carbon sequestration in soil and through other mechanisms; and,
3. Bio-based energy opportunities.

Grazing Land and Forest Health

The objective of this conservation concern is to implement new technologies and/or approaches to maintain, restore, or enhance grazing land and forest health while sustaining productivity. Subtopics include:

1. Invasive species management on grazing and forest land;
2. Effects of pests, diseases, and fragmentation on forest and grazing land quality/health,
3. Systems or practices to minimize overgrazing and restore lands suffering effects of overgrazing.
4. Low-input approaches to increasing forage production; and
5. Alternative grasses or forages for livestock

Wildlife Habitat

The objective of this conservation concern is to implement new technologies and/or approaches for environmentally sound wildlife habitat management while sustaining agricultural productivity. Subtopics include:

1. Riparian area management and restoration
2. Invasive species management
3. Pollinator protection
4. Biodiversity; and,
5. Wetland function and health.

Market-based approaches

The objective of this approach is to develop, implement, and/or evaluate

processes, technology tools, institutional arrangements, or systems that are “market-based” in nature and address one of the above priority resource concerns. Possible subtopics include:

1. Development and application of technical tools that measure environmental services in order to document credits for trading;
2. Greenhouse gas accounting tools,
3. Water quality improvement accounting tools; and
4. Nutrient trading or accounting tools

Technologies scalable to small farms, limited resource producers, and underrepresented groups

The objective of this concern is to implement new technologies and/or innovative approaches for environmentally sound natural resource management that sustain agricultural productivity, and are easily adopted and affordable for small farms, limited resource producers, and underrepresented groups. Subtopics include:

1. Organic farming methods
2. Manure management
3. Energy efficiency
4. Low-input low-cost conservation techniques

2. Technology Component

Proposals must address one or more of the following specific technology categories identified by NRCS:

Improved on-farm energy efficiency

Possible subtopics include:

- a. Renewable energy sources such as wind or solar;
- b. Methane recovery; and,
- c. Other innovative farm management or production technologies.

Development and adoption of on-farm energy audits

Possible subtopics include:

- a. Automated self energy audit technology;
- b. Energy audit worksheets; and,
- c. Compilation of on-farm energy auditors and audit processes.

II. FUNDING AVAILABILITY

Effective on the publication date of this notice, the New York NRCS State Conservationist announces the availability of up to \$250,000 for CIG proposals in the state, with individual grants not to exceed \$75,000. The intent of the state component is to provide flexibility to target CIG funds to individual producers and smaller organizations that may possess promising innovations, but may not

compete well on the larger scale of the national grants' competition.

III. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

CIG applicants must be a federally recognized Indian Tribe, state or local unit of government, non-governmental organization, private business, or individual.

A. Matching Funds

Selected applicants may receive grants of up to 50 percent of the total project cost. Applicants must provide non-federal funding (matching funds) for at least 50 percent of the project cost. Up to half of the applicant's matching funds (up to 25 percent of the total project cost) may be from in-kind contributions.

B. Beginning and Limited Resource Farmers and Ranchers and Indian Tribes

Information regarding the definitions for Limited Resource or Beginning Farmers and Ranchers can be found in the EQIP Final Rule, Federal Register, Vol. 68, No.104, Section 1466.3, Definitions.

For the FY 2008 grant award process, up to 10 percent of the total funds available for CIG may be set aside for applications from Beginning and Limited Resource Farmers or Ranchers, Indian Tribes, or community-based organizations comprised of or representing these entities. To compete for these set-aside funds, the applicant must make a declaration in the application as described in Part IV. B.5. of this notice. Applications that are unsuccessful in the set-aside competition will be placed automatically in the general application pool for consideration. Funds not used in the set-aside pool will revert into the general funding pool.

In addition, an exception regarding matching funds is made for projects funded out of the set-aside. Up to three-fourths of the required matching funds for such projects (up to 37.5 percent of the total project cost) may derive from in-kind contributions. This exception is intended to help Beginning and Limited Resource Farmers or Ranchers and Indian Tribes meet the statutory requirements for receiving a CIG.

C. EQIP Payment Limitation and Duplicate Payments

Section 1240G of the Food Security Act of 1985 (as amended by the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002), 16 U.S.C. 3839aa-7, imposes a \$450,000 limitation for all cost-share or incentive payments disbursed to individuals or entities under an EQIP contract between 2002 and 2008.

The limitation applies to CIG in the following manner:

1. CIG funds are awarded through grant agreements; these grant

agreements are not EQIP contracts. Thus, CIG awards are not limited by the payment limitation.

2. Direct or indirect payments made to an individual or entity using funds from a CIG award to carry out structural, vegetative, or management practices count toward each individual's or entity's EQIP payment limitation. Through project progress reports, CIG grantees are responsible for certifying that producers involved in CIG projects do not exceed the payment limitation. Further, all direct and indirect payments made to producers using CIG funds must be reported to NRCS. Direct or indirect payments can not be made for a practice for which the producer has already received funds through any of the USDA programs (EQIP, Agricultural Management Assistance [AMA], Conservation Security Program [CSP], Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program [WHIP], etc.) since this would be considered a duplicate payment.
3. The following are two examples of how the \$450,000 EQIP payment limitation applies to CIG projects:
 - a. A \$50,000 CIG is awarded to a state environmental agency to demonstrate an innovative, market-based, water quality-trading program. The money is used to finance the development of a market infrastructure, and none of the funds is used to implement structural, vegetative, or management practices. Producers in the trading market demonstration area may indirectly benefit from their eventual participation in the market, but there is no direct or indirect payment of CIG dollars. If, on the other hand, part of the CIG award was used to make payments to producers who implement a conservation practice on their land as part of a trading program, those payments would count towards each producer's \$450,000 EQIP payment limitation.
 - b. A \$50,000 CIG grant is awarded to a conservation district to pilot a community-based animal waste treatment technology innovation. EQIP eligible producers in the area transport their animal waste to a central treatment location. Because producers are not directly or indirectly receiving CIG funds, the payment limitation does not apply. If, however, the producers were paid for their waste, or for transporting their waste to the central treatment location using CIG funds, the payments would be subject to each producer's EQIP payment limitation.

D. Project Eligibility

All agricultural producers receiving direct or indirect payments through participation in a CIG project must meet the EQIP eligibility requirements as set forth in 16 U.S.C. 3839aa-1.

Refer to www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/eqip/ for more information on EQIP and eligibility requirements. Participating producers are not required to have an EQIP contract. Applications must describe the extent of

participation of EQIP eligible producers.

A person or entity is not eligible if the three-year average adjusted gross income (AGI) exceeds \$2.5 million with less than 75 percent derived from farming, ranching, or forestry-related sources at the time of application.

A person who is determined ineligible for USDA program benefits under the Highly Erodible Land Compliance (HELC) and Wetland Compliance (WC) provisions of the Food Security Act of 1985 will not be eligible to receive direct or indirect payments through CIG.

Technologies and approaches that are eligible for funding in a project's geographic area through EQIP are ineligible for CIG funding except where the use of those technologies and approaches demonstrates clear innovation. The burden falls on the applicant to sufficiently describe the innovative features of the proposed technology or approach (applicants should reference New York' EQIP Eligible Practices List by contacting the New York NRCS State Office).

The grantee is responsible for providing the technical assistance required to successfully implement and complete the project. NRCS will designate a program/technical contact and administrative contact to provide administrative and technical oversight for each project receiving an award.

IV. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

A. How to Obtain Application Materials

All Office of Management and Budget (OMB) standard forms necessary for CIG submission are posted on the following Web site: www.grants.gov/agencies/aapproved_standard_forms.jsp. An application checklist is available on the CIG Web site: www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/cig or www.ny.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/cig.html

B. Application Content and Format

Applications must contain the information set forth below in order to receive consideration for a grant. Applicants should not assume prior knowledge on the part of NRCS or others as to the relative merits of the project described in the application. Submit applications in the following format:

Applications should be typewritten or printed on 8½" x 11" white paper, double-spaced. The text of the proposal should be in a font no smaller than 12-point, with one-inch margins. If submitting proposals for more

than one project, submit a separate, complete application package for each project. Proposals should be saved as Microsoft Word or Adobe (PDF) files onto a compact disc (CD), and the electronic copy included in the application package.

Proposals must include all required forms and narrative sections described below. Incomplete applications will not be considered.

1. **Cover Sheet:** Applicants must use **Standard Form (SF) 424** as the cover sheet for each project proposal. SF-424 can be downloaded from www.grants.gov/agencies/aapproved_standard_forms.jsp or obtained from the New York NRCS State Office. (See contacts at the end of this announcement.)
2. **Project Summary Sheet:** Applicants must submit a **Project Summary Sheet** no more than two pages in length that includes the information listed below (a.-k.). A template for the Project Summary Sheet is available on the NRCS CIG Web site:

www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/cig

-or-

www.ny.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/cig.html

- a. Project title.
 - b. Project director name and contact information (including e-mail).
 - c. Names and affiliations of project collaborators.
 - d. Project purpose.
 - e. Project deliverables/products.
 - f. Project Scope/Area.
 - g. Project start and end dates. (Projects should plan to begin no earlier than September 1, 2008 and no later than September 30, 2008)
 - h. CIG State Component Category (Natural Resource or Technology)
 - i. Application Review Category (water resources, soil resources, atmospheric resources, grazing land and forest health, wildlife habitat, market-based approach, technologies scalable to small farms, energy efficiency, or energy audits).
 - j. Declaration of EQIP Eligibility
 - k. Brief summary of project.
3. **Project Description:** Each project must be accurately and completely described in no more than 10 double-spaced pages. The description must include the following information:
 - a. Project background: Describe the history of, and need for, the

proposed innovation. Provide evidence that the proposed innovation has been studied sufficiently to indicate a good probability for success of the project.

- b. Project objectives: Be specific, using qualitative and quantitative measures, if possible, to describe the project's purpose and goals. Describe how, based on the description of innovative conservation projects and activities provided in Section I.C., the project is innovative.
- c. Project methods: Describe clearly the methodology of the project and the tools or processes that will be used to implement the project.
- d. Location and size of project or project area: Describe the location of the project and the relative size and scope (e.g., acres, farm types and demographics, etc.) of the project area. Provide a map, if possible.
- e. Producer participation: Estimate the number of producers involved in the project, and describe the extent of their involvement (all producers involved in the project must be eligible for EQIP).
- f. Project action plan and timeline: Provide a table listing project actions, timeframes, and associated milestones through project completion.
- g. Project management: Give a detailed description of how the project will be organized and managed. Include a list of key project personnel, their relevant education or experience, and their anticipated contributions to the project. Explain the level of participation required in the project by government and non-government entities. Identify who will participate in monitoring and evaluating the project.
- h. Benefits or results expected and transferability: Identify the results and benefits to be derived from the proposed project activities, and explain how the results will be measured. Identify project beneficiaries—for example, agricultural producers by type or region or sector; rural communities; municipalities. Explain how these entities will benefit. In addition, describe how results will be communicated to others via outreach activities.
- i. Project evaluation: Describe the methodology or procedures to be followed to evaluate the project, determine technical feasibility, and quantify the results of the project for the final report. (Grant recipients will be required to provide a semi-annual report of progress, quarterly financial reports, and a final project report to NRCS. Instructions for submitting quarterly reports will be detailed in the grant agreement.).
- j. Environmental impacts: Describe the anticipated environmental effects of the proposed project. This description will be used to determine whether an Environmental Assessment (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is needed for any given

project, prior to the awarding of grant funds. Should an EA or EIS be required, the applicant is responsible for the cost.

- 4. Budget Information:** Must use **Standard Form (SF) 424 A Budget Information Non-Construction Programs** to document budget needs. SF 424 A is available at www.grants.gov/agencies/aapproved_standard_forms.jsp or can be obtained from the NRCS State Office. A budget form is required for each year of requested support. In addition, a cumulative budget is required detailing the requested total support for the overall project period. The budget form may be reproduced as needed by the applicant. In addition to the SF424 A, all applicants must provide a **detailed narrative** in support of the budget for the project, broken down by each project year. All budget categories for which support is requested must be individually listed (with costs) in the same order as the budget and justified on a separate sheet of paper and placed immediately behind the Budget SF-424-A. Discuss how the budget specifically supports the proposed activities. Explain how such budget items as personnel, travel, equipment, etc. are essential to achieving the project objectives. Justify the project cost effectiveness and include justification for personnel salaries. Indicate the total amount (both cash and in-kind) of non-Federal matching support that will be provided to the proposed project. **Include a signed letter from the matching source documenting the value, and the nature (cash or in-kind) of the matching funds.** This letter serves as written verification of commitments of matching support. In-kind costs of equipment or project personnel cannot exceed 50 percent of the applicant's match (except in the case of projects carried out by either a Beginning or Limited Resource Farmer or Rancher, or Indian Tribe, or a community-based organization comprised of or representing these entities). The remainder of the match must be provided in cash. If claiming indirect costs, an applicant must provide an indirect cost rate agreement or indirect cost rate proposal as justification for the rate of indirect costs being claimed. **Indirect costs can not exceed 15 percent.**
- 5. Declaration of Beginning Farmer or Rancher, Limited Resource Farmer or Rancher, or Indian Tribe:** If an applicant wishes to compete in the 10 percent set-aside funding pool (see Part III. B. that describes the provision of a set-aside pool of funding for Beginning and Limited Resource Farmers or Ranchers, and Indian Tribes) and avail themselves of the in-kind contribution exception, applicants must make a declaration in writing of their status as a Beginning Farmer or Rancher, Limited Resource Farmer or Rancher, Indian Tribe, or a community-based organization comprised of or representing these

entities.

6. **Declaration of EQIP Eligibility:** Applicants must make a declaration in writing that they, or parties involved in the project, are eligible for EQIP.
7. **Certifications:** All applications must include a signed **SF-424 B, Assurances, Non-Construction Programs**. SF-424 B may be found at: www.grants.gov/agencies/aapproved_standard_forms.jsp or contact the New York NRCS State Office. Applicants, by signing and submitting an application, assure and certify that they comply with the following from 7 Code of Federal Register (CFR):
 - a. Part 3017, Government wide Debarment and Suspension (Non-procurement)
www.access.gpo.gov/nara/cfr/waisidx_04/7cfr3017_04.html.
 - b. Part 3018, New Restrictions on Lobbying
www.access.gpo.gov/nara/cfr/waisidx_04/7cfr3018_04.html.
 - c. Part 3021, Government wide Requirements for Drug-Free Workplace (Financial Assistance)
www.access.gpo.gov/nara/cfr/waisidx_04/7cfr3021_04.html.
8. **DUNS Number:** A Dun and Bradstreet (D&B) Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number is a unique nine-digit sequence recognized as the universal standard for identifying and keeping track of over 70 million businesses worldwide. A Federal Register notice of final policy issuance (68 FR 38402) requires a DUNS number in every application (i.e., hard copy and electronic) for a grant or cooperative agreement (except applications from individuals) submitted on or after October 1, 2003. For information about how to obtain a DUNS number, go to www.grants.gov/RequestaDUNS or call 1-866-05-5711. **Please note that the registration may take up to 14 business days to complete.**
9. **Required CCR Registration:** The Central Contractor Registry (CCR) is a database that serves as the primary government repository for contractor information required for the conduct of business with the government. This database will also be used as a central location for maintaining organizational information for organizations seeking and receiving grants from the government. CIG applicants must register with the CCR. To register, visit www.ccr.gov. **Allow a minimum of five days to complete the CCR registration.**

C. How to Submit a Written Proposal

Applicants must submit one signed original and six complete copies of each project application. Each copy of the proposal must be stapled securely in the upper left-hand corner. Hard copies must be accompanied by an electronic copy on a compact disc (CD). Electronic files must be

either Microsoft Word or Acrobat (PDF) files. **Applications submitted via facsimile or e-mail will not be accepted.** Submit written proposals to Ronald Alvarado, State Conservationist, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, 441 S. Salina St., Suite 354, Room 520, Syracuse, New York 13202.

D. How to Submit a Proposal Electronically

Applicants may submit proposals electronically through www.grants.gov, the federal government's e-grants portal. Applications submitted through www.grants.gov must contain all of the elements of a complete application outlined above. Instructions for electronically submitting the required standard forms, abstract, narrative, and declarations are posted on www.grants.gov. Applications submitted electronically are date and time stamped by www.grants.gov, and must be received by the identified closing date. **Note that NRCS is not responsible for any technical malfunctions or Web site problems related to www.grants.gov submissions. Applicants should begin the www.grants.gov process well before the submission deadline to avoid problems.**

E. Proposal Due Date

Proposals must be received in the New York NRCS State Office by 4:00 P.M., Eastern Daylight Time (EDT) on May 2, 2008. A proposal's postmark date is not a factor in whether an application is received on time. The applicant assumes the risk of any delays in proposal delivery. Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit completed applications via overnight mail or delivery service to ensure timely receipt by NRCS.

F. Acknowledgement of Submission

Proposals received by the due date will be acknowledged with an official letter. If an applicant has not received an acknowledgement within 30 days of the submission, they must contact the NRCS Program Contact (see Part VII.). Otherwise, the application may not be considered for funding.

G. Funding Restrictions

Awardees may not use un-recovered indirect costs as part of their matching funds.

CIG funds may not be used to pay any of the following costs unless otherwise permitted by law, or approved in writing by the Authorized Departmental Officer in advance of incurring such costs.

1. Costs above the amount of funds authorized for the project.
2. Costs incurred prior to the effective date of the grant.
3. Costs that lie outside the scope of the approved project and any

- amendments thereto.
4. Entertainment costs, regardless of their apparent relationship to project objectives.
 5. Compensation for injuries to persons, or damage to property arising out of project activities.
 6. Consulting services performed by a federal employee during official duty hours when such consulting services result in the payment of additional compensation to the employee.
 7. Renovation or refurbishment of research or related spaces; the purchase or installation of fixed equipment in such spaces; and the planning, repair, rehabilitation, acquisition, or construction of buildings or facilities.

This list is not exhaustive. Questions regarding the allowances of particular items of cost should be directed to the administrative contact listed in Section VII.

H. Patents and Inventions

Allocation of rights to patents and inventions shall be in accordance with USDA regulation 7 CFR 3019.36. This regulation provides that small businesses normally may retain the principal worldwide patent rights to any invention developed with USDA support. In accordance with 7 CFR 3019.2, this provision will also apply to commercial organizations for the purposes of CIG. USDA receives a royalty-free license for federal government use, reserves the right to require the patentee to license others in certain circumstances, and requires that anyone exclusively licensed to sell the invention in the United States must normally manufacture it domestically.

I. Withdrawal of Applications

Applications may be withdrawn by written notice at any time before an award is made. Applications may be withdrawn in person by the applicant, or by an authorized representative thereof, if the representative's identity is made known and the representative signs a receipt for the application.

V. APPLICATION REVIEW

A. Proposal Review and Selection Process

Prior to the evaluation review, each application will be screened for completeness and compliance with the provisions of this notice by appropriate New York NRCS staff. Incomplete applications and those that do not meet the provisions of this notice will be eliminated from competition, and notification of elimination will be mailed to the applicant. Applications meeting the provisions of this notice will be scored by a

subcommittee of the STC and appropriate NRCS technical staff against the Criteria for Proposal Evaluation listed below. Scored applications will be forwarded to the state conservationist for final selection and funding decisions.

B. Criteria for Proposal Evaluation

The Proposal Review Committee will use the following criteria to evaluate project proposals. Each of the four criteria carries an equal weight of 25 percent.

1. Purpose and goals:
 - a. The purpose and goals of the project are clearly stated.
 - b. The project adheres to the applicable FY 2008 category (natural resource conservation concerns or technology) stated in this notice; and,
 - c. There is clear and significant potential for a positive and measurable outcome.

2. Soundness of approach or design:
 - a. The project adheres to the description of innovative projects or activities found in Part I. C. of this notice.
 - b. Technical design and implementation strategy is based on sound science.
 - c. There is a good likelihood of project success.
 - d. The project substantively involves EQIP eligible producers; and,
 - e. The project promotes environmental enhancement and protection in conjunction with agricultural production.

3. Project management:
 - a. The proposal has clear milestones and timelines, designated staff, and demonstrates collaboration.
 - b. The project staff has the technical expertise needed to do the work; and,
 - c. The budget is reasonable and adequately justified.

4. Transferability:
 - a. There is great potential to transfer the approach or technology to others and/or to other geographical areas; and,
 - b. The project will result in the development of technical or related materials (e.g., technical standards, technical notes, manuals, handbooks, software) that will help foster adoption of the innovative technology or approach by other producers, and in other geographic areas.

C. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

CIG awards are anticipated to be announced by July 15, 2008. Funds are not awarded, and work may not start, until an agreement is signed by both NRCS and the grantee. All agreements are expected to be finalized by August 15, 2008.

VI. AWARD INFORMATION

A. Award Notification

The state conservationist will notify applicants who have been selected. Anticipated date for projects to begin is October 1, 2008. The state conservationist will also notify applicants whose proposals have not been selected.

B. Grant Agreement

The CCC, through NRCS, will use a grant agreement with selected applicants to document participation in the CIG component of EQIP. The grant agreement will include:

- Project purpose.
- Project objectives and deliverables.
- The final project plan listing cooperators in the project, and identifying the grant applicant and the project manager.
- The project timelines and expected project completion date.
- The project progress and budget reporting requirements.
- Award amount and budget information.
- Information regarding requests for advance of funds or reimbursement.
- The role of NRCS technical oversight in the project.
- Reporting requirements including attendance at CIG grantee biannual meeting.
- Changes in project plans.
- Other requirements and terms deemed necessary by the CCC to protect the interests of the United States.

C. Reporting Requirements

Grantees receiving an advance of federal funds of more than \$25,000 are required to submit a SF-272, Federal Cash Transactions Report, and when necessary, the continuation sheet, SF-272-A, no later than 15 days following the end of each quarter or 90 days after project completion. These reports are used to monitor cash advanced to recipients and to obtain disbursement and outlay information for each award.

Grantees must submit a Financial Status Report (SF 269) no later than 30 days after the end of each quarter and 90 days after completion of project. The SF-272 and SF-269 are available at:

www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/cig/InfoForGrantees.html.

In addition, every six months the grantee must submit a written performance progress report to the NRCS program/technical contact. This report is distinct from the quarterly financial report described above. Each progress report shall cover work performed during the previous six-month period, including any funded or unfunded time extensions, a comparison of actual accomplishments to project goals, and a statement of work projected to be completed in the next six-month period.

The grantee is responsible for providing the technical assistance required to successfully implement and complete the project. NRCS will designate a Program Contact, an Administrative Contact, and a Technical Contact to provide oversight for each project receiving an award.

To satisfy the requirements of EQIP (7 CFR 1466) compliance measures, the grantee is required to submit as a component of the semi-annual progress report:

1. A list of producers, identified by name and social security number, of all EQIP eligible producers or entities involved in the project.
2. The dollar amount of direct and indirect payment made to each individual producer or entity for any structural, vegetative, or management practices. Both quarterly and cumulative payment amounts must be submitted.
3. A self-certification indicating that each individual or entity receiving a direct or indirect payment through this grant complies with the EQIP Payment Limitation, Adjusted Gross Income (AGI), Highly Erodible Land (HEL), and Wetlands Conservation Compliance Farm Bill provisions.

Progress report templates will be provided to grantees by the NRCS program contact. This template is also available on the NRCS CIG Web site at: www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/cig/InfoForGrantees.html.

NRCS will designate a program/technical contact for the project. This individual will have technical oversight responsibility for the project. The grantee must send copies of each semi-annual progress report to this NRCS contact, and comply with any requests for information from this individual.

Upon passage of the completion date of the project, a final report must be submitted within 90 days detailing project activities, funding received, funding expended, results, and potential for transferability of results. The final report should address completion of the project deliverables listed in the grant agreement.

VII. CIG CONTACTS

CIG Program/Technical Contact:

Donald J. Pettit
Assistant State Conservationist for Programs
Natural Resources Conservation Service
441 S. Salina St., Suite 354, Room 520
Syracuse, New York 13202.
Phone: (315) 477-6503
Fax: (315) 477-6560
donald.pettit@ny.usda.gov

For administrative questions (e.g., indirect costs, contracts), please contact:

Kim Stinson
Contracting Officer
Natural Resources Conservation Service
441 S. Salina St., Suite 354, Room 520
Syracuse, New York 13202.
Phone: (315) 477-6518
Fax: (315) 477-6560
laureen.eipp@ny.usda.gov

Additional information about CIG, including fact sheets and frequently asked questions (FAQs), is available on the following CIG Web sites:

www.ny.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/cig.html or www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/cig.