McMullin Area
Groundwater Sustainability Agency

NRCS EQIP WaterSMART Grant Application Guide

Designed especially for MAGSA landowners

Updated October 2024

TABLE OF CONTENTS

About EQIP WaterSMART Initiative…… 3
Eligibility requirements…… 3

What Projects & Practices Can I Receive Funding For? …… 4
MAGSA recommended projects…… 4
How to include these projects in your application…… 5

Application Steps…… 6

Attachment #1 …… 7
Sample NRCS EQIP Application …… 8

Attachment #2…… 11
MAGSA Recommended EQIP WaterSMART Projects…… 12

About EQIP WaterSMART Initiative:

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is a continuous voluntary conservation program administered by the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) that provides financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers to implement approved conservation practices on their farms.

In 2011, the NRCS and US Department of the Interior's Bureau of Reclamation collaborated to begin the WaterSMART Initiative based on the shared understanding that adequate water supplies are fundamental to healthy communities and agriculture. The Initiative provides complementary investments in practices to conserve water and increase drought resiliency. **Through the Initiative, the agencies have made a funding pool of $1 million available every year to MAGSA landowners through Fiscal Year 2026.**

MAGSA strongly encourages growers to take advantage of this unique dedicated funding pool to benefit their own operation's long-term success, in addition to the collective success of the region as we tackle drought and water supply challenges together. MAGSA is here to help every step of the way and has prepared this guide to support you through the funding application process.

Eligibility Requirements:

To be eligible for NRCS EQIP Water SMART funding, a MAGSA landowner must:

→ **Be enrolled in the Farm Service Agency (FSA)**

→ **Control or own eligible land** *(i.e., cropland, rangeland, pastureland, non-industrial private forestland, and associated lands)*

→ **Make an adjusted gross income (AGI) of less than $900,000/year**

- AGI is calculated by taking the average of the 3 taxable years preceding the most immediately preceding complete taxable year. Click here for other common questions related to NRCS AGI requirements (https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs- and-services/payment-eligibility/adjusted-gross-income/index) .

→ **Comply with highly erodible land and wetland conservation requirements.**

- *This means landowners agree they will not 1) Produce an agricultural commodity on highly erodible land without an adequate conservation system, 2) plant an agricultural commodity on a converted wetland or, 3) convert a wetland to enable or enhance agricultural production.*

What Projects & Practices Can I Receive Funding For?

The following conservation practices are eligible to receive NRCS EQIP WaterSMART funding. You can include more than one of the practices listed below in your application:

- Flowmeters with Telemetry*
- Irrigation Water Management** (Soil Moisture Sensors with Telemetry)
- Cover Crops
- Irrigation Systems (micro, drip, sprinkler)
- Irrigation Pipelines (flood)
- Irrigation Pumps (booster, Surface Water transport); Not for well pumps
- … And others! Contact the NRCS Field Office at the email or phone number listed on the last page of this guide to discuss the full suite of eligible conservation practices.

MAGSA Recommended Project

FOR FULL DETAILED DESCRIPTIONS OF THE RECOMMENDED PROJECTS, SEE THE "MAGSA RECOMMENDED EQIP PROJECT" DOCUMENT ATTACHED AT THE END OF THIS GUIDE

MAGSA is recommending all growers who submit their NRCS EQIP "Conservation Program Application" (form NRCS-CPA-1200) include Advanced Irrigation Water Management. Even if a grower submits a request for other NRCS conservation practices, MAGSA strongly recommends adding this to benefit their operation's long-term success, and the collective success of our local area as we tackle drought and water supply challenges together.

Why this project?

Advanced Irrigation Water Management & Soil Moisture Sensor Advanced Irrigation Water Management with an Irrigation Management Optimization (IMO) tool with technical support from Irrigation for the Future to interpret and monitor results. This tool, in tandem with the installation of a soil sensor with telemetry, allows growers to play out different scenarios on their farm to make informed decisions about their water and land use. Ultimately, it will make growers better stewards of their land and allow them to make more efficient business operations decisions that improve their bottom line. **(See attachment A to learn more.)**

How to include this project in your EQIP application:

To include Advanced Irrigation Water Management (a flowmeter with telemetry is required to use and apply for Advanced Irrigation Water Management), write the following under "Assistance Requested" of your NRCS-CPA-1200 Conservation Program Application:

Applicant (Decision Maker): John Smith	**Application Date:** 10/10/2023
Address: 123 W MAGSA St. Kerman, CA **Email:** jsmith@gmail.com	**Location where assistance is requested:** APN 123-456-78
Telephone: 559-123-4567	**Receive text messages (optional):** 559-123-4567, yes
Assistance Requested: **Practice Code 449:** **Irrigation Water Management (3 years) & soil moisture sensor with telemetry** (advanced); includes installation of soil moisture sensor & measurement and tracking, data logger, telemetry in conjunction w/ progressively enhanced predictive model, IMO, for analysis: irrigation scheduling, reports, yield, land-use, etc.	

NOTE: If your application is selected for funding, you will need to submit a design and quote to NRCS outlining what your project will cost. Contact MAGSA at (559) 515-3339 or info@mcmullinarea.org for recommendations of flowmeters and telemetry equipment that will meet MAGSA's requirements as outlined in the Rules & Regulations and the market value of this equipment.

Application Steps

STEP 1: Enroll in the Farm Service Agency (FSA) with the US Department of Agriculture

(FSA application must be completed before EQIP application can be accepted. Keep in mind the FSA application can take about 2-3 weeks to process.)

- Contact Fresno County FSA office to initiate the farm registration process
  - By phone at (559) 276-7494 ext. 2 OR (559) 490-8013
  - By email at yoann.bugarin@usda.gov or Theresa.barajas@usda.gov
- Gather relevant documents based on discussion with FSA. These will likely include:
  - ✓ Proof of identity (driver's license, social security card, IRS EIN number)
  - ✓ Proof of land ownership (copy of recorded deed or current property tax bill)
  - ✓ Lease agreements
  - ✓ Entity Identification Status (articles of incorporation, trust & estate documents, partnership agreement). Contact FSA to receive appropriate eligibility forms for your operation.
- Submit documents to the FSA office via US Postal Service, fax, email or by a one-on-one in-person appointment.

Fresno County Farm Service Agency
4625 W. Jennifer Street Ste. 109
Fresno, CA 93722
Phone: (559) 276-7494 ext. 2
Fax: (844) 206-6971
Email: yoann.bugarin@usda.gov or Theresa.barajas@usda.gov

STEP 2: Complete EQIP Application Packet

Estimated time to Complete: Less than 1 hour

- Conservation Program Application (CPA-1200)- MAGSA recommends landowners include meters with telemetry and advanced irrigation water management in your application! See attachment for sample application.
- Adjusted Gross Income Form (CCC-941)
- Direct Deposit Form (SF-119911) - Bring a blank voided check with your application
- Irrigation History Form (LTP-5)

Find and download all application materials here: https://www.mcmullinarea.org/eqip/ **OR** call the NRCS Fresno Field Office at 559-276-7494 to pick up physical copies of the application forms.

STEP 3: Submit Your EQIP Application

Submit your application directly to the NRCS Fresno Field Office at 4625W Jennifer Ave #125 Fresno, CA during operating hours between 8 AM to 4:30 PM.

NRCS Site Visit: After you submit your application, NRCS will contact you to set up a farm site visit. This doesn't guarantee you will be selected for funding but is required for every applicant.

Attachment #1

CONSERVATION PROGRAM APPLICATION

Clear Form

Applicant (Decision Maker):	Application Date:
Address: Email:	Location where as
Telephone:	Receive text mess
Assistance Requested: Practice Code 449: **Irrigation Water Management (3 years) & soil moisture sensor with telemetry** (advanced); includes installation of soil moisture sensor & measurement and tracking, data logger, telemetry in conjunction w/ progressively enhanced predictive model, IMO, for analysis: irrigation scheduling, reports, yield, land-use, etc.	

Template language to include Irrigation Water Management (advanced) & soil moisture sensors & telemetry.

Click here for instructions to complete this form or contact the local office for assistance.

1. **Do you have a customer record with the Farm Service Agency (FSA)?**
   ❑ Yes ❑ No

Check this box

2. **Interested in participating in the following (select all that apply):**
   - ❑ Agricultural Conservation Easement Program-Wetland Reserve Easement (ACEP-WRE)
   - ❑ ural Management Assistance (AMA)
   - ❑ vation Stewardship Program (CSP)
   - ☑ Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)
   - ❑ Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)

Program name

a) Program enrollment type, activity type, and/or project name, as applicable:
MAGSA WaterSMART Initiative

3. **Applicant Information:**
   Select the business structure and enter the legal name, and tax identification number for all applicants who will be participants on the contract or agreement including the decision maker.

Business Structure (Mark with an X)		Applicant Legal Name	Tax Number (last four digits)
Individual	Entity		
❑	❑		
❑	❑		
❑	❑		
❑	❑		
❑	❑		
❑	❑		

To add more applicants, complete NRCS-CPA-1200 Continuation Page, Applicant Information and attach to this form.

a) If applicant is a legal entity or joint operation, do you have appropriate documents including proof to sign for the entity or joint operation?
❑ Yes ❑ No ❑ N/A

8

b) Complete the table below for all applicants who meet the requirements for one or more of the historically underserved categories. Refer to the instructions to learn more about the requirements. If none, leave blank. (optional)

Applicant Legal Name	Limited Resource Farmer or Rancher	Beginning Farmer or Rancher	Socially Disadvantaged Farmer or Rancher	Veteran Farmer or Rancher	Veteran Discharge Date
	❑	❑	❑	❑	
	❑	❑	❑	❑	
	❑	❑	❑	❑	
	❑	❑	❑	❑	
	❑	❑	❑	❑	
	❑	❑	❑	❑	

4. **Land Information.** The following questions apply to the land being offered for enrollment through this application.

a) Land Type (check all that apply):

❑ Private Land
❑ Public Land: ❑ Federal Government ❑ State Government ❑ Local Government
❑ Indian Land: ❑ Allotted ❑ Tribal Trust Land ❑ Tribal Non-Trust Land ❑ Other

b) Control of Land Documentation (check all that apply):

❑ Deed or other evidence of land ownership
❑ Written lease agreement
❑ Other agreement or legal conveyance (describe):

c) Is the land currently enrolled in other USDA conservation program(s)?

❑ Yes ❑ No
Which program(s):

d) Organic Certification:

❑ Certified Organic by the National Organic Program (NOP)
❑ Transitioning to become Certified Organic by the NOP
❑ Exempt from Organic Certification as defined by the NOP
❑ Not Applicable

e) What is the primary crop type(s)?

f) What is the primary livestock type(s)?

The applicant agrees not to start any financially assisted conservation practice or activity or engage the reimbursable services of a certified technical service provider before an obligating document is executed by NRCS. The applicant understands that if they start a conservation practice or activity prior to NRCS executing an obligation the applicant will be ineligible to receive payment for the conservation practice or activity. The applicant may request a waiver to begin a conservation practice or activity early by submitting their written request to the applicable NRCS State Conservationist. Applicants must provide NRCS with written authorization from the landowner to install structural or vegetative practices on leased land included in this application.

The applicant acknowledges that they have or will file all other required eligibility information including highly erodible land conservation/wetland conservation certifications, adjusted gross income certifications, and member information for entities and joint operations with the FSA, as applicable, prior to NRCS approving an agreement based on this application.

Leave blank. N/A.

The applicant may obtain a copy of the applicable conservation program contract appendix, which defines the full terms and conditions of program participation at the local NRCS office.

❑ Check here if NRCS-CPA-1200 Continuation Page, Applicant Information is attached.

Applicant Signature	**Date**

NON-DISCRIMINATION STATEMENT

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at How to File a Program Discrimination Complaint and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

Attachment #2

McMullin Area
Groundwater Sustainability Agency

MAGSA Recommended EQIP WaterSMART Project

Project Description

MAGSA is recommending all growers who submit their NRCS EQIP "Conservation Program Application" (form NRCS-CPA-1200) include **Advanced Irrigation Water Management**. Even if a grower submits a request for other NRCS conservation practices, MAGSA strongly recommends adding this practice in addition to benefit their operation's long-term success, and the collective success of our local area as we tackle drought and water supply challenges together.

Advanced Irrigation Water Management, 3 years & Soil Moisture Sensor with Telemetry

MAGSA producers who apply for the flowmeter and telemetry may be eligible for *up to* three years of Advanced Irrigation Water Management (IWM) (soil moisture tracking) funding if combined with Irrigation Management Optimization (IMO), an advanced irrigation management and analysis tool.

What it is: Advanced IWM combined with IMO is an advanced irrigation management and analysis tool for operating where water is expensive or limited. The tool allows growers to play out different scenarios on their farm to make informed decisions about their water and land use. IMO is used to target irrigation strategies that maximize net returns to water and energy year over year. The tool helps landowners identify how different irrigation timing strategies will influence soil moisture depth at any point across the season, evaluate how different levels of applied water will impact yield and net returns, and answer questions like "are the last few inches of water applied on one field better used to expand production on additional acres?". Once calibrated to a field, IMO uses predictive analytics to provide:

- Soil moisture measurement and tracking at four points per field
- Daily tracking and recording of crop water-use and water application ("Check-book" water balance calculation) via data logger, telemetry and cloud-based computing (field-scale modeling)
- Soil moisture graph indicating field capacity (FC), available water holding capacity (AWHC), and management allowed depletion (MAD)
- Forward looking estimation of crop water demand 5 days out (FRET)

Year 1 deliverables

Calibrated for the field by a technical service provider, with input from the grower

- Detailed evaluation of irrigation system performance and constraints.
- Field-specific calibration of ET.
- Soil salinity testing and three years of soil salinity and water salinity monitoring
- Scheduling tool for energy use optimization
- A more complete picture of crop water availability in spatial variable fields.

Year 2 deliverables

Grower will operate the tool with full support from technical service provider

Predictive analytics calibrated to the unique conditions of the existing irrigation system and field, allowing the user to:

- Evaluate the cost of different full season of water and energy use strategies
- Estimate yield impacts from different levels of applied water
- Evaluate land-use strategies for future water supplies
- Pre-test full-season irrigation timing strategies for best fit
- Accurately plan, schedule, and track the coming season's irrigation strategy

Year 3 deliverables

Producer will operate tool with limited support from technical service provider

- Yield modeling estimates are refined per site
- Evaluate alternative irrigation systems or modifications to existing irrigation systems for the unique conditions of the site

Why MAGSA recommends it: The Advanced IWM and IMO model and analysis tool helps growers make sense of reported data from their flowmeter and telemetry system, as well as soil moisture sensors that are installed as part of this conservation practice. Ultimately, it will make growers better stewards of their land and allow them to make more efficient business operations decisions that improve their bottom line. MAGSA wants to provide the information and resources for our growers that will allow them to flourish as we work towards balanced levels of groundwater by 2040 under SGMA.

Estimated Cost & Next Steps: If your application is selected for funding, you will need to submit a quote to NRCS outlining what your project will cost. The costs above are rough estimates. Contact Collin English with Irrigation for the Future at (530)760-7173 or info@iff.ag with questions about IMO and the program cost.