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Madison GWD
Magic Valley GWD
North Snake GWD
South West ID

City Members:

City of American Falls
City of Blackfoot
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Busch Agricultural
Jerome Cheese
United Water of Idaho

EQIP Ground and Surface Water Conservation (GSWC) Program

In 2004, Utah received funding for the Ground and Surface Water Conservation Provision of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP-GSWC). To be eligible for a contract in this program a producer must have irrigated 2 out of the last 5 years. The Local Work Group met and made recommendations concerning the program. It was decided that any funding received for the GSWC program would be split into two methods of water savings. Methods of saving water were Water Banking and Irrigation System Improvement. Water Banking is accomplished by offering an incentive to producers that pump wells to irrigate their crops. In 2003 there were many producers who applied for water banking that irrigated their farms from surface irrigation systems. The LWG discussed the 2003 program and decided that in 2004 the Water Banking incentive would be limited to farms irrigated by wells. The LWG discussed the intent of the program and decided that a more long-term solution to water savings should be considered. A decision was reached to include Irrigation System Improvements as a method of water savings due to the long term over which the water savings will be realized. It was determined that funds received for GSWC would be divided 60% to Water Banking and 40% to Irrigation System Improvements.

Incentive Rates

- The incentive rate for Water Banking was discussed to determine an appropriate incentive that would entice producers to conserve water through utilization of the program. An incentive rate was developed that is based upon the cost of purchasing alfalfa to feed a producers' livestock to replace the alfalfa from a field that was not irrigated. The LWG determined that the cost of replacement alfalfa was equivalent to \$10/acre-inch of irrigation water applied. Due to the severe drought that is expected to continue in Utah during 2004 a cost share rate of 60% was agreed to. A cost share rate of 60% would then set the incentive rate to \$6/acre-inch. Since this incentive payment is intended to purchase water

- and leave it in the aquifer it was decided that there would be no higher incentive rate for Limited Resource or Beginning Farmers for Water Banking. A contract limit of \$30,000/year with a 3 year maximum contract (2 year incentive payment - \$60,000 max.) was set by the LWG for Water Banking.
- The incentive rate for Irrigation System Improvements was discussed and a decision was reached that the cost share rate should be limited to 50% for eligible practices. The cost share rate for Limited Resource and Beginning Farmers was also discussed and the cost share rate was set at 65% to provide an additional incentive to those producers to improve their irrigation systems and conserve water. Practices selected as eligible for cost-share were determined by Local Work Groups. A limit of \$30,000 per contract was set by the LWG for Irrigation System Improvement projects.

Screening Process

A screening system was designed for applications for GSWC Irrigation System Improvements. The screening system was based entirely on the increase in irrigation efficiency that the improvements would accomplish. A "High" priority was given to those applications that would provide an increase in system efficiency greater than or equal to 35%. A "Medium" priority was given to those applications that would provide an increase in efficiency between 15 and 34%. A "Low" priority was given to those applications that would provide an efficiency improvement less than 15%.

Eligible Counties

The LWG considered areas within Utah that have been targeted by the State of Utah Division of Water Resources as those areas in which there was an increased level of concern about the aquifers. The LWG determined that the entire state was being affected by the long term drought and a decision was made to make the GSWC program available Statewide.