

# RECP Funds Will Help Farmers Establish Conservation Practices

The U. S. Department of Agriculture announced primary details of a 1974 Rural Environmental Conservation Program (RECP) to strengthen conservation and environmental protection measures on American farms and to encourage the development, management, and protection of nonindustrial private forest lands.

In December the Department announced the initial RECP funding level for calendar 1974 at \$90 million, of which \$10

million was initially earmarked for the Forestry Incentives effort.

The RECP which carries forward some features of the old Rural Environmental Assistance Program (REAP) is designed to share with farmers and forest landowners from 50 to 75 percent of the cost of carrying out approved forestry and conservation practices.

Participation in this program is open to all eligible farmers regardless of race, religion, color, sex or national origin.

The program is authorized by the Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act and the Agriculture and Consumer Protection Act of 1973. The 1973 Act was signed into law by President Richard M. Nixon on August 10, 1973. The program provides for both annual and long-term cost-sharing agreements.

Under long-term agreements, essential practices and practice cost-sharing will be scheduled over a period of 3 to 10 years. These agreements with farmers will be based on whole farm conservation plans which have been approved by appropriate officials. Requests for long-term agreements will be accepted only in cases where the farmer has an approved plan and has indicated he is ready to carry out a scheduled practice during the current program year.

The special Forestry Incentives Program phase of RECP will apply only in counties to be specifically designated for this phase of the program. The counties will be designated by the State ASC Committee after consulting with the State Forester. Cost-sharing in these counties will be available to owners of nonindustrial private forest lands for planting trees for timber production and for improving a stand of forest trees for timber production. Forest management plans developed by foresters in consultation with the landowners will be required as the basis for cost-sharing agreements for all forestry practices in the designated counties.

Cost-sharing for regular forestry practices will also be offered in counties that are not designated for the special Forestry Incentives Program. In these counties forestry practices must also provide improved protection against wind or water erosion as well as provide for the production of forest products.

Practices to be offered under the 1974 RECP for annual or long-term agreements, include: establishing permanent vegetative cover; improving permanent vegetative cover; planting trees; improving a stand of forest trees; water impoundment reservoirs, stripcropping; constructing terrace systems; diversions; streambank stabilization; permanent wildlife habitat; sediment retention; erosion or water control structures; sediment, chemical or water runoff control measures; windbreaks or shelterbelts; and

reorganizing irrigation systems. All are designed to provide enduring protection to soil and water resources. In addition, state and county committees will have the opportunity to develop, with appropriate justification, other practices needed to solve critical local conservation problems.

A draft environmental statement has been filed with the Council on Environmental Quality and circulated for agency and public comment. Program modifications will be considered based on comments received during the review period.

Several USDA agencies are involved in the operation of the RECP. The program will be administered by the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service through its farmer-elected committee system. The Soil Conservation Service will provide technical assistance and advice and recommendations on policies for soil and water conservation practices including conservation planning needed for longterm agreements.

The Forest Service will provide advice and recommendations on policies for all aspects of forestry practices and technical service, including planning assistance to the applicant. The Extension Service will provide educational support and assistance for increasing the effectiveness of the program.

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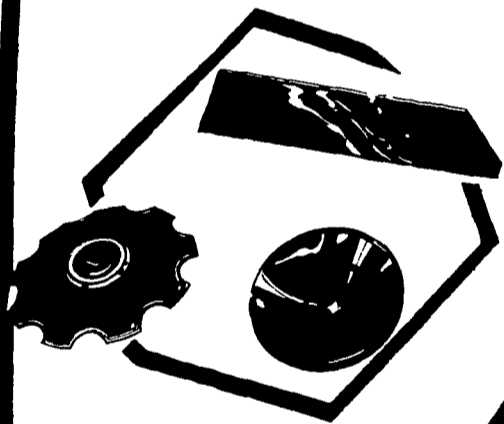
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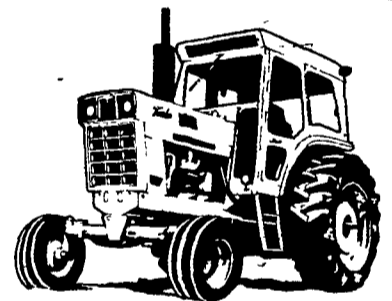
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