

STATE IRRIGATION EFFICIENCY COST-SHARE PROGRAM

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STATE CONSERVATION COMMISSION

The State Conservation Commission (SCC) was established by the Kansas Legislature in 1937 to promote soil and water conservation. The SCC is governed by nine members consisting of an elected commissioner from each of the five administrative areas; two ex-officio members representing Kansas State University (KSU) Research and Extension; and two appointed members representing the Kansas Department of Agriculture (KDA) and the USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). The agency is administered by an executive director appointed by the commissioners.

The SCC has the responsibility to administer the Conservation Districts Law (K.S.A. 2-1901 et seq.), the Watershed District Act (K.S.A. 24-1201 et seq.) and other statutes authorizing various programs. The agency budget is financed from the dedicated funding of the State Water Plan Special Revenue Fund, State General Fund, and fee funds.

The agency is structured as a single program agency, but operates several subprograms that tie both to the mission of the SCC and to many stated goals of the State Water Plan. One of the goals of the SCC is to administer efficiently those subprograms that enhance and protect the state's natural resources. The agency pursues this goal by working with the 105 conservation districts and 88 organized watershed districts, and other local, state and federal entities.

WATER RESOURCES COST-SHARE PROGRAM

The Water Resources Cost-Share Program (WRCSP) was authorized by an amendment to K.S.A 2-1915 in 1979 and was first funded in 1980. The conservation district in each county administers the program at the local level. The SCC develops regulations, policies, and procedures to guide program implementation.

Each fiscal year, beginning July 1, county conservation districts receive an allocation of cost-share funds from the SCC. A portion of these funds may be

used for a variety of conservation practices. Other allocated funds may only be used to address a specific resource concern such as water conservation. These targeted funds are called the Irrigation Initiative Allocation (IIA).

The SCC and conservation districts are assisted in implementation of the program by the NRCS. With the a few exceptions, all structures or practices cost-shared through the WRCSP are required to be built to NRCS "Standards and Specifications."

IRRIGATION EFFICIENCY PROGRAMS

The Kansas Water Plan has identified groundwater declines as an issue in the Lower and Upper Arkansas, Cimarron, Upper Republican, Smoky Hill-Saline and Solomon River Basins. In 1993, the Kansas Agriculture Ogallala Task Report recommended the SCC provide enhanced cost-share assistance for irrigation system efficiency improvement. Through dedicated funding of the WRCSP, the SCC provides enhanced cost-share funds through the IIA to 38 conservation districts to provide financial assistance to irrigators for eligible efficiency measures designed to improve or convert existing irrigation systems. Targeted areas of highest priority for irrigation system modification under the WRCSP include the Rattlesnake Sub-Basin and the Intensive Groundwater Use Control Areas (IGUCA's). The goal of providing financial assistance in the form of cost-share and management incentive payments is to reduce consumptive use.

Conservation District Eligibility

The IIA funds are allocated based on those counties with greater than 24,999 acres of irrigated land and greater than 24,999 acre feet of water irrigated as reported to the Division of Water Resources water use reports. Currently, 38 county conservation districts primarily in the western one-half of the state are eligible to receive IIA funding.

Eligible Practices

The following is a list of eligible practices offered under the state irrigation efficiency cost-share programs:

- Low Energy Precision Application (LEPA)
- Low pressure spray nozzles
- Subsurface drip irrigation
- Irrigation tailwater recovery system
- Irrigation water conveyance pipeline
- Irrigation Management Incentive (payment/not cost-share)

Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants include landowners, tenants or operators. Tenants and operators must have authority granted by the landowner through a power of attorney. Application is made at the county conservation district office. All applications must be approved by the SCC before a project may begin. Applications for irrigation efficiency cost-share are received by the conservation district during a specified sign-up period then evaluated and prioritized based on efficiency improvement. Potential Farm Efficiency for irrigation practices adopted by the SCC is defined in the NRCS Kansas Irrigation Guide.

Limitations

The following limitations apply to irrigation efficiency cost-share applications:

- A valid water right (in good standing) must be verified to the conservation district.
- Cost-share funds can not be used to convert non-irrigated land unless an equal amount of previously irrigated land is taken out of irrigated production.
- The proposed project must have a minimum final cost per acre foot saved based on a state prioritization worksheet.
- Cost-share rates are set by the conservation district at a maximum of 70% of the actual cost or county average cost, whichever is less.
- State established cost-share limits are \$10,000 per practice unless set lower by the conservation district. (Exceptions may be made for subsurface drip projects.)
- Non-metered systems and systems with end guns are eligible but for a lesser amount of cost-share.
- All applicants must review and sign a conservation plan of operations.

Subsurface Drip Irrigation

The SCC promotes the adoption of subsurface irrigation technology through enhanced funding opportunities for interested applicants. In fiscal year 2002 the SCC funded 16 demonstration sites in 10 counties at a cost-share rate up to \$20,000 per system. Multiple co-sponsors of these projects included NRCS, KSU Research and Extension, Groundwater Management Districts, irrigation equipment dealerships, banks and county conservation districts. Although demonstration projects are not being pursued by the SCC in fiscal year 2003, an increased level of funding up to \$20,000 per system may be available based on state prioritization criteria.

Irrigation Water Management Incentive

In fiscal year 2002, the SCC began a pilot project that provided monetary incentives to irrigators to implement an evapotranspiration (ET) based irrigation scheduling program. The intent of this program is to provide awareness and education to irrigators to encourage adoption of irrigation scheduling technologies such as KanSched. The SCC requires participants to receive appropriate training from KSU Research and Extension or the NRCS in order to gather, enter and process data required to implement a scheduling program. This program has been adopted for statewide eligibility for FY 2003.

WRCSP FUNDING

Funding Source

Funding for the Water Resources Cost-Share Program comes from the Kansas Water Plan Special Revenue fund, which is generated from an assortment of taxes and fees. This fund is a dedicated source of state funding with the intent of protecting, conserving and enhancing Kansas' natural resources.

FY 2003 Funding

The base allocation in the amount of \$2,751,608 was divided among the 105 conservation districts in fiscal year 2003. This allocation addresses locally identified needs that may also be used to address water conservation. The 38 Kansas conservation districts eligible for enhanced irrigation efficiency allocations received a total of \$451,000 to implement irrigation efficiency practices. The Rattlesnake Sub-basin is allocated \$25,000 in irrigation efficiency targeted funding. An additional \$213,871 is available on a competitive basis for Subsurface Drip (SDI) Irrigation demonstration projects.