



**Natural Resources
Conservation Service**

Room 3416 Federal Building
700 West Capitol Ave.
Little Rock, AR 72201
Web: <http://www.ar.nrcs.usda.gov>

News Release

Release No.: 122216-01

Contact: Reginald Jackson, State Public Affairs Specialist
(501) 301-3133(w) 501-352-7761(c)
reginald.jackson@ar.usda.gov

NRCS Announces Application Deadline for Ag Producers to Apply for Groundwater Decline Initiative Funding Consideration in Seven Arkansas Counties

Little Rock, AR – December 22, 2016 - Agricultural producers in Arkansas, Craighead, Cross, Lonoke, St. Francis, Poinsett and Prairie counties have until January 30, 2017, to submit applications for funding consideration to voluntarily implement conservation practices through the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Groundwater Decline Initiative.

More than \$3 million is available through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) to address the water quantity issues in the Alluvial and Sparta aquifers.

“While Arkansas has an abundance of good quality groundwater in many parts of the state, groundwater is being depleted faster than the rate of recharge in the primary agricultural area for cultivated crops,” said Mike Sullivan, NRCS state conservationist for Arkansas.

“Though there is a critical decline of groundwater in the aquifer beneath these increasingly irrigated acres, NRCS uses its programs and technical expertise to install systems that convert from groundwater use to surface water utilizing the state’s annual rainfall,” Sullivan said.

All contracts will require Irrigation Water Management (IWM) for three years. Those practices which have the biggest groundwater savings will be the highest priority.

Priority ranking will be given for:

- Locations within the greatest cones of depression in the Alluvial and Sparta aquifers.
- Systems converting to surface water systems where irrigation wells are pumping from the Sparta Aquifer.
- Management practices such as irrigation water management, pump automation, flow measuring devices and soil moisture sensors.

-more-

Helping People Help the Land

USDA is an Equal Opportunity Provider and Employer

“Improving irrigation efficiencies on existing groundwater systems can increase water savings by more than 25 percent just by the use of IWM and computerized hole selection (Phaucet and Pipe Planner),” Sullivan said. “Further reductions in water use will be realized through scheduling tools and other irrigation water management devices such as atmometers, soil moisture meters, and pump automations.”

To sign up for EQIP, visit your local USDA field service center. To locate the local office, visit <http://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app>.