



**Natural Resources  
Conservation Service**

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# News Release

Release No.: 6

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## *Making Conservation Resources More Accessible for All*

**Richmond, VA, Jan. 30, 2020** – When Calvin T. McGhee, Jr., began working with his son and namesake to re-establish McGhee Farms in Louisa County, Va., he knew they didn’t want to continue down the same path the family had followed for generations. Both men had seen the negative impacts of cattle in the property’s creeks and ponds and wanted to clear up those issues for themselves and their descendants.

The McGhees received financial assistance through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) to improve their pasture and grazing management and to install additional stream protection and waterers for their cattle and hay operation.

“We can put livestock in places we couldn’t put them before,” says Calvin T. McGhee, III. “We have waterers in places that didn’t originally have water. We put in divisional fencing where we couldn’t have divided them off at first. So, it [EQIP] helped to overcome those types of challenges and put in some conservation practices to do our part to save the environment.”

Historically underserved producers\* like the McGhees can use the EQIP Advance Payment option to start their stewardship journeys and get higher payment rates for the practices they install. The general EQIP reimbursement process could be cost prohibitive for many of these producers because they were required to pay for practice implementation *first* and get repaid *afterwards*. Interested producers can get funds up-front for at least 50 percent of the payment rate of each practice.

NRCS accepts applications year-round but makes funding selections at specific times. Virginia farmers and forest landowners can now sign up to install recommended conservation practices on cropland, pastureland and non-industrial private forestland. NRCS will accept EQIP applications for livestock, cropland and forestry fund pools with these additional special initiatives available to Virginia producers/landowners:

- **American Black Duck Initiative** – Focused conservation practices to restore wintering habitat in the Delaware Bay and Chesapeake Bay watersheds;
- **Conservation Activity Plans** – Development of site-specific plans to recommend conservation practices that will address an identified natural resource need.
- **Eastern Hellbender** – Targeted conservation practices to reduce sediment and nutrient inputs for improved habitat and water quality;
- **Golden-winged Warbler** – Young forest habitat restoration in Appalachian breeding territory;

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- **High Tunnel System** – Steel-framed, polyethylene-covered structures to extend the growing season in an environmentally safe manner;
- **Longleaf Pine** – Stand establishment and management in the Southeastern Virginia historical range;
- **National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI)** – Targeted practices to clean up impaired streams and improve aquatic habitats in the War Branch and Mountain Run watersheds in Rockingham County and Gap Creek in Rockingham and Shenandoah County;
- **Northern Bobwhite in Pine Savannas** – Management strategies to convert commercial loblolly and shortleaf pine plantings to highly valuable pine savannah habitats;
- **Northern Bobwhite in Working Grasslands** – Native grass restoration to address habitat loss while maintaining or improving cattle production on the land;
- **On-Farm Energy** – Agricultural Energy Management Plans (AgEMP) or farm energy audits to assess energy use and recommend ways to reduce it;
- **Organic** – Practices to help certified organic growers, those working to achieve organic certification, and specialty crop producers address resource concerns on their operations;
- **StrikeForce** – Priority ranking for cropland, high tunnel, and livestock practices to support program participation among underserved producers in rural communities.

Interested producers must submit applications on or before **Feb. 28, 2020**, to be considered for fiscal year 2020 EQIP funding. Each applicant *should* submit a signed and dated *Conservation Program Application* to the local NRCS service center by close of business on the published deadline for a given batching period. Applicants without farm records established through USDA’s Farm Service Agency will not be considered for ranking. The name, tax identification number, and address provided must also match IRS income tax records.

Applicants approved for financial assistance will receive a payment based on an NRCS determination of incurred costs and income sacrificed for practice implementation. Historically underserved producers can opt for the advance payment after they are approved to develop an EQIP contract. If you previously applied for EQIP and were not funded, contact your local NRCS Service Center for more information.

Call or visit your local NRCS office to learn more about USDA program eligibility requirements and how EQIP and other Farm Bill programs can help you better protect and manage natural resources on your land. Visit [farmers.gov](http://farmers.gov) for USDA service center locations. State-specific program information is available on the NRCS Virginia website at [www.va.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.va.nrcs.usda.gov).

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\* [Historically underserved](#) producers include beginning, socially disadvantaged, veteran and limited resource farmers or ranchers. (Click on the link to access full definitions for each category above.)