

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) - FY 2020 Clean Water Fund (CWF) Cover Crop Demonstration Program

***Submit additional questions to: cwfquestions@state.mn.us**

General Information, Policy, and Eligibility

Q1: The Request for Proposals (RFP) states that the program is to provide opportunity to increase the establishment of cover crops and related tillage practices. What is the definition of *related tillage practices*?

A: For the purposes of this program, related tillage practices refers to those tillage practices that are needed to establish or terminate cover crops. Tillage practices, such as conservation tillage or no-till, on their own without establishment of cover crops are not eligible for this program.

Q2: The RFP states that priority will be given to *new adoption*? What is the meant by *new adoption*?

A: New adoption refers to the establishment of cover crop on acres where a landowner has not established cover crops in the past 5 years and has not been enrolled in any federal or state program to receive payments for cover crop establishment.

Landowners who established cover crops due to a prevent plant or drown-out spots are exempt from this definition.

Q3: What is the length of contracts for cover crops?

A: The goal of this program is long-term adoption and sustainability of cover crops. Contracts must have a minimum duration of 3 years. Any projects proposing payment terms other than 3-years must be reviewed by BWSR staff and approved by the Assistant Director of Regional Operations prior to work plan approval.

Q4: What activities can be used to increase landowner knowledge of cover crops?

A: A main goal of this program is to better understand barriers to cover crop adoption and increase landowner knowledge cover crops.

Landowner education could include activities such as infiltration test, soil tests, field days, signage, etc.

Q5: What is the definition of an *established standard*?

A: A professional accepted practice must be consistent with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG), or be a professionally accepted engineering or ecological practice. Design standards for all practices must include specifications for operation and maintenance for the effective life of the given practice, including an inspection schedule and procedure.

Q6: What is meant by a *professional accepted practice*?

A: A professional accepted practice is defined as a well-recognized and widespread practice that has prior BWSR approval and is designed by technical staff that have the appropriate technical expertise, skills and training such as Job Approval Authority, Certified Crop Advisor, Extension Educator, licensed Professional Engineer, or Registered Landscape Architect.

Q7: What will be the length of the grant agreement?

A: Grant agreements will have an expiration date of December 31, 2022.

Q8: What can be used for in-kind cash value as match?

A: Match includes the services, materials, or cash contributed to the accomplishment of grant objectives. In-kind cash value has to be directly attributed to the project or activity accomplishments and account for the same as items charged directly to the grant. Use the following guidance when considering in-kind cash value:

Local staff and administrative costs in excess of the reporting and grant management, project development, or technical and engineering component of the grant funds received.

Conservation practice costs may not be increased beyond the actual costs of technical assistance, design, materials, and installation by the application of match. In no case may conservation practice costs exceed 100% of the actual cost of design, materials, and installation. Land value match may only be used to match structural or installed conservation practices and may only be applied where changes from current land use or land cover are implemented such that water resource protection becomes the new primary objective for the land under consideration.

Q9: Can loan or grant funds from other state programs be used as match?

A: Loan funds from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's (MPCA) Clean Water Partnership (CWP) Program and Minnesota Department of Agriculture's AgBMP Program may be used as match.

Q10: What are fair and reasonable landowner reimbursement rates?

A: If the flat rate payment option is chosen, nominees may use NRCS EQIP rates or choose rates lower or higher based on professional experience and consistent with prevailing local conditions. If the proposed rate is higher than the NRCS EQIP rates, BWSR approval must be given.

Q11: What is the required seasonal lifespan of a cover crop contract?

A: Summer/fall planted cover Crops may be terminated after March 1st the following year by applying herbicide, roller-crimper, grazing, tillage, and/or a combination of these practices. See the NRCS Cover Crop Termination Guidelines for additional details.