

Business

Money available for conservation practices

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WATERLOO

Federal agriculture offices have a few extra bucks available for farmers interested in installing conservation practices on their property.

A new program created by the 1996 Farm Bill has dumped \$2.9 million in cost-share money into the laps of county Farm Service Agency offices in Iowa. Property owners who want to construct conservation practices — to control soil erosion, for example — can apply for Environmental Quality Incentive Program funds through mid-September.

The \$2.9 million is in addition to

EQIP funds available

Black Hawk: \$27,086
Benton: \$31,644
Bremer: \$15,746
Buchanan: \$31,226
Butler: \$19,090
Tama: \$31,572
Grundy: \$25,850
Fayette: \$25,550

\$2.14 million allocated to Iowa earlier this year by another program, the Agricultural Conservation Program. EQIP is its successor.

"The ACP funds are almost all obligated to producers, so this new inter-

im funding is welcome," said Tom Grau, Iowa FSA executive director.

Northeast Iowa counties will get more than \$200,000 in EQIP dollars. Mike Webster, Black Hawk County Natural Resources Conservation Service conservationist, said the money can be put to good use, protecting the county's soil and water resources.

"We're very fortunate to get this. I think there is a need out there," he said.

But in order to take advantage of the money, property owners can't hem and haw. They must enroll by mid-September. Funds will be obligated by the end of that month, but federal officials may alter projected

allocations in August if there's evidence a county isn't spending its money, Webster said.

Half of the EQIP funds are targeted for livestock production practices, such as rotational grazing, developing livestock ponds and other water supplies, fencing streambanks, and building waste storage facilities if an operation is more than five years old.

The level of cost-sharing varies by county and the particular practice but usually ranges between 50 and 75 percent of the project's total cost, not to exceed \$3,500 per year.

Interested property owners should contact their county FSA or NRCS office.