Conservation Corner

*Conservation Corner is a weekly article produced by the Forest County Land &Water Conservation Department. For more information contact Steve Kircher, County Conservationist-Land Information/GIS Director at 715-478-1387 or by e-mail at* *lcc@co.forest.wi.us**.*

This week I’d like to present a couple funding programs that are available to Forest County Landowners. The first program is the **Environmental Quality Incentives Program or (EQIP).** The tentative application deadline for the next round of funding for this program (EQIP) is **February 28, 2020**. The EQIP is a voluntary conservation program that provides technical and financial assistance to rural landowners. Common projects include the development of erosion control and water quality improvement, wildlife habitat development, and tree planting, thinning, and other forest stand improvement activities, as well as the development of forest management plans and fish & wildlife management plans. A full list of eligible conservation practices and financial assistance payment rates may be downloaded from the national **NRCS State Payment Schedules webpage.**

Special EQIP initiatives are offered for the establishment of **honey bee and other pollinator habitat**, including woody and herbaceous plantings; wildlife habitat development and invasive species control, within the Great Lakes watershed; soil health, including cover crops and no-till farming; organic farming; energy conservation; and High Tunnel Systems (aka “hoop houses”).

Another program is the **Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP).** Applications are being accepted for on a continuous basis. Farmers and forestland owners may apply at any time, for the next round of funding, with an application deadline anticipated in late winter or early spring. The CSP is essentially a conservation rewards program, for working agricultural lands, which provides financial payments for operators’ existing level of conservation, plus incentives to implement additional conservation enhancement activities. The minimum annual payment is $1,500 per operator.

Similar to EQIP, a full list of eligible CSP conservation activities and financial assistance payment rates may be downloaded from the national NRCS State Payment Schedules webpage. Additional information, including CSP job sheets is available at the national CSP website. *For more information contact Steve Kircher, County Conservationist-Land Information/GIS Director at 715-478-1387 or by e-mail at* *lcc@co.forest.wi.us**.*