The U.S. Department of Agriculture recently announced that the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Nebraska received additional funding for natural resource conservation through several of its Farm Bill programs. This funding will go towards applications NRCS currently has on-hand.

Nebraska State Conservationist Craig Derickson said, “This additional funding means NRCS can provide financial and technical assistance to more landowners and operators than originally anticipated. Here in Nebraska, we often receive twice as many applications for natural resource conservation assistance than we can fund. This additional funding will help NRCS apply more conservation work on Nebraska’s working lands.”

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) received an additional $3.25 million, of which $2.5 million will be geared toward irrigation water management practices. The remaining dollars will go towards financial and technical help with structural and management conservation practices on agricultural land.

The Agricultural Water Enhancement Program (AWEP) received an additional $1.3 million. AWEP is a voluntary conservation initiative that provides technical and financial assistance to help farmers and ranchers conserve surface and ground water and improve water quality, mostly through irrigation water management practices.

The Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) received an additional $75,000. WHIP is a voluntary program that encourages the creation of wildlife habitat.

Through WHIP, NRCS provides technical and financial assistance to landowners and others to develop upland, wetland, riparian, and aquatic habitat areas on their property.

The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) also recently had the total number of acres that can be accepted into the program during 2011 increased to 1.2 million acres. Nebraska currently leads the nation in the amount of acres enrolled in CSP.

This voluntary conservation program encourages producers to address resource concerns in a comprehensive manner by undertaking new conservation practices; and improving, maintaining, and managing existing conservation activities.

“This additional funding and acres dedicated towards natural resources conservation will result in cleaner water, more wildlife habitat and more productive crop and pastureland,” Derickson said.

For more information about NRCS and their programs and services, visit your local USDA Service Center or visit www.ne.nrcs.usda.gov.