

Climate Resilient Farming
Round 5
Questions and Answers
2/5/20

Q: Can state funds be used to purchase equipment to complete implementation of Best Management Practices associated with Stream Corridor and Shoreline Management Systems? Specifically, could an excavator be purchased to install the system and then be owned and maintained by the District for future stream corridor and shoreline management implementation projects.

A: Equipment must be directly related to the function of the BMP. An excavator would not be directly related to the function of the BMP and therefore is not eligible.

Q: What NRCS standard should be used for permanent seedings in the vineyards? Also, where and how do I put in the equipment costs? The district will own it not the farms.

A: The practice standard to use would be Conservation Cover 327. The flat rate for Conservation Cover of Orchard or Vineyard Alleyways is \$87.29/acre based on 2019 NY EQIP rates.

Equipment costs should go under Other Direct Expenses on the SW2. They would not go on the SW3.

Q: We would like to apply for funding to interseed rye on 160 acres of corn. In our scenario the farm plans to plant approximately 160 acres of corn in 2020 and purchase an interseeder through the grant program to interseed Rye into corn around June. The soy beans that he would then plant the following year he would cover crop when the soy bean is removed, which would be Rye, but it would not be interseeded. So, under this scenario those interseeded acres would be moving around the farm. But the way I understand things, he needs to cover the same acres for 3 consecutive years.

A: There is not currently a rule against changing fields for cover crops based on rotation, but the total acres proposed to be cover cropped must be implemented. Unless the farm is currently receiving cost share assistance with state funding to cover crop the soy than it would be eligible for cost share under the proposed scenario. Additionally, as long as the interseeder is utilized for cover crop implementation during the duration of the contract than it would not need to be on the same fields.

Q: The District has a client who raises and finishes beef on pasture. They also have a dedicated field to growing hay as a source of supplement feed for the winter. The past few years, both the pasture and hay fields did not produce enough due to droughts. Would a Water-Reel big gun type of sprinkler (compliant with NRCS Sprinkler Standard Code 442) be eligible for funding through the Climate Resilient Farming grant?

A: CRF cannot fund single components, projects must propose a complete system. An Irrigation Water Management System would be eligible but must also meet the goals of the program to reduce the environmental footprint of the farm.

Clarification on Cost Share Rate: Items for 100% cost share for outreach and technical assistance should be listed under Other Direct Expenses Related to Project (line F on SW2).

Clarification on Project ID: The prioritization number relates to the prioritization per track not overall. If you are submitting multiple applications for different tracks and multiple applications within a track you would prioritize within each track. The following example is for Niagara SWCD submitting two Track 1 applications and two Track 3 applications. (District # - Track # - prioritization #)

- 30-1-1
- 30-1-2
- 30-3-1
- 30-3-2

Q: Under the Rd. 5 CRF Highlights page 1. Cost Share Rate, listed items for 100% cost share are (soil health training, cover crop signs, and soil health testing). What and who is the soil health training for (District Folks or Farmers)? Or will the grant cover soil health seminar for farmers?

A: Training is an eligible expense under Track 3 Healthy Soils NY. Training should be targeted towards landowners to increase likelihood of adoption of soil health practices. Projects that incorporate training and outreach including cover crop signs with acreage cover cropped will score higher than just implementation projects. Highest priority may not be most acres but increasing likelihood of adoption by demonstrating to others.

Q: Are workshops relating to research on behavior science eligible within CRF?

A: Soil health testing and soil health training are eligible components of a Track 3 soil health project. However, all CRF projects must be focused on implementing practice systems that will mitigate GHG emissions and enhance resilience to the impacts of climate change. Projects may not be solely focused on research or education, and they must be tied to climate change. Projects that incorporate training and outreach with acreage cover cropped will score higher than just implementation projects.

Q: Would the purchase of an under-vine vineyard mower be eligible for the Climate Resilient Farming program? The mower would be owned by the District and rented out to farms for their use. This would allow for a significant reduction in runoff and erosion from vineyard lands and build a healthier soil for increased absorption of carbon from the atmosphere.

A: Equipment that is directly related to the function of the BMP are eligible for state assistance under the CRF Program. Districts can request state assistance payments to cost-share the expense related to the purchase of equipment to be used on farms to implement BMP Systems. Specific farm(s) must be listed on the proposal who will be working with the District to implement the BMP systems. Additionally, the Soil Conservation – Cultural System Implementation Policy for set rates could be utilized to implement the BMPs associated with the equipment being purchased.

Q: We have a large crop grower in the county that had interest in a higher efficiency corn dryer. Is paying for a dryer something that would be fundable? There would of course be GHG emission reduction due to lower propane use.

A: No. The project as described does not include an eligible practice system that would fit within any of the available funding tracks, as detailed in Section II of the RFP. Therefore, it is ineligible within CRF Round 5.

Q: We received a call from a local farmer who is interested in switching his operation over to no till. He discovered our CRF RFP online and was asking if purchasing a roller crimper would be eligible.

A: Equipment that is directly related to the function of the BMP is eligible for state cost-share. A roller crimper would be directly related to the function of the BMP and therefore is eligible. If being cost-shared for a farm, it should be explained why this specific piece of equipment is needed, and why it cannot be purchased by the District and made available to all applicable farms in the county. Additionally, the Soil Conservation – Cultural System Implementation Policy for set rates could be utilized to implement the BMPs associated with the equipment being purchased.

Q: Is a tree planting practice allowable to be cost shared in the CRF as climate change mitigation on historic agricultural fields? I have a farm interested in reforesting some fields that were pastured or cut for hay years ago but are now periodically brush hogged to keep the weeds down. The fields are relatively steep and somewhat poorly drained. When you calculate the time of concentration, you have to consider the land use and a wooded watershed versus one that is in grass with machinery damage would slow down potential flood waters because of canopy, leaf litter, etc. Of course, this would be on a small scale, but the overall goal is to reduce the runoff curve number to the lowest possible number. I guess the better argument would be that the planting would store carbon over a long period of time and sort of kickstart the process of natural regeneration.

A: Tree planting can be included as part of a CRF Round 5 proposal and can be cost shared up to 75 percent. A riparian buffer system could be used which employs the applicable standards 612 tree/shrub establishment and 490 tree/shrub site preparation. An erosion control system – structural could be utilized including 342 critical area planting as you noted the area has steep slopes and has poor drainage. Additionally, the stormwater design manual Ch. 5 Green Infrastructure has tree planting as a stormwater management practice for runoff reduction. Should you utilize the stormwater manual include additional detail as practices may not be as familiar with reviewers as NRCS practices. Also, noting GHG reductions and co-benefits of flood mitigation are encouraged.

Frequently Asked Questions Addressed in Previous Rounds

Can I apply for multiple tracks on behalf of the same farm?

Yes, but you must submit separate applications for each track and the systems must each stand alone and not be dependent on the other.

How long will the contract be?

The contract term will start as 3 construction/growing seasons plus three months for administration to close out the project, with an additional 24 months possible through no cost time extensions (with consent of all parties), consistent with the Agricultural NonPoint Source program policies.

Will there be a contract or a letter of agreement for a project seeking only \$10,000 in state funds? The RFP indicates awards \$10,000 or under may be via letter of agreement.

The LOA is for the total state amount so yes, \$10,000 or under regardless of total project cost could be done under a LOA.

The District received a grant through Round 1 of the CRF Program. The project design demonstrates a much higher cost than what was originally budgeted. Can the District apply for additional funds to cover the budget shortfall?

No, the District cannot apply for additional funds to cover the budget shortfall for the Round 1 project. The District and farmer could decide to re-apply under the current Round for funds with a design in hand and more accurate budget for the project and cancel the Round 1 project.

Farm Eligibility

Is an educational, publicly owned farm eligible?

The definition of a farm in the Agriculture and Markets Law (which is the definition that will be used for the Climate Resilient Farming program) is:

"Farm operation" means the land and on-farm buildings, equipment, manure processing and handling facilities, and practices which contribute to the production, preparation and marketing of crops, livestock and livestock products as a commercial enterprise" (AGM Article 25-AA §301)

The farm in question here is an educational rather than commercial enterprise and is therefore ineligible as a farm.

Is a not-for-profit farm eligible?

See question above for the definition of "farm operation." A farm is eligible as long as it meets the criteria of being a commercial farm, regardless of its 501(c)3 status.

Is rented agricultural land that is owned by a municipality eligible for funding?

Yes, rented agricultural land regardless of who owns the land is eligible for funding. BMPs to be implemented on rented property should not be submitted for funding unless there is a written lease for the use of the property for the life span of the BMP (page 6 of RFP).

Is a farm that has an easement on it eligible?

Yes, as long as the easement does not preclude any of the proposed practices.

A local municipality along with a school district would like to partner with two downstream agricultural producers to implement a water management system to improve the stream corridor and make the whole watershed more resilient to increased severe storms. Is the municipality eligible as a partner with the agricultural producers for cost share and in-kind match as part of the project?

Yes, a municipality is eligible as a partner with the agricultural producers for cost-share and/or in-kind match as part of the project. Match resources from the municipality should be reflected as a sub-category under sponsor match.

We have a landowner in the county that is in the process of establishing a small farm on about 25 acres. The farm plans to graze animals and plant about 10 acres of apple and nut trees. As far as the Climate Resilient Farming grant is concerned, they are most interested in Track 3, and specifically the Prescribed Rotational Grazing System. Regarding eligibility, they are in the process of purchasing the property and establishing the farm, with an anticipated property

transfer closing date at before the RFP deadline. Does the CRF Program require a certain level of experience or 'establishment' for a farming operation to apply?

The CRF Program does not require a certain level of experience or establishment for a farming operation to apply. However, landownership and/or control must be established before the closing of the RFP and the District must conduct the required Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) assessment before the proposal details can be developed. In addition, the goal of the CRF Program is to reduce the impact of agriculture on climate change and to increase the adaptability and resiliency of New York State farms in the face of a changing climate. Any applications made on behalf of the farm(s) must meet these goals.

Match

Is there a minimum landowner/operator contribution requirement? Can the sponsor or County provide the whole 25% local match?

There is no landowner/operator contribution requirement. The maximum state cost share rate is 75% with a 25% local match, which can be provided through District, federal, or landowner funds (or any combination thereof). State funding cannot match other state funds.

However, one of the metrics for scoring under “Cost Effectiveness” (worth 20% of the overall score) is “Landowner support is documented.” If the landowner is not providing funding for the project, it may be advisable to add some other documentation of landowner commitment to completing the project and eventual upkeep, operations, and maintenance.

Resources and Tools

Can we use the new program Water Erosion Prediction Project (WEPP) instead of RUSLE for calculations that will be used on the CRF application?

WEPP may be used in place of RUSLE2 in the CRF application process, despite it not yet being allowed for use in planning for NRCS or CAFO purposes.

Equipment

Does the program have a preference on whether equipment is brand new or refurbished?

Any District with specific questions about equipment etc. is welcome to ask specific questions regarding their situation.

However, a general rule of thumb consistent with the Agricultural Non-Point Source Program, is that equipment that has been professionally refurbished and/or carries a new warranty is likely to satisfy program requirements, and equipment that is being simply reused may not meet requirements.

If a farm is applying to implement a double cover cropping system using a no-till drill and does not have a no-till drill, would that be an eligible expense to request funds for based on the equipment definition in the grant RFP? (If the equipment is directly related to the function of the BMP state assistance payments can be used.)

Equipment that is directly related to the function of the BMP can be eligible for state assistance under the CRF Program. If being cost-shared for a farm, it should be explained why this specific piece of equipment is needed, why it cannot be purchased by the District and made available to all applicable farms in the county, and why the standard rate per acre reimbursement for cover

crop practice systems is not the most feasible option to incentivize adoption of the conservation practice system(s).

Under the RFP, Soil Health Track, can the District purchase equipment for assisting landowners in completing no till or composting practices and then work with them to implement?

Equipment that is directly related to the function of the BMP can be eligible for state assistance under the CRF Program. Districts can request state assistance payments to cost-share the expense related to the purchase of equipment to be used on farms to implement BMP Systems. Specific farm(s) must be listed on the proposal who will be working with the District to implement the BMP systems.

Are wind machines an eligible practice for funding through CRF? The machines are used to protect the vineyard during extreme cold air events and prevent frost damage.

No. Wind machines do not currently fit under any of the eligible tracks or practice systems, as detailed in the RFP.

TRACK 1

With regard to Track 1, Agricultural Waste Storage and Flare, would a solids separator unit to help reduce carbon matter and gas development be an eligible component?

The solids separation is considered a critical component of the system to reduce solids accumulation in the storage. It is eligible for cost-share as a part of a manure storage cover and flare system (refer to RFP Appendix A—Guidance Document Track 1).

Is the flare a required component of Track 1, Agricultural Waste Storage Cover and Flare?

Yes—the methane must be burned and converted to carbon dioxide.

Is a CNMP required for Track 1? Are CNMP updates eligible for funding?

Any farm receiving funding for a manure storage cover and flare system must have a CNMP. Updates to the CNMP are eligible for in-kind match (refer to RFP Appendix A—Guidance Document Track 1).

We have a farm that is interested in applying for funds for a cover and flare. Does the storage need to already exist in order for the farm to apply for funding?

No, the storage does not need to already exist to be eligible to apply for funding. However, the RFP and Rating Sheet requires specific information about the proposed amount of methane reduced, clean water exclusion, etc. from the storage. A design for the pending storage system should be in place in order to answer the required questions pursuant to the CRF RFP.

A farm in the County is in the process of developing a two-staged earthen manure storage system to function with a new barn facility. The first facility is going to be smaller. The second storage facility is going to be much larger. Since both storage facilities are going to be considered part of the same system do, they both have to be covered to prevent rainwater from mixing in? In addition, how long is the producer required to track and report the amount of methane destroyed through the system?

There is no requirement that both storage facilities be covered. However, additional consideration may be given for Adaptation/Resiliency points if both storages are covered. There

is no required length of time for the producer to track and report the amount of methane destroyed. The Track 1 Proposal Rating Sheet includes consideration of the commitment by the producer and District to engage in regular testing and/or recording to be able to demonstrate greenhouse gas emission savings because of practice systems implemented. Additional consideration may be given in the scoring based on the length of time the producer and District commits to tracking and reporting greenhouse gas emissions savings.

Is replacement of an existing waste storage cover eligible for funding? We have a farm that installed an anaerobic digester over 20 years ago and the cover needs replacement, would this be an eligible project under CRF, Track 1?

Replacement of an existing waste storage cover that was installed as a component of an anaerobic digester is not eligible under CRF, Track 1.

Can CRF funds, under Track 1, be used to upgrade a non-functional manure separator?

No, CRF funds cannot be used to upgrade a non-functional manure solids/liquid separator.

TRACK 3

Can nutrient management, NY NRCS 590, be eligible for reimbursement through the CRF RFP in the Soil Health Track?

Yes, nutrient management, NY NRCS 590, is an eligible practice system for reimbursement through the CRF RFP, Soil Health Track.

Could you please provide some clarification on the CRF proposal Rating Sheet under Cost Effectiveness regarding farm expansion? Specifically, what is a clear definition of farm expansion as it relates to practice proposals under the Soil Health Track?

Projects addressing needs due to farm expansion shall be defined as any proposed practice system(s) needed to enhance adaptation to climate driven extreme weather from intended or recent farm growth, as opposed to solely due to the new realities of changing climate. Examples could include proposals to extend current or recently cost-shared cover cropping to new crop fields obtained by a farmer or to expand current or recently cost-shared rotational grazing systems on new land acquired by a farmer.

Under track 3, “will there be a reduction in nitrogen fertilizer as a result of practices systems implemented, and if so, how much? How do I estimate Nitrogen reductions?

Nitrogen fertilizer reductions may be estimated a number of ways, including comparing current nitrogen fertilizer applications by the farm with those predicted to result from project implementation. Cornell University Nutrient Guidelines (<http://nmsp.cals.cornell.edu/guidelines/nutrientguide.html>) and associated tools and methods may be used to perform the estimates.

If a farmer is going to do cover cropping or buffers in order to try and get mitigation points in conjunction with a project in track 2, should the cover crop or buffers be close by the main project?

There is no requirement that the cover crop/buffers be proximal to the main project.

However, a project with systems that are designed to function together in event of extreme weather are more likely to score better than a similar project with discrete systems that function on their own but do not build on each other.