

2007 Cattle Industry Annual Convention & Trade Show

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Conservation Programs

Make them work for you.

by **Troy Smith**

NASHVILLE, TENN. (Jan. 31, 2007) — During the Cattlemen's College® session on government conservation programs, several speakers offered advice regarding assistance available to producers through the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP). The audience also was advised to expect program changes resulting from rewriting of the federal farm bill in 2007.

Dave Petty, an Iowa producer and member of NCBA's Environmental Stewardship Committee, said EQIP has been popular among producers. Many among government agency personnel also believe it has provided effective use of conservation dollars, delivering considerable "bang for the buck." Petty cited his own application of EQIP assistance to improve livestock watering, planned grazing and nutrient-management systems on his river valley operation.

Since approval of assistance is based on conservation objectives and sustainability, Petty advised prospective applicants to consider complementary projects, such as fencing, water development and grazing management. Generally, projects with multiple benefits that fit long-term plans for conservation are favored.

"The farm bill is likely to change with 2007 legislation, and we assume there will be

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— **Dave Petty**

a decrease in total funding and some redistribution of dollars among programs," Petty said. "Still, the best-prepared people with the best projects will have an advantage when seeking assistance."

Harry Slawter, Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) director of financial assistance, agreed. He said U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Secretary Mike Johanns would discuss EQIP-related proposals for the new farm bill when he addresses the convention later this week. Details will be accessible via the internet at www.usda.gov.

Jeff Repp, an Oregon-based NRCS range management specialist, explained the new Grazinglands Spatial Analysis Tool (GSAT). NRCS field personnel are being trained in use of the decision support tool developed to help producers inventory grazing resource

supplies and forage use demands. GSAT is being offered as an aid in determining effective stocking rates.

NRCS specialist Arnold Norman and Agricultural Research Service (ARS) Soil Scientist Gale Dunn alerted producers to the development of another decision support tool for assessing grazing and marketing management options during drought years. Producer-testing of the tool will begin next month, with general availability expected next year.

Petty, Slawter, Repp and Norman presented their comments Jan. 31 during the Cattlemen's College session "RM102: Conservation Programs: Working for You!" at the 2007 Cattle Industry Annual Convention and NCBA Trade Show in Nashville. The Cattlemen's College is sponsored by Pfizer Animal Health. Audio files of the session will be available in the www.4cattlemen.com newsroom within two weeks of the conference.

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