

Utah FY 2026 Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) - Migratory Big Game Initiative

Overview

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Utah announced Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 funding through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).

EQIP provides technical and financial assistance to agricultural producers and forest landowners to address natural resource concerns.

The Migratory Big Game Initiative (MBGI) is part of Working Lands for Wildlife (WLFW). Under the MBGI, NRCS helps farmers and ranchers conserve, restore, and enhance working lands that are important to migratory big game populations. MBGI priorities are to:

- ♦ Maintain connected landscapes that provide diverse seasonal habitats required by migratory big game animals.
- ♦ Address resource concerns that negatively impact the quality and quantity of habitats.
- ♦ Modify and manage fences that help the movement of wildlife through and across private lands.
- ♦ Improve big game habitat and migration corridors within Utah priority locations.
- ♦ Help landowners keep their grasslands intact.
- ♦ Protect working lands from development, removing invasive weeds and invading conifers, reducing wildfire risk, and protecting wetlands.
- ♦ Restore and improve big game habitat by enhancing riparian and mesic areas, reducing invasive/

noxious weeds, increasing plant productivity and health, and reducing fuels that threaten habitat with catastrophic fires.

Important Dates

Application Deadlines:

- ♦ **January 15, 2026** - Batch 1. Subsequent batches will only be used if needed, and if funding is available.
- ♦ **April 3, 2026** - Batch 2.
- ♦ **July 24, 2026** - Batch 3.

Ranking Deadlines:

- ♦ **March 20, 2026** - Batch 1.
- ♦ **May 1, 2026** - Batch 2.
- ♦ **July 31, 2026** - Batch 3.

Obligation Deadlines:

- ♦ **June 19, 2026** - Batch 1 and 2.
- ♦ **August 28, 2026** - Batch 3.
- ♦ **September 4, 2026** - 100% obligation deadline for all applications.

Eligibility Highlights

MBGI applicants must:

- ♦ Be the operator, owner, or other tenant of an agricultural operation in the Farm Services Agency (FSA) farm records management system. Producers must establish or update records with FSA in order to be eligible.
- ♦ Participate in the daily management, administration, and performance of the operation for the land included in the contract.
- ♦ Have effective control of the land.



Land Eligibility:

Land included in the EQIP application must be agricultural or nonindustrial private forest land and one of the following:

- ♦ Privately owned land.
- ♦ Publicly owned land that meets certain criteria.
- ♦ Indian land that meets certain criteria.

Ineligible land includes:

- ♦ Land currently enrolled in other conservation programs may be ineligible for EQIP.
- ♦ Land enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) with some exceptions.
- ♦ Land enrolled in the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) under the wetland reserve easement (WRE or WRP).
- ♦ Permanently submerged lands with some exceptions.

The applicant is responsible for providing documentation to establish and document land eligibility for EQIP.

For full eligibility details please visit your local NRCS office.





EQIP - Payments and Payment Limitations (530.406)

For contracts obligated in FY 2023 and future years, NRCS limits the number of separate payments to a maximum of five for land management practices that address an identified resource concern on the same land unit within the maximum contract length of 10 years.

Indian Tribes or Alaska Native corporations with contracts or an alternative funding arrangement are excluded from the person, legal entity payment limitations, and contract limits. Each EQIP contract with a person or legal entity will be limited to \$450,000 over the term of the contract.

Group contracts and joint operations may have a contract limit of up to \$900,000 with an approved waiver from the Financial Assistance Program Division director (FAPD).

Individual and entity payment limitations are not applicable to contracts obligated during FY 2025.

For contracts obligated prior to FY 2025, the FAPD director may approve an AGI and payment limitation waiver for eligible projects with water management entities if the waiver is needed to fulfill the objectives of the project. Approved payment limitation waivers may not exceed an

aggregate payment limit of \$900,000 to the water management entity or any individual member thereof, for all contracts entered into under the water conservation project authority during the 2018 Farm Bill period. NRCS considers certain criteria when determining whether to approve a payment limitation waiver.

Starting with contracts obligated in FY 2025, water management entities may have a contract limit of up to \$900,000. The FAPD director may approve a request to waive this limit up to \$1,800,000 for a water management entity project if certain conditions are met.

EQIP - Fund Pools for FY 2026

- ◆ Utah Salinity
- ◆ Utah Price San Rafael
- ◆ Utah Southwest Basin
- ◆ Utah Garkane
- ◆ Utah South Bonneville
- ◆ Utah Northwest
- ◆ Utah Cache Rich
- ◆ Utah Weber River
- ◆ Utah Lower Colorado
- ◆ Utah Middle Sevier
- ◆ Utah Lower Sevier
- ◆ Utah Uintah Basin

EQIP Utah Category for MBGI FY2026

- ◆ Utah Migratory Big Game Initiative (MBGI)

Core Practice (must be contracted):

- ◆ 645 – Upland Wildlife Habitat Management

Supporting Practices:

- ◆ 314 – Brush Management
- ◆ 382 – Fence
- ◆ 666 – Forest Stand Improvement
- ◆ 383 – Fuel Break
- ◆ 528 – Grazing Management
- ◆ 315 – Herbaceous Weed Treatment
- ◆ 516 – Livestock Pipeline
- ◆ 500 – Obstruction Removal
- ◆ 338 – Prescribed Burning
- ◆ 550 – Range Planting
- ◆ 643 – Restoration of Rare or Declining Natural Communities
- ◆ 391 – Riparian Forest Buffer
- ◆ 390 – Riparian Herbaceous Cover
- ◆ 574 – Spring Development
- ◆ 533 – Pumping Plant
- ◆ 649 – Structures for Wildlife
- ◆ 612 – Tree/Shrub Establishment
- ◆ 614 – Watering Facility
- ◆ 642 – Water Well
- ◆ 420 – Wildlife Habitat Planting
- ◆ 384 – Woody Residue Treatment

For questions, please contact your local District Conservationist at ut.nrcs.usda.gov or visit your nearest USDA Service Center.

