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AWEP FUNDING AVAILABLE FOR FARMERS IN THE EASTERN SNAKE PLAIN AQUIFER REGION

March 11, 2011 – Farmers in the Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer region can apply for special Agricultural Water Enhancement Program funding from the Natural Resources Conservation Service to carry out water conservation practices. The sign-up period runs through April 15, 2011.

The Idaho Water Resources Board (IWRB) received special funding through USDA's Agricultural Water Enhancement Program to help stabilize the Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer (ESPA). The project is a joint effort by the Idaho Water Resources Board and the NRCS.

"The Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer provides all or part of the water supply for more than two million acres of irrigated agriculture in eastern Idaho, said Jeff Burwell, Idaho NRCS State Conservationist. "This project aims to get more water into the aquifer to help sustain it for the farms, industries and towns that depend on the water it provides."

The IWRB identified five actions to help reduce ground water withdrawals and increase water reaching the aquifer through infiltration and recharge: Aquifer demand reduction; Conversion to dry land farming; Transition to crops with lower water requirements; Conversion from ground irrigation water to surface water; and, Enhancing irrigation systems to improve water delivery.

Farmers can apply for funding to install conservation practices related to these five priorities. Financial support is available through the NRCS and producers apply to and contract directly with NRCS.

"Work that may qualify for funding includes converting irrigated crops to dryland, replacing leaky canals and diversion structures with pipe or concrete, converting ground water irrigation sources to surface water sources, or converting surface irrigation to sprinkler systems," Burwell said.

Stop in your local NRCS field office to find out if this voluntary program can help you. For office locations go to the NRCS Web site at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/> and look for "Find a Service Center."

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