

## **Conservation News in South Carolina**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **JOHANNIS EXTENDS INCENTIVES TO COMPLETE EQIP PRACTICES DELAYED BY HIGH ENERGY COSTS**

*COLUMBIA, June 5, 2006-* Agriculture Secretary Mike Johannis announced the deadline for completing environmental projects to qualify for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) energy cost assistance will be extended to September 1, 2006.

"Farmers and ranchers have put various conservation practices on hold because of the recent increases in the cost of energy," said Johannis. "As part of our commitment to help mitigate the impact of high energy costs on agricultural producers, this cost adjustment and time extension will lessen the impact of energy prices on farmers and ranchers, while protecting our natural resources."

Prior to today's announcement the deadline for completion of the EQIP projects was June 30th to receive the incentive payment for EQIP projects that have been delayed due to increasing energy costs. The EQIP energy cost assistance applies to regular EQIP projects, Ground and Surface Water Conservation EQIP projects and Klamath Basin EQIP projects.

The one-time payment adjustment applies only to participants who signed EQIP contracts in 2004 or earlier and will only be paid for practices that are completed between March 1 and September 1, 2006. Projects must be completed before payments can be made. The 15 percent payment increase will focus on a select list of specific practices that have escalated in price by 20 percent or more because of rising energy costs and to practices most affected by increased costs in construction materials such as concrete, steel and plastic pipe.

Administered by USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service, EQIP is a voluntary conservation program for farmers and ranchers that promotes agricultural production and environmental quality. EQIP offers financial and technical assistance to participants who implement structural or management practices on agricultural land.

For more information on this one-time adjustment, go to the NRCS Web site <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov> or visit your nearest USDA Service Center.

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