

# Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Program

## ***Issue:***

Continued support for the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Program's (CRBSCP) 2.5% "earmark" as a National Priority under USDA's Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) and policies affecting the program.

## ***Problem:***

Some have proposed that the CRBSCP status as a national priority area for salinity control be discontinued. Further the NRCS proposes changing the federal cost share rate from 75 percent to 50 percent.

## ***How this would affect your constituents:***

Without the national priority earmark, and the 75% cost-share water quality benefits would be slowed. The program benefits downstream water users and the environment by reducing salt and nutrient loading as well as reduction of sediment in the rivers. The program also conserves water by using more efficient irrigation systems.

## ***Program benefits:***

As a National Priority several Upper Basin States (Wyoming, Colorado, and Utah) have received additional funding (2.5% of EQIP) for salinity control in designated Salinity Control Areas. These funds are used with other dollars in a close partnership with the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (USBR), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the CRBSCP Forum, and local Conservation Districts. This program currently removes approx. 772,627 tons of salt per year reducing the TDS (Total Dissolved Solids) of the river in the lower basin by 65 mg/l – saving downstream users over \$88 million in water treatment costs. There is still much work to do. Utah has over 127,000 more acres that could be treated, reducing further the salinity load to the Colorado River. In addition the improved irrigation efficiency achieved has saved over 87,600 acre-feet of water per year and at the same time has increased crop production.

## ***What you can do about this issue:***

1) Continue support of the Colorado River Salinity Control Program as a National Priority under EQIP with its 2.5% "earmark" and 2) assure that NRCS continues as the federal agency administering the EQIP portion of the program. This best assures the program will continue to meet constituent needs, comply with Minute 242 of the Mexican treaty and provide usable water for the Lower Basin.

Encourage that NRCS rules not penalize states that utilize a 75% cost-share in national priority areas. The CRBSC program overall has an actual cost-share of 50% when Basin States funds are added to the program at a rate of \$0.43 per \$1.00 of EQIP.

Encourage continued support for the USBR and NRCS partnership in the CRBSCP and input from the local conservation districts into the review process.

Encourage federal agencies to allow more input at the local workgroup level when considering cost-share rates, approved practices and maximum contract amounts.

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