

Agricultural Voluntary Incentive Program

The goal of the Agriculture Voluntary Incentive Program is to implement practices that can increase crop yields, improve soil health and add value to operations, while improving water quality.

Fertilizer and manure application to crops in the State of Utah help maximize yields and improve soil health. However, the over application of nutrients can be expensive and have adverse impacts on the environment, including water quality.

The Division of Water Quality (DWQ), in cooperation with the Utah Department of Agriculture and Food (UDAF) have begun the Voluntary Agricultural Incentive Program to help farming operations develop Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans (CNMPs) that will help producers maximize crop yields while staying in compliance with state water quality regulations.

Participants in the Voluntary Agricultural Incentive Program will be able to sit down with Nutrient Management Planners from UDAF to discuss their agricultural operation; then utilizing soil tests, manure tests and crop nutrient uptake the planner can develop a CNMP that will identify best management practices for each operation.

As an incentive to participate in this program, DWQ has agreed to pay each producer a one-time \$1,000 payment to work with a UDAF planner to develop a CNMP. Once the plan is complete, the \$1,000 payment will be made to the producer. This \$1,000 can be used to cover the cost of soil and manure test that the cooperators will collect to develop the CNMP. After the CNMP has been implemented for a one year period, DWQ will then pay the producer \$12/acre for each acre covered under their CNMP. At the end of each year the producer will sit down with their Nutrient Management Planner and review their soil tests, manure tests, and application records. If the planner determines that the plan was followed correctly the annual payment will be submitted to DWQ and a check will be issued to the producer.

This is a voluntary, incentive based program. A producer's inability to correctly follow the CNMP developed for them will not result in regulatory actions. However, if they do not follow the CNMP developed for them they will not be eligible to receive the \$12/acre incentive payment for that year. All records will be kept at USDA Service Centers, or UDAF offices in locked filing cabinets. The only documents that will be stored at the DWQ office is the contract with the producer stating how many acres are enrolled in the program, the amount of funding contracted with the producer, and payment information. In some instances a representative from DWQ may ask to access records to verify that planners are correctly collecting the data that is required, but they will not be accessing those records for regulatory purposes.

Utah Division of Water Quality
in cooperation with
The Utah Department of
Agriculture and Food

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The application period for the Voluntary Agriculture Incentive Program will be July 1, 2020 to August 1st 2020. If you are interested in participating in this program complete the attached application and submit it to Jim Bowcutt (jdbowcutt@utah.gov) or Hannah Freeze (hfreeze@utah.gov) before Close of Business on July 1st. All applications will go through a ranking process, and funding will be awarded based on the need and potential water quality benefits of each application.