

Montana Salinity Control Association

Montana Salinity Control Association received set-aside funding from the USDA-NRCS Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP), assigned from the national NRCS for the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). This specific funding will be used over a five-year period for new salinity projects in Montana.

The Montana Salinity Control Association will conduct an initial site review with the producer to determine whether saline seeps are caused by current farming practices and/or rule out those that form naturally with little to no influence from surface land use. If a seep is caused by farming practices, they will conduct a groundwater investigation, which includes the installation of shallow groundwater monitoring wells and an elevation survey of wells and other relevant surface points.

After the field investigation, the Montana Salinity Control Association will assess the information and create a saline seep reclamation plan, including a map delineating the recharge and discharge areas targeted for land-use change. Copies of the plan will be delivered to the producer and to the local NRCS office. The producer can then proceed with development of an Environmental Quality Incentives Program contract to implement conservation practices to treat the identified recharge area.

All producers who have an interest in reclaiming their saline seep should contact the local Conservation District and NRCS or Montana Salinity Control Association. An initial field review and information about the program will be discussed and then a decision can be made if they should proceed with developing a reclamation plan.

Two practice payments are utilized to help producers change cropping systems in the recharge areas causing the saline areas. Together they currently pay a producer about 199.00 dollars per acre to convert from annual grain to perennial forage over a 5-year period, starting with the 2021 season. These rates do change each year based on the comparison prices of wheat and alfalfa/grass for hay and/or grazing.