



United States Department of Agriculture

Office of the Secretary
Washington, D.C. 20250

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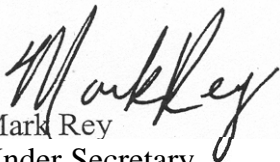
Dr. John D. Graham
Administrator
Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs
Office of Management and Budget
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Dr. Graham:

Thank you for your prompt letter regarding the forthcoming proposed rule on the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). It does an excellent job of addressing the highest environmental needs and priorities of EQIP. It lays out actions needed to fulfill the statutory purpose of the program and provides practical recommendations to optimize environmental benefits. USDA has incorporated the suggestions in to the proposed rule and coordinated this development with representatives of OMB.

We *are* committed to implementing EQIP in such a way as to achieve the purposes stated in the statute: "to promote agricultural production and environmental quality as compatible goals and to optimize environmental benefits". Your comments help us fulfill this commitment and have greatly enhanced the proposed rule. We look forward to working with you and your staff as we proceed to implement EQIP.

Sincerely,


Mark Rey
Under Secretary
Natural Resources & Environment