



ADVANCING THE LEGACY

8833 Ralston Road  
Arvada, CO 80002  
303.431.6422  
info@coloradocattle.org  
www.coloradocattle.org



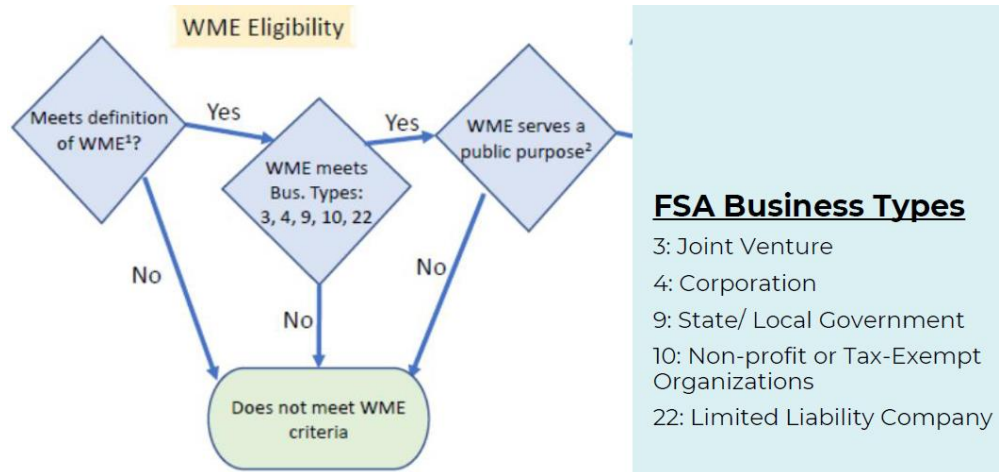
## Ag Water NetWORK | [www.agwaternet.org](http://www.agwaternet.org)

**WEBINAR Highlights – USDA - NRCS Water Management Entities (WMEs) - How can irrigation entities utilize this contracting designation to speed up ditch-wide conservation projects?**

[Recorded December 11, 2024](#)

**Presenter:** Liz With, Colorado USDA - NRCS Assistant State Conservationist for Partnerships  
Emails: Liz With: [elizabeth.with@usda.gov](mailto:elizabeth.with@usda.gov) Kindra Bradner: [kindra.brandner@usda.gov](mailto:kindra.brandner@usda.gov) Stacey Eskew: [stacey.eskew@usda.gov](mailto:stacey.eskew@usda.gov)

- Historically, Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) funding has been for individual producers to implement agricultural conservation projects on land they either own or lease.
- The 2018 Farm Bill created "Water Management Entities" (WMEs) that allowed for public or semi-public irrigation companies that provide water to ag producers, to also become a potentially eligible EQIP participant
- Eligible WMEs can utilize EQIP funding for "off-farm" irrigation water delivery system improvements.
- Eligibility is established with the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA), which is NRCS's sister agency.
- FSA is responsible for managing every individual producer, every entity, and eligibility records across all USDA programs.



WME Eligible Business Types. Slide: NRCS

- EQIP-eligible WME types are shown on the diagram (right).
- To start an EQIP application, go to the FSA. They will want to see your incorporation papers, your tax information, etc. to determine what your entity type is and whether it is an EQIP-eligible WME.
- There is an adjusted gross income (AGI) threshold of \$900,000. The AGI of a WME or individual producer is based on their average AGI for the last three years. A producer with an AGI that is

greater than \$900,000 is not eligible for EQIP funding. A WME may be able to get a waiver if it has an AGI exceeding \$900,000.

- Individual shareholders in WMEs that are structured as non-profits will not have to provide their AGI statements to the FSA. For other types of potentially eligible WMEs such as joint ventures or limited liability corporations, the individual shareholders will have to provide the last 3 years of the AGI shown on their tax returns to determine if each shareholder is eligible for EQIP funding.
- If for example, one shareholder owns 10% of the shares in a mutual ditch and is not eligible due to exceeding the \$900,000 AGI threshold, the EQIP contract amount would be reduced by 10 percent.
- NRCS requires documented land control for project eligibility. For those entities using prescriptive easements or other recorded easements, the applicant will need to work closely with NRCS to determine if they meet the agency's land control requirements. NRCS may also need to consult with the Office of General Counsel (OGC) to review easements on a case-by-case basis. Eligible participants are encouraged to collect written landowner consent for areas where the project will be installed.
- Since eligible WMEs can only do off-farm ag water infrastructure improvements, the NRCS does not require a wetland compliance and highly erodible land (HEL) review if the land being crossed as part of the project is "non-agricultural land."