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## A Message to Wildlife Partners

Recent changes in Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP) have shifted the direction and strategies for NRCS for program year 2012. Nationwide funding to WHIP for 2012 decreased from \$85 million to \$50 million. The remaining WHIP funds will be used to implement a national Working Lands for Wildlife Project (WLWP). Several species are targeted for this WLWP effort that includes many wildlife partners and partner resource leveraging support. North Carolina will be included in an effort to enhance habitat for the Golden Winged Warbler in our higher mountain elevations. Efforts are underway to inform local partners and prepare outreach information. Additional information will be forthcoming.

Applicants for 2012 WHIP have been sent a letter informing them of this WHIP funding issue for 2012. These applicants were informed that they may apply to EQIP for 2012 for their wildlife interests. WHIP applications will remain viable until September in the outside chance that any WHIP funds become available late in 2012. Decisions will be made late in the federal fiscal year with respect to managing existing WHIP applications on file.

WHIP Long Leaf Pine (LLP) applicants have been informed that NRCS has set up an Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) long leaf pine ranking pool for 2012. We had over \$700,000 in requests. Limited funds within North Carolina's EQIP allocation have been set aside and there may be an opportunity that the national office may add additional funds if they become available to assist us with the Long Leaf Pine ranking pool. NRCS wants to continue all efforts to support this initiative.

Applications for the long leaf pine habitat improvement should be directed to the long leaf pine ranking pool in EQIP. Forestry interest other than long leaf pine should be directed to the various area forestry ranking pools.

We may see a new farm bill for 2013 that could provide new guidance for WHIP. Partners should anticipate getting together in early summer to reflect on current WHIP and EQIP programs and to refine strategies for program year 2013.

Questions may be sent to Greg Walker, ASTC-Programs, NRCS, at 919-873-2104.

