



May 18, 2020

Calling All US Biochar Producers and Farmers:

Help USBI and NRCS promote the use of Biochar and Compost to Improve Soil Health

We want to make sure you know about a new NRCS cost-share activity that can help pay for biochar application on farms. And we want to ask for your help to apply for an NRCS grant to speed up the implementation of this new practice by supporting on-farm biochar demonstration projects and case studies. Please read below for more information on the new program and how you can help us reach out to farmers and biochar producers who would be interested in participating.

NRCS Soil Carbon Amendment Practice Code 808. The USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service Soil Health Program has introduced Soil Carbon Amendment practice 808 which will allow farmers to receive cost share funds for using biochar and compost to increase soil carbon. Cost share funds will be made available through the \$1.8 billion Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) which provides financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers to address natural resource concerns and deliver environmental benefits such as improved water and air quality, conserved ground and surface water, increased soil health and reduced soil erosion and sedimentation, improved or created wildlife habitat, and mitigation against increasing weather volatility. Hawaii, Oregon and New York have already adopted the Soil Carbon Amendment (808) conservation practice. Seven other states have indicated an intent to adopt the practice as it is rolled out during 2020-2021. Here is a link to the practice document: <https://drive.google.com/open?id=1ITxStXMI51473SjYKrk8jAGmsC6Ed5KA>

USBI wants to assist the rollout and adoption of the program by providing incentive funds for farmers to use biochar and biochar amended compost through the NRCS Conservation Innovation Grant for On-Farm Conservation Innovation Trials.

USBI is applying for an NRCS grant to develop a five-year farm demonstration project in which cooperating farms would apply biochar or biochar and compost on a small acreage for five years. This will be a side-by-side demonstration, not a fully replicated scientific trial. The grant would subsidize the delivery of biochar to the participating farmers.

The farmer would apply the biochar or biochar-compost in the most appropriate way for their soils and crops following the guidelines of the Soil Carbon Amendment (808)

conservation practice. Typical applications might include: use of biochar with nutrient sources at 400-1000 lbs per acre in pre-till or strip tillage of corn or soybeans; 400 lbs of biochar with 1600 lbs of compost for application at 1-2 tons per acre in vineyards, orchards and row crops; or deep banding of biochar at 1-10 tons per acre when seeding grains. A Missouri corn and soybean farmer has increased soil carbon from less than 1% to more than 4% by strategically applying small amounts of biochar in seed rows each year for five years which has resulted in improved quality and yield. Ten dry tons applied to the top 6 inches of one acre will increase soil carbon by 1% which would increase water retention by approximately 26,000 gallons.

Farmer Benefits and Obligations. The farmer will get free biochar or biochar-amended compost, and will gain knowledge about biochar application and results. The farmer will be responsible for all the labor involved in applying the biochar, taking soil samples and photo data points and recording yield data. The farmer will provide this data to the project and agree to allow data to be used in case studies and reports.

Biochar Producer Benefits and Obligations. Producers will be asked to provide biochar at a discounted price (to help meet the federal matching grant requirements), but the payment to producers will still provide a small profit margin. Producers will gain information about the application and results of their biochar products. They will also gain access to new markets as the project communicates results to the public through case studies, webinars and workshops. Ultimately, biochar producers will benefit from future sales to all farmers who are eligible for the **NRCS Soil Carbon Amendment Practice Code 808**, through the NRCS EQIP program.

Please fill out the forms below to indicate your interest in participating as a Biochar Producer or a Farmer. Please forward this email on to any farmers that you think might be interested in participating. We seek to enroll about 100 farmers in this trial.

The form is just to indicate interest. There is NO obligation to continue with the program.

We MUST have your response by May 25.

Farmer Interest Form: <https://airtable.com/shrvqkV0qRqR27Qhr>

Producer Interest Form: <https://airtable.com/shrg0BXLqIV26Vbcq>

Producers will also need to sign a letter of commitment for our funding match. Once you submit the form, we will contact you to explain the next steps.

Please Enroll Now. Join USBI and NRCS in promoting the use of biochar. For questions, contact Tom Miles at USBiochar@gmail.com or tmiles@trmiles.com.