

National Bulletin: 300-13-

Subject: LTP – National Water Quality Initiative (EQIP) – Fiscal Year (FY) 2013

Action Required By: Friday, March 15, 2013

Purpose. To provide State Conservationists and the Directors, Caribbean and Pacific Islands Areas, (STCs) with guidance for administering the FY 2013 National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI) funded through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).

Expiration Date. September 30, 2013

Background. NWQI will assist producers with addressing high-priority water resource concerns in small watersheds with streams or water bodies in one or more of the following categories, referenced from this point forward as "focus waters":

1. Impaired—A stream or water body documented to be impaired and identified on a State's 303(d) list of impaired waters as designated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).
2. Threatened—A stream or water body with water quality data documenting an impairment, but does not have a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) Implementation Plan and is not listed on the 303(d) list of impaired waters as designated by the EPA.
3. Total Maximum Daily Loads—A stream or water body that has been on EPA's 303(d) list of impaired waters, but may have been removed because there is a TMDL plan for implementation.
4. Critical—A stream or water body upstream of an impaired segment, which is determined by the STC to be a significant contributing source of the downstream impairment for a stream in one or more of the three categories above.

If a stream or water body is also designated as a source of drinking water, additional consideration for selecting that stream or water body may be warranted.

In general, it is expected that State Conservationists and Directors (STCs) will continue with the same watersheds that were selected in FY 2012 to advance implementation progress in an accelerated manner. However, STCs, in consultation with their State water quality agency and State Technical Committee, have some flexibility to add new watersheds, with justification, but cannot add more than one to two new watersheds for FY 2013. If a watershed designated in FY 2012 is not meeting expectations, STCs may request to discontinue new FY 2013 investments in this watershed with appropriate written justification to the Regional Conservationist. See Attachment A for further details on the selection of watersheds.

The FY 2013 allocation letter identified the allocation of \$33 million in EQIP financial assistance (FA) funding to address this national initiative. This EQIP funding will be used to accelerate efforts to improve water quality in already approved FY 2012 watersheds and no more than two additional 12-digit hydrologic units (watersheds) containing focus waters in each state or territory.

DIST: R, S, L, and National Center Directors

To ensure correct and timely implementation of the FY 2013 National Water Quality Initiative, STCs and directors will use the following general guidance:

- NWQI subaccounts must be created by STCs in ProTracts for this initiative. Conformance to this standardization will facilitate efficient fund management, performance assessment, reports to partner agencies, and public transparency.
- Field offices will accept applications on a continuous basis. All eligible applications must be entered in ProTracts, and if the required screening criteria indicate a need for ranking, a score will be documented in the Application, Evaluation, and Ranking Tool (AERT). Low-priority applications will not be ranked.
- STCs will select one or more application and ranking periods as per the 2013 program timeline and announce the period(s) a minimum of 30 days in advance of the date.
- Fund management will require States to return unused NWQI EQIP FA funds, below the amount indicated in the FY 2013 allocation letter, to National Headquarters (NHQ) to ensure the national level commitment is available to target producer applications located in approved watersheds. All NWQI funds must be obligated to contracts by **July 1, 2013**. These funds may not be used to supplant, or replace, any existing program funds. These funds are intended to accelerate conservation efforts in these watersheds.

Explanation. In order to support the FY 2013 NWQI, STCs must complete the following:

1. **Selection of NWQI Watersheds.** Following guidance in attachment A, State Conservationists must evaluate and select appropriate 12-digit HUC watersheds to offer and implement the NWQI during FY 2013 no later than COB Friday, **March 15, 2013**. States must follow the guidance in attachment A to complete the following:
 - A. Identify watersheds with focus waters to be supported through the EQIP National Water Quality Initiative and fill out the Microsoft Access watershed selection form with requested information (sample provided in attachment A).
 - B. Return the attachment A request form for approval of any additional supporting practices the State needs to support NWQI projects during FY 2013. Requested practices will be reviewed and approved prior to release of the ProTracts ranking tool.
 - C. Return the watershed selection and practice justification request form (attachment A) no later than COB **March 15, 2013**, by email to Meghan Wilson, Regional Conservationists' Office, at Meghan.Wilson@wdc.usda.gov.
2. **Application, Evaluation, and Ranking Tool.** States must develop the ranking evaluation criteria in the ProTracts Application, Evaluation, and Ranking Tool (AERT) and complete these actions as follows no later than COB Friday **March 15, 2013**.
 - A. **ProTracts Subaccounts** - States must establish a separate subaccount in ProTracts for each watershed approved for the NWQI and assign the account type of "National Water Quality." A separate subaccount must also be established for managing NWQI-funded Conservation Activity Plan (CAP) applications along with the "National Water Quality" account type.
 - B. **National Water Quality Initiative Subaccount Resource Concerns** - States must assign the resource concerns to the NWQI subaccount as shown in attachment B. For planning purposes, States should emphasize the primary resource concerns targeted by the NWQI.
 - C. **National Approved Land Uses** - States must designate the approved land uses as eligible for the NWQI subaccount as indicated in attachment B.
 - D. **Approved Core and Supporting Practices** - States must offer all the core conservation practices and CAPs listed in attachment C. If a State does not have a need to offer one of the required core practices (e.g., the practice is not needed to address a water quality resource concern), the STC or director will notify the appropriate Regional Conservationist

and copy the EQIP Team Leader and National Initiatives Team Leader with justification to not offer a required core practice. States are encouraged, but not required, to offer all supporting practices listed in attachment C. States may not add any additional core practice other than what is listed in attachment C.

- E. States are responsible for association of core and offered supporting practices with the approved resource concerns into ProTracts AERT, as indicated in attachment C. States may request approval from the Regional Conservationist, with concurrence from the Deputy Chief for Programs, to offer additional supporting practices not listed in attachment C. using the request form in attachment A mentioned previously.
- F. States are also responsible for using a "systems approach" in conservation planning, which incorporates selection of practices which address the concepts of "Avoiding, Controlling, or Trapping" pollutants, known as "ACT." This ACT systems approach is explained in attachment C, along with designations showing which practices address aspects of ACT.
- G. **Screening Criteria.** States must utilize the national screening criteria as provided in attachment D to support NWQI and to manage workload associated with application evaluation and ranking. Use of this screening worksheet is required and all eligible applications must have an assigned priority of "High," "Medium," or "Low" recorded in ProTracts.
- H. **Conservation Activity Plans (CAP).** The ProTracts application type of "planning" must be associated with each EQIP CAP application and ranking of these applications is mandatory. Additional guidance for administration of CAPs is provided in NB300-13-1 requires that the ranking question in attachment E must be included in all State-level and local-level subaccounts in which an EQIP CAP will be ranked.
- I. **State Ranking Criteria.** State ranking criteria to support the NWQI have been established as shown in attachment E. States are responsible for populating the ProTracts AERT with the State ranking criteria in attachment E. States may not modify the approved NWQI State category ranking criteria.
- J. **Local Ranking Criteria.** States must develop and populate local ranking criteria. Refer to attachment E for examples of local ranking criteria to support the NWQI.
Note: NWQI is subject to the requirements in Title 440, Conservation Programs Manual (CPM), Part 512, Subpart C, as well as the fund management policy regarding application evaluation, assignment of points, and multipliers. States must follow guidance from the Deputy Chief of Programs.
- K. **Payment Schedules.** There is no intent to develop new practice payment schedules or scenarios for support of the FY 2013 NWQI. States must follow established requirements in 440-CPM, Part 512, Subpart D, relating to regional payment schedules. All payment schedules to support FY 2013 programs were to be completed and uploaded to ProTracts by COB, Friday, November 9, 2012.

- 3. **Application Period** - NHQ will issue an announcement that the FY 2013 NWQI is available in all States. States may accept applications for NWQI on a year-round basis, but applications should not be processed or evaluated until after national announcement. State Conservationists shall select and offer application periods consistent with the nationally established application and ranking periods.

Note: Low-priority applications will not be ranked.

Public Affairs - No State or local announcements in the media about NWQI may be made until after the national level announcement, either from the Department or by the Chief. It is anticipated the national-level announcement will occur soon after the State watersheds are selected and approved in late March 2013.

Fund Management - Once States have established their ProTracts subaccount and AERT, States must allocate the entire reserved 5 percent NWQI FA to these subaccounts. At the end of the ranking

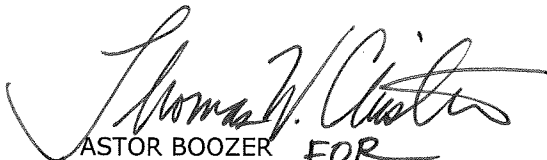
period, any unused funds below the original reserved funds must be returned to NHQ by allowance change in the ACT tool no later than July 3, 2013, to address other NWQI priorities. STCs may add additional EQIP FA above the original allocation to support NWQI established subaccounts, but may not reduce the initial reserved amount of 5 percent. These funds will be used to support new proposed projects. NWQI EQIP funds are not to be used to supplant, or replace, any existing program funds.

Obligation Deadline - All NWQI EQIP contracts must be obligated by **July 1, 2013**. Return of funds or request for additional funds should be done in accordance with 440-CPM, Part 512, Subpart I, Section 512.84, "Fund Allocation Changes."


For any program opportunities which may provide EQIP FA for livestock-related projects, State Conservationists must ensure that applications are properly associated with an appropriate "Livestock Type."

NWQI Outcomes - Attachment F provides an introduction to tools and reports to be used during FY 2013 to document performance and outcomes resulting from the initiative. Additional guidance will be provided at a later date to provide details, training, and support for these required actions.

Contact. If you have any questions about NWQI, contact Martin Lowenfish, Landscape Conservation Initiatives Team Leader, at (202) 690-4979 or martin.lowenfish@wdc.usda.gov. If you have any questions about EQIP program rules, contact Mark Rose, EQIP Team Leader, Financial Assistance Programs Division, at (202) 690-2621 or mark.rose@wdc.usda.gov.



ASTOR BOOZER *FOR*
Regional Conservationist, West



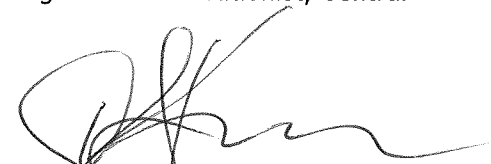
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- Attachment A - Guidance for State selection of Watersheds
- Attachment B - Approved Land Uses and Resource Concerns to Support the Water Quality Initiative
- Attachment C - NRCS Core and Supporting Practices to Support the Water Quality Initiative
- Attachment D - Required Water Quality Initiative Screening Criteria Worksheet
- Attachment E - Required Water Quality Initiative State Ranking Questions and Example Local Questions
- Attachment F - National Water Quality Initiative Outcomes

Attachment A

Guidance for State Selection of FY 2013 Watersheds and Submission to NHQ

States are required to work with their respective State water quality agency and their respective State Technical Committees in the watershed selection process. State water quality agencies (including drinking water source protection agencies and programs) have important expertise in identifying water quality concerns and can contribute data, monitoring, watershed planning and technical assistance resources to projects in NWQI watersheds. State source water protection coordinators have information about drinking water protection areas as well as other data. States must select appropriate watersheds based upon several resource factors provided by NHQ.

Working with these groups, States will identify one to three watersheds to which they will dedicate the percentage of EQIP funds outlined in their State budget allocation guidance documents. These selections must be completed and the FY 2013 NWQI Access form completed by COB Friday, March 15, 2013.

To assist States with the identification of focus watersheds, NHQ has posted documents to the Regional Conservationists' National Water Quality Initiative SharePoint site at <https://nrsc.sc.egov.usda.gov/orc/nwqi>. These documents list HUC 12-digit watersheds with 303(d) impairments related to nutrients (including algal growth, low DO, and ammonia), sediment (including turbidity), and pathogens for each State. The lists will include a count of 303(d)-impaired waters and the specific sources of impairment for each watershed. The 303(d) data is provided by EPA to the RAD GIS Lab, in NHQ, for assembly and provision to the States. In addition, the RAD GIS Lab can provide other information on the total acres of agricultural land and acres of agricultural land vulnerable to leaching and runoff (CEAP soil vulnerability layer) in each 12HUC. This additional information is to be used to support the appropriate EPA 303-listed stream impairments information provided, which may be of assistance in collaborating with State Water Quality Agencies and State Technical Committees.

Other factors that should be considered in the selection of priority watersheds include USGS SPARROW model data, CEAP data, other NRCS initiatives, current projects, staffing, State resource assessments, State source water assessments and protection plans, State and local watershed management plans, existing monitoring efforts, and available data.

States should emphasize nutrients (e.g., low DO, ammonia, algal growth, and chlorophyll-A), sediment (including turbidity), and pathogens (related to animal agriculture) in this initiative, which is also reflected in the approved primary resource concerns. NRCS and collaborating agencies have targeted these impairments for the initiative.

Additional information to help in the selection of priority watersheds may be viewed on the EPA Web site at http://iaspub.epa.gov/waters10/attains_nation_cy.control?p_report_type=T. On the EPA Web site, the user will be prompted to select the appropriate State and should then select "Impaired Water Reports." Maps, impairments, etc., are available for viewing at this site; however, it should be noted that the names of bodies of water will not always match up with the "HUC12_Name" from the "National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI) Information Support Table." In some States, the viewer must select "Assessed Water Reports" to view a map. Note

that the information bar on the right of this page links to EnviroMapper, from which the user can access surface and ground water sources of drinking water by clicking on the “Drinking Water Information” button and selecting a location.

When there is a choice among recommended watersheds that meet the resource considerations described above, States are strongly encouraged to select contiguous 12-digit HUCs where feasible. In States with a low number of farms and ranches vis-a-vis available funds, the STC may request a waiver from the Regional Conservationist to add additional contiguous 12-digit HUCs. In States with few landowners within individual 12-digit HUCs, States may request a waiver to select **one** 10-digit HUC where successful outcomes at the 10-digit scale have been identified in lieu of three 12-digit HUCs.

The results of this selection process will provide for a listing of focus watersheds where state and local partners and the NRCS State Conservationist believe NRCS can have an impact on reducing any negative agricultural water quality impacts through a focused EQIP implementation.

Watersheds should be evaluated on an annual basis (see Attachment F, “National Water Quality Initiative Outcomes”) for progress in utilizing funds, implementing core conservation practices, and partner assistance. If a watershed is not meeting expectations, it may be necessary to discontinue initiative financial assistance for new EQIP contracts under NWQI and approve new watersheds. These adjustments will be considered by the Regional Conservationists on a case-by-case basis as requested and justified by the State Conservationists.

Common Terms Used by EPA can be found at:

<http://water.epa.gov/lawsregs/lawsguidance/cwa/tmdl/glossary.cfm>

<http://www.epa.gov/reg3wapd/tmdl/ChesapeakeBay/primer.html>

<http://www.sourcewatercollaborative.org/swp-usda/>

Instructions for accessing and filling out the FY 2013 NWQI Access Form

State Conservationists should use the FY 2013 NWQI Access Form to submit selected watersheds and other requested information to NHQ. Space is available in the form to write justifications for discontinuing funding for FY 2012 watersheds; for selecting additional 12-digit HUCs or one 10-digit HUC; and/or non-303(d) listed watersheds. **Note: You must fill out the form for all FY 2012 watersheds, including those you are proposing to discontinue, in addition to watersheds you may be requesting to add in FY 2013.**

1. Find the Microsoft Access file, titled “FY13 NWQI,” on the SharePoint and save it to your desktop.
(<https://nrcs.sc.egov.usda.gov/orc/nwqi/Shared%20Documents/Forms/AllItems.aspx>).
2. Open the file from your desktop.
3. Select your State in the first window that opens and click “Go to Form.”
4. Fill out the form according to the instructions. **Note: You MUST enter a 12-digit (or 10-digit) HUC in order to save your information and to add additional watersheds.**

5. After you have entered one HUC, you can add another watershed by clicking the right arrow button next to “Record” at the bottom of the form.
6. When you are finished entering data, click “Save and Close” and then “Exit.” As long as you have entered a HUC, your data will be saved on the SharePoint.
7. You may edit your data at any point up until the submission deadline of **March 15, 2013**.
8. To delete a watershed that you’ve already entered, click “Delete Watershed” at the bottom of the form.
9. If you need assistance with using the form, or please contact Meghan Wilson at Meghan.Wilson@wdc.usda.gov or (202) 690-2191.

Sample FY 2013 NWQI Access Form

Main Form

NRCS FY2013 National Water Quality Initiative

Alabama

Reminder: You must request a waiver to discontinue funding for an FY 2012 watershed; to select any new watersheds (those that were not designated in FY 2012); to choose more than three 12-digit HUCs; or to choose one 10-digit HUC instead of multiple 12-digit HUCs. A 10-digit HUC should only be chosen if there are very few landowners within individual 12-digit HUCs in your state.

1. REQUIRED: 12-Digit or 10-Digit HUC (Number)

2. (Optional) 12-Digit or 10-Digit HUC (Name)

3. 8-Digit HUC (Name):

4. Was this watershed part of the FY 2012 NWQI?

4a. If the answer to Question 4 is Yes, are you requesting to discontinue funding for this watershed?

5. Does this watershed require a waiver (for any change to FY 2012 NWQI)?

6. If the answer to Question 5 is Yes, please provide justification for the waiver (otherwise, leave blank).

7. Please select pollutants (more than one may be selected):

- Sediment
- Nutrients
- Pathogens

8. Please select which category of waterbody is associated with this watershed:

- Impaired and 303(d) listed
- Threatened (does not have TMDL plan and is not 303(d) listed)
- TMDL (may have been on 303(d) list but removed)
- Critical (upstream of impaired segment)
- None of the above

9. If you selected "None of the above" in Question 8, please provide justification.

10. Has this watershed/waters been identified as a drinking water source?

11. Is there water quality monitoring in place?

12. If the answer to Question 10 is Yes, what is the name of the organization conducting the monitoring?

13. Is there a need and an interest to work with monitoring professionals to conduct edge-of-field monitoring that meets the new Edge-Of-Field Water Quality Monitoring, Data Collection and Evaluation, Conservation Activity (Code 201) and/or Edge-Of Field Water Quality Monitoring, System Installation, Conservation Activity (Code 202)?

Sample FY 2013 NWQI Access Form (continued)

14. Is this watershed being assessed by the Water Quality Index for Runoff Water from Agricultural Fields (WQI_{ag})? If yes, please indicate which years WQI_{ag} is being used.

FY2012

FY2013

15. Please identify any Landscape Initiatives that encompass or are contiguous to this watershed (more than one may be selected):

- None
- Bay-Delta
- Chesapeake Bay
- Driftless Area
- Everglades
- Great Lakes Restoration
- Gulf of Mexico
- Illinois River/Eucha-Spavinaw
- Lesser Prairie Chicken
- Longleaf Pine
- Migratory Bird Habitat
- Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watersheds
- Illinois River/Eucha-Spavinaw
- Lesser Prairie Chicken
- Longleaf Pine
- Migratory Bird Habitat
- Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watersheds
- New England/New York Forestry
- North Central Wetlands
- Northern Plains Migratory Bird Habitat
- Ogallala Aquifer
- Red River Basin
- Sage Grouse
- West Maui Coral Reef

16. Is there one or more 319 projects in this watershed?

17. If the answer to Question 14 is Yes, what is the approximate total amount of the 319 project(s)? NOTE: This information is to be secured from the State water quality agency.

Delete Watershed

Save and Close

Justification to Add Supporting Practices

States adding supporting practices must complete the following justification and submit it to Meghan Wilson (meghan.wilson@wdc.usda.gov) by **March 15, 2013**.

Justification for additional supporting practices to be offered in State to support FY 2013 NWQI:

Instructions: Select the practice code, practice name below and enter justification why supporting practice is needed.

Name of State =>

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Req No	Prac Code (Select from List)	Practice Name (Select from list)	Justification for waiver to add supporting practice. Note: Additional suggested supporting practices must also have a practice standard purpose consistent with the identified resource concerns approved for WQI. Requests for supporting practices will not be approved if the practice is not associated with one of the approved resource concerns in the national CPPE for WQI as shown on Attachment C of the FY 2013 Bulletin.
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			

Example:

1	328	Conservation Crop Rotation (Ac.) (328) (5/11)	This practice is needed to address the typical resource concerns associated with water quality issues on cropland within 303(d)-listed watershed. The practice completes the typical system of practices such as cover crop and residue management needed to reduce impact of nutrient application and runoff.
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Attachment B

Approved Land Uses and Resource Concerns to Support the National Water Quality Initiative

The following tasks must be completed in ProTracts by Friday, **March 15, 2013**.

Approved Land Uses

States must assign the following land uses as eligible for the NWQI in the ProTracts AERT ranking tool:

Land Use Type
Crop
Forest
Grazed Forest
Grazed Range
Hay
Pasture
Headquarters

Approved Natural Resource Concerns

States must assign the following natural resource concerns for the NWQI in the ProTracts AERT:

Primary Natural Resource Concerns:

Water Quality
Excessive Nutrients and Organics in Surface Water
Excessive Suspended Sediment and Turbidity in Surface Water
Harmful Levels of Pathogens in Surface Water

Note: State ranking criteria should prioritize applications that focus on addressing the primary natural resource concerns identified above. Below are other resource concerns that may have ancillary benefits associated with addressing primary resource concerns.

Secondary Natural Resource Concerns:

Water Quality
Excessive Nutrients and Organics in Groundwater
Excessive Salinity in Groundwater
Excessive Salinity in Surface Water
Harmful Levels of Pathogens in Groundwater
Harmful Levels of Pesticides in Groundwater
Harmful Levels of Pesticides in Surface Water
Harmful Temperatures of Surface Water

Fish and Wildlife
Inadequate Water
T&E Species: Declining Species, Species of Concern
Threatened and Endangered Fish and Wildlife Species

Water Quantity
Insufficient Flows in Water Courses

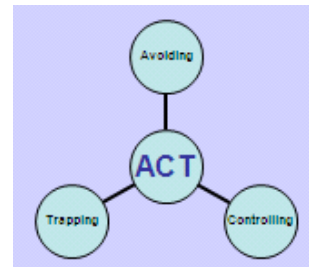
Attachment C

NRCS Core and Supporting Practices Approved for Support of the NWQI – FY 2013

Conservation Activity Plans	Code
Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan	102
Nutrient Management Plan	104
Irrigation Water Management Plan	118
Drainage Water Management Plan	130

Conservation Practices and “ACT”:

The initiative emphasizes a “systems approach” to address priority natural resource concerns. A cornerstone of this approach is to encourage producers to implement a system of practices that has been determined to address specific high-priority resource concerns in selected watersheds as well as incorporate selection of practices that address the concept for Avoiding, Controlling, or Trapping pollutants, or “ACT.” The concept of ACT is defined as:



- A (Avoiding): Avoidance helps manage nutrients and sediment source control from agricultural lands, including animal production facilities. Practices such as Nutrient Management (590), Cover Crop (340), and Conservation Crop Rotation (328) help producers avoid pollution by reducing the amount of nutrients available in runoff or leaching into priority water bodies and watersheds. Practices such as cover crops and crop rotation help take up nutrients to avoid potential runoff and pollution. Crop rotations that include differing crops, such as legumes, can limit amounts of commercial nutrients applied.
- C (Controlling): Land treatment in fields or facilities that prevents the loss of pollutants includes practices such as conservation tillage practices and residue management, which improve infiltration, reduce runoff, and control erosion. Specific practices such as No-till/Strip/Till/Direct Seed (329), Mulch Tillage (345), and Ridge Till (346) are foundation practices to recommend to producers in priority watersheds. Practices such as Cover Crop (340) will also do double duty by helping with Avoidance as well as Controlling. If producers plan fall application of manure or fertilizers without application of a cover crop, consideration should be given as to the need for Drainage Water Management (554). Other facilitating practices, such as Terraces (600) or Stripcropping (585), help control erosion and may manage runoff to reduce nutrients loading.
- T (Trapping): The last line of defense against potential pollutants at edge of field, or in facilities to trap or treat. Practices such as Contour Buffers (332), Filter Strips (393), and the suite of wetland practices to create, enhance, and/or restore wetlands (658, 659, and 657) all serve to trap and uptake nutrients before entering water bodies.



Planning considerations to support “Avoiding”:

- Apply fertilizer (chemical, manure, etc.) at the appropriate rate and time, with the appropriate placement and method. For example:
 - Rate: Use adaptive management techniques over time to track residual soil nutrient levels with soil testing.
 - Time: Apply fertilizer in the spring instead of fall, unless there is a winter cover crop in place.
 - Placement: Apply fertilizer to the root zone for enhanced uptake by plants.
 - Method: Properly calibrate fertilizer application equipment to ensure the correct amount of fertilizer is applied.
- Develop a nutrient management plan to identify nitrogen and phosphorus management actions that will reduce losses of nitrogen and phosphorus.
- When calculating optimal rate of application, make sure to credit other sources that contribute nitrogen and phosphorus to the soil, such as previous legume crops, irrigation water, and organic matter.
- Properly store fertilizer (e.g., in a storage building with impermeable floors).
- Compost manure to reduce the overall volume for disposal.

Planning considerations to support “Controlling”:

- Plant cover crops to absorb and store nitrogen and phosphorus in the fall and winter and to prevent erosion.
- Use no tillage, ridge-tillage, or other reduced-tillage practices in place of conventional tillage.
- Use irrigation systems (e.g., sprinklers, low-energy precision applications, surges, and drips) to apply water uniformly and with greater efficiency; this reduces water loss and transport of nitrogen and phosphorus out of the field.
- When designing a drainage system, consider the factors that affect design size and layout to meet the water management needs of the land, which include the water-holding capacity of the soil, root depth, rain distribution, and how water flows through the land.
- Consider rotating crops to minimize use of fertilizer in some cases.
- Use stream crossings, fencing, and watering facilities to keep pastured animals out of water bodies.
- Divert roof runoff and other uncontaminated stormwater away from animal confinement and manure storage areas.

Planning considerations to support “Trapping”:

- Create or restore wetlands and riparian forest buffers to trap nitrogen and phosphorus before they reach water bodies.
- Route soil drainage water, including tile drainage, through wetlands, riparian forests, or grass buffer strips to allow for nitrogen and phosphorus removal before flowing into rivers or streams.
- Install a controlled drainage system that will keep the water table high during the off-season, which increases the breakdown of nitrate into nitrogen gas (overall this reduces nitrogen in drainage water).
- Consider augmenting a drainage system with a bioreactor filled with wood chips that helps remove nitrates from water before being released to streams.
- Install a pump to reuse drainage water stored in a holding pond (along with the nitrogen and phosphorus in the water) during dry periods.

- Plant a vegetative buffer along drainage ditches to capture more nitrogen, phosphorus, and sediment from runoff before entering the waterway.
- Ensure that all runoff from animal confinement areas and areas used to store manure, feed, and bedding is captured and retained.
- Ensure waste storage facilities, such as stacking pads, lagoons, and holding ponds are designed to store the amount of waste produced at the operation, as well as account for large storms that could result in overflow.

Core Conservation Practices Required to Be Offered in NWQI – FY 2013

States must offer all of the following core practices to support NWQI during FY 2013.

Core Practices	Code	Avoiding	Controlling	Trapping
Waste Storage Facility	313	X	X	
Animal Mortality Facility	316		X	
Composting Facility	317	X	X	
Conservation Cover	327	X		X
Conservation Crop Rotation	328	X		
Residue and Tillage Management, No Till/Strip Till/Direct Seed	329		X	X
Contour Farming	330		X	X
Contour Orchard and Other Perennial Crops	331		X	X
Contour Buffer Strips	332			X
Cover Crop	340	X		X
Critical Area Planting	342		X	X
Residue Management, Seasonal	344		X	X
Residue and Tillage Management, Mulch Till	345		X	X
Residue and Tillage Management, Ridge Till	346		X	
Well Water Testing	355	X		
Waste Treatment Lagoon	359		X	
Waste Facility Closure	360	X		
Anaerobic Digester	366		X	
Field Border	386		X	X
Riparian Herbaceous Cover	390			X
Riparian Forest Buffer	391			X
Filter Strip	393		X	X
Stream Habitat Improvement and Management	395	X		
Grade Stabilization Structure	410		X	X
Grassed Waterway	412		X	
Irrigation Reservoir	436		X	
Irrigation Water Management	449		X	
Access Control	472	X		
Prescribed Grazing	528	X		
Drainage Water Management	554		X	
Heavy Use Area Protection	561	X		
Animal Trails and Walkways	575		X	
Streambank and Shoreline Protection	580	X		
Nutrient Management	590	X		
Terrace	600		X	
Vegetative Barrier	601			X

Core Practices	Code	Avoiding	Controlling	Trapping
Tree/Shrub Establishment	612	X		X
Waste Treatment	629		X	
Waste Recycling	633		X	
Waste Transfer	634	X		
Vegetated Treatment Area	635			X
Water and Sediment Control Basin	638		X	X
Constructed Wetland	656			X

Supporting Conservation Practices States May Offer in NWQI – FY 2013

States may offer all or any of the following practices to support NWQI during FY 2013.

Supporting Practices	Code	Avoiding	Controlling	Trapping
Agrichemical Handling Facility	309	X		
Alley Cropping	311		X	X
Brush Management	314	X	X	
Herbaceous Weed Control	315	X		
Prescribed Burning	338	X		
Sediment Basin	350		X	
Water Well Decommissioning	351	X		
Dike	356		X	X
Diversion	362		X	
Roofs and Covers	367	X	X	
Pond	378			X
Windbreak/Shelterbelt Establishment	380		X	X
Silvopasture Establishment	381	X		
Fence	382	X		
Dam	402		X	X
Hedgerow Planting	422	X		X
Hillside Ditch	423		X	
Irrigation Ditch Lining	428	X	X	
Irrigation Pipeline	430		X	
Irrigation System, Microirrigation	441	X		
Irrigation System, Sprinkler	442	X		
Irrigation System, Surface & Subsurface	443	X		
Land Reclamation, Landslide Treatment	453		X	
Precision Land Forming	462			X
Irrigation Land Leveling	464	X	X	
Lined Waterway or Outlet	468		X	
Mulching	484		X	X
Forage Harvest Management	511	X	X	
Forage and Biomass Planting	512	X		X
Livestock Pipeline	516	X	X	
Range Planting	550			X
Row Arrangement	557	X		
Roof Runoff Structure	558	X		
Access Road	560	X		
Spring Development	574	X		
Stream Crossing	578	X		

Supporting Practices	Code	Avoiding	Controlling	Trapping
Open Channel	582		X	
Stripcropping	585		X	
Structure for Water Control	587		X	X
Cross Wind Ridges	588		X	
Cross Wind Trap Strips	589C		X	X
Amendments for the Treatment of Agricultural Waste	591	X	X	
Integrated Pest Management	595	X		
Herbaceous Wind Barriers	603		X	
Surface Drain, Field Ditch	607		X	
Surface Drain, Main or Lateral	608		X	
Surface Roughening	609	X		
Watering Facility	614	X		
Underground Outlet	620		X	
Solid/Liquid Waste Separation Facility	632		X	
Waterspreading	640		X	
Water Well	642	X		
Restoration and Management of Declining Habitats	643	X		
Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management	644		X	
Windbreak/Shelterbelt Renovation	650		X	X
Wetland Restoration	657		X	
Wetland Creation	658		X	
Wetland Enhancement	659		X	

ProTracts Practice – Resource Concern AERT Matrix

For each approved watershed subaccount, States must populate the appropriate core and supporting practices in the ProTracts Application, Evaluation, and Ranking Tool (AERT) and associate the following appropriate resource concern as shown in the following tables. See note at end for details. For planning considerations, the two primary resource concerns should be emphasized with producers located in priority watersheds.

EPA 303(d) Impairment		Sediment and Turbidity	Temperature	Salinity		Nutrients, Low DO, Ammonia, Algal Growth		Pesticides		Habitat Alteration and Cause Unknown – Impaired Biota			Pathogens and Associated Animal Waste Management		
NRCS Approved Resource Concerns		Water Quality								Fish and Wildlife		Water Quantity	Water Quality		
NRCS Natural Resource Concern Categories for ProTracts Application, Evaluation, and Ranking Tool (AERT)		Excessive Suspended Sediment & Turbidity in Surface Water <u>Primary</u>	Harmful Temperatures of Surface Water	Excessive Salinity in Ground Water	Excessive Salinity in Surface Water	Excess Nutrients and Organics in Ground Water	Excess Nutrients and Organics in Surface Water <u>Primary</u>	Harmful Levels of Pesticides in Surface Water	Harmful Levels of Pesticides in Ground Water	Fish and Wildlife – Inadequate Water	Fish and Wildlife – TES Fish and Wildlife Spp Listed or Proposed Under ESA	Insufficient Flows in Water Courses	Harmful Levels of Pathogens in Groundwater	Harmful Levels of Pathogens in Surface Water <u>Primary</u>	
Conservation Practice	Code	"C" = Core practice required to be offered in each approved watershed; "X" = Supporting practices are optional to be offered if needed in State.													
Agrichemical Handling Facility	309					X	X	X	X						
Alley Cropping	311	X				X	X	X	X					X	
Waste Storage Facility	313	X											C	C	
Brush Management	314	X						X	X					X	
Herbaceous Weed Control	315							X	X						
Animal Mortality Facility	316					X	X						C	C	
Composting Facility	317					X	X						C	C	
Conservation Cover	327	C				C	C	X	X				X	X	
Conservation Crop Rotation	328	X		X	X	C	C	X	X				X	X	
Residue and Tillage Management, No Till/Strip Till/Direct Seed	329	C		X	X	C	C							X	
Contour Farming	330	C				C	C							X	
Contour Orchard and Other Perennial Crops	331	C		X	X	C	C							X	
Contour Buffer Strips	332	C	X			X	C	X						X	
Prescribed Burning	338							X	X						
Cover Crop	340	C		X	X	C	C	X	X				X	X	

EPA 303(d) Impairment		Sediment and Turbidity	Temperature	Salinity		Nutrients, Low DO, Ammonia, Algal Growth		Pesticides		Habitat Alteration and Cause Unknown – Impaired Biota			Pathogens and Associated Animal Waste Management		
NRCS Approved Resource Concerns		Water Quality								Fish and Wildlife		Water Quantity	Water Quality		
NRCS Natural Resource Concern Categories for ProTracts Application, Evaluation, and Ranking Tool (AERT)		Excessive Suspended Sediment & Turbidity in Surface Water <u>Primary</u>	Harmful Temperatures of Surface Water	Excessive Salinity in Ground Water	Excessive Salinity in Surface Water	Excess Nutrients and Organics in Ground Water	Excess Nutrients and Organics in Surface Water <u>Primary</u>	Harmful Levels of Pesticides in Surface Water	Harmful Levels of Pesticides in Ground Water	Fish and Wildlife – Inadequate Water	Fish and Wildlife – TES Fish and Wildlife Spp Listed or Proposed Under ESA	Insufficient Flows in Water Courses	Harmful Levels of Pathogens in Groundwater	Harmful Levels of Pathogens in Surface Water <u>Primary</u>	
Conservation Practice	Code	"C" = Core practice required to be offered in each approved watershed; "X" = Supporting practices are optional to be offered if needed in State.													
Critical Area Planting	342	X	C	C	C					C	C	C	X	C	
Residue Management, Seasonal	344	C		X	X	C	C	X	X					X	
Residue and Tillage Management, Mulch Till	345	C		X	X	C	C							X	
Residue and Tillage Management, Ridge Till	346	C		X	X	C	C								
Sediment Basin	350	X					X							X	
Well Water Testing	355					X							C	X	
Dike	356	X												X	
Waste Treatment Lagoon	359	X											X	C	
Waste Facility Closure	360												C	C	
Diversion	362	X						X	X			X		X	
Anaerobic Digester	366												X	C	
Roofs and Covers	367	X											X	X	
Pond	378					X	X								
Windbreak/Shelterbelt Establishment	380		X					X							
Silvopasture Establishment	381					X	X	X							
Fence	382						X							C	
Field Border	386	X					C	X	X				C	C	
Riparian Herbaceous Cover	390	C	C			X	C			C	C	C	C	C	
Riparian Forest Buffer	391	C	C			X	C			C	C	C	X	X	
Filter Strip	393	C		C	C	C	C	C	C				C	C	
Stream Habitat Improvement	395		X							C	C	C			

EPA 303(d) Impairment		Sediment and Turbidity	Temperature	Salinity		Nutrients, Low DO, Ammonia, Algal Growth		Pesticides		Habitat Alteration and Cause Unknown – Impaired Biota			Pathogens and Associated Animal Waste Management		
NRCS Approved Resource Concerns		Water Quality								Fish and Wildlife		Water Quantity	Water Quality		
NRCS Natural Resource Concern Categories for ProTracts Application, Evaluation, and Ranking Tool (AERT)		Excessive Suspended Sediment & Turbidity in Surface Water <u>Primary</u>	Harmful Temperatures of Surface Water	Excessive Salinity in Ground Water	Excessive Salinity in Surface Water	Excess Nutrients and Organics in Ground Water	Excess Nutrients and Organics in Surface Water <u>Primary</u>	Harmful Levels of Pesticides in Surface Water	Harmful Levels of Pesticides in Ground Water	Fish and Wildlife – Inadequate Water	Fish and Wildlife – TES Fish and Wildlife Spp Listed or Proposed Under ESA	Insufficient Flows in Water Courses	Harmful Levels of Pathogens in Groundwater	Harmful Levels of Pathogens in Surface Water	
Conservation Practice	Code	"C" = Core practice required to be offered in each approved watershed; "X" = Supporting practices are optional to be offered if needed in State.													
Dam	402	X													
Grade Stabilization Structure	410	C													
Grassed Waterway	412	C	X												
Hedgerow Planting	422	X												X	
Hillside Ditch	423	X						X		X		X			
Irrigation Ditch Lining	428	X											X	X	
Irrigation Pipeline	430												C	X	
Irrigation Reservoir	436													C	
Irrigation System, Microirrigation	441			X	X	X	X								
Irrigation System, Sprinkler	442			X	X	X	X								
Irrigation System, Surface & Subsurface	443			X	X	X	X								
Irrigation Water Management	449			C	C	X	X						C	C	
Land Reclamation Landslide Treatment	453	X													
Precision Landforming	462	X					X						X		
Irrigation Land Leveling	464	X											X		
Lined Waterway or Outlet	468	X													
Access Control	472	C	X				C	X		X	X	X		X	
Mulching	484	X					X							X	
Forage Harvest Management	511		X					X						X	

EPA 303(d) Impairment		Sediment and Turbidity	Temperature	Salinity		Nutrients, Low DO, Ammonia, Algal Growth		Pesticides		Habitat Alteration and Cause Unknown – Impaired Biota			Pathogens and Associated Animal Waste Management		
NRCS Approved Resource Concerns		Water Quality								Fish and Wildlife		Water Quantity	Water Quality		
NRCS Natural Resource Concern Categories for ProTracts Application, Evaluation, and Ranking Tool (AERT)		Excessive Suspended Sediment & Turbidity in Surface Water <u>Primary</u>	Harmful Temperatures of Surface Water	Excessive Salinity in Ground Water	Excessive Salinity in Surface Water	Excess Nutrients and Organics in Ground Water	Excess Nutrients and Organics in Surface Water <u>Primary</u>	Harmful Levels of Pesticides in Surface Water	Harmful Levels of Pesticides in Ground Water	Fish and Wildlife – Inadequate Water	Fish and Wildlife – TES Fish and Wildlife Spp Listed or Proposed Under ESA	Insufficient Flows in Water Courses	Harmful Levels of Pathogens in Groundwater	Harmful Levels of Pathogens in Surface Water <u>Primary</u>	
Conservation Practice	Code	"C" = Core practice required to be offered in each approved watershed; "X" = Supporting practices are optional to be offered if needed in State.													
Forage and Biomass Planting	512	X	X			X	X							X	
Livestock Pipeline	516									X				C	
Prescribed Grazing	528	C	C			X	C	X	X	X	X	X		X	
Range Planting	550	C	X					X	X	X	X	X		X	
Drainage Water Management	554			X	X	X	X						X	C	
Row Arrangement	557	X						X	X						
Roof Runoff Structure	558	X													
Access Road	560	X													
Heavy Use Area Protection	561	C				X	X							C	
Spring Development	574					X	X								
Animal Trails and Walkways	575	X						X		X	X	X		C	
Stream Crossing	578	X	X							X	X	X		X	
Streambank and Shoreline Protection	580		C							C	C	C		X	
Open Channel	582	X													
Strip Cropping	585	X						X	X						
Structure for Water Control	587	X	X			X	X	X	X					X	
Cross Wind Ridges	588	X													
Cross Wind Trap Strips	589C							X							
Nutrient Management	590	X				C	C								
Amendments for the Treatment of Agricultural Waste	591	X											X	X	
Integrated Pest Management	595					X	X	X	X						
Terrace	600	C				X	X						X	X	

EPA 303(d) Impairment		Sediment and Turbidity	Temperature	Salinity		Nutrients, Low DO, Ammonia, Algal Growth		Pesticides		Habitat Alteration and Cause Unknown – Impaired Biota			Pathogens and Associated Animal Waste Management	
NRCS Approved Resource Concerns		Water Quality								Fish and Wildlife		Water Quantity	Water Quality	
NRCS Natural Resource Concern Categories for ProTracts Application, Evaluation, and Ranking Tool (AERT)		Excessive Suspended Sediment & Turbidity in Surface Water <u>Primary</u>	Harmful Temperatures of Surface Water	Excessive Salinity in Ground Water	Excessive Salinity in Surface Water	Excess Nutrients and Organics in Ground Water	Excess Nutrients and Organics in Surface Water <u>Primary</u>	Harmful Levels of Pesticides in Surface Water	Harmful Levels of Pesticides in Ground Water	Fish and Wildlife – Inadequate Water	Fish and Wildlife – TES Fish and Wildlife Spp Listed or Proposed Under ESA	Insufficient Flows in Water Courses	Harmful Levels of Pathogens in Groundwater	Harmful Levels of Pathogens in Surface Water <u>Primary</u>
Conservation Practice	Code	"C" = Core practice required to be offered in each approved watershed; "X" = Supporting practices are optional to be offered if needed in State.												
Vegetative Buffer	601	C	X			X	C			X	X	X		
Herbaceous Wind Barriers	603	X				X	X	X						
Surface Drain, Field Ditch	607					X		X					C	
Surface Drainage, Main or Lateral	608	X												
Surface Roughening	609	X												
Tree/Shrub Establishment	612	C	C				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Watering Facility	614						X							
Underground Outlet	620	X					X							X
Waste Treatment	629	X											C	C
Solid/Liquid Waste Separation Facility	632	X					X						X	X
Waste Recycling	633	X											C	C
Waste Transfer	634	X				X	X	X	X				X	C
Vegetated Treatment Area	635	X												C
Water and Sediment Control Basin	638	C		X	X									X
Waterspreading	640													X
Water Well	642			X	X	X	X							
Restoration and Management of Declining Habitats	643	X	X							X		X		
Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management	644									X	X			X
Windbreak/Shelterbelt Renovation	650	X						X						
Constructed Wetland	656	X											C	C
Wetland Restoration	657									X	X			X

EPA 303(d) Impairment		Sediment and Turbidity	Temperature	Salinity		Nutrients, Low DO, Ammonia, Algal Growth		Pesticides		Habitat Alteration and Cause Unknown – Impaired Biota			Pathogens and Associated Animal Waste Management	
NRCS Approved Resource Concerns		Water Quality								Fish and Wildlife		Water Quantity	Water Quality	
NRCS Natural Resource Concern Categories for ProTracts Application, Evaluation, and Ranking Tool (AERT)		Excessive Suspended Sediment & Turbidity in Surface Water <u>Primary</u>	Harmful Temperatures of Surface Water	Excessive Salinity in Ground Water	Excessive Salinity in Surface Water	Excess Nutrients and Organics in Ground Water	Excess Nutrients and Organics in Surface Water <u>Primary</u>	Harmful Levels of Pesticides in Surface Water	Harmful Levels of Pesticides in Ground Water	Fish and Wildlife – Inadequate Water	Fish and Wildlife – TES Fish and Wildlife Spp Listed or Proposed Under ESA	Insufficient Flows in Water Courses	Harmful Levels of Pathogens in Groundwater	Harmful Levels of Pathogens in Surface Water <u>Primary</u>
Conservation Practice	Code	"C" = Core practice required to be offered in each approved watershed; "X" = Supporting practices are optional to be offered if needed in State.												
Wetland Creation	658									X	X			X
Wetland Enhancement	659									X	X			X

Note: The previous practice-resource concern matrix must be used by States to populate the NWQI AERT in ProTracts by Friday, March 15, 2013, as shown in the example screen print below:

Select Practices to Address Resource Concerns [Close](#)

escription/Land Uses | Resource Concerns | **Practices** | National Priorities | State Issues | Local Issues | Results Text | Selection Summary | < Back | Next >

Resource Concern Category: **Fish and Wildlife** [Go](#) [Export](#)

Resource Concern	Access Road (560)	Animal Trails and Walkways (575)	Anionic Polyacrylamide (PAM) Erosion Con (450)	Brush Management (314)	Channel Bank Vegetation (322)	Channel Stabilization (584)	Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan (100)	Conservation Cover (327)	Constructed Wetland (656)
Habitat Fragmentation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Inadequate Cover/Shelter	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Inadequate Water	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
T&E Species: Declining Species, Species of Concern	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Threatened and Endangered Fish and Wildlife Species	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Attachment D

**Required National Water Quality Initiative Screening Criteria Worksheet:
NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)**

Fiscal Year 2013

A Screening Worksheet must be completed for each eligible EQIP application.

Instructions: This screening worksheet must be completed for each eligible producer applying for EQIP National Water Quality Initiative assistance. Applications will be accepted on a continuous basis; however, an application period has been established for purposes of evaluation, ranking, and funding decisions. The goal of this screening tool is to ensure that conservation technical assistance and EQIP program benefits are managed efficiently to address priority conservation needs related to this national initiative.

Completion of this worksheet and documentation does not constitute agreement to provide EQIP program benefits nor approval of a program contract. The original screening worksheet should be filed with the applicant case file or EQIP program file and unless the application is determined to be ineligible, the screening priority (high, medium, and low) must be recorded in ProTracts. Upon request, a copy of any completed screening worksheet may be provided to the applicant.

Detailed Screening Criteria Worksheet – Complete for each eligible EQIP Applicant

Applicant Name:		County:	
Application No:		Field Office:	
Evaluator Name:		Date:	

Priority Determination for ProTracts – Select One:

<u>Ineligible Category:</u> The EQIP application is associated with land that is not located within the boundaries of the approved watershed for the National Water Quality Initiative. (Enter application in ProTracts, but do not rank. Offer alternative program assistance.)	Application Status is “Ineligible”
<u>High Priority Category:</u> All of the conservation practices requested in the application will be implemented on land physically located inside the NWQI watershed, AND The application includes “core” conservation practices (as identified for the pollutants of the eligible water quality initiative 12-digit watershed) on more than 25 percent of the offered acres – OR – The application is for a Conservation Activity Plan (CAP).	High Priority Status in ProTracts
<u>Medium Priority Category 1:</u> All of the conservation practices requested in the application will be applied on land physically located inside the NWQI watershed, AND The application contains “core” conservation practices (as identified for the pollutants of the eligible water quality initiative 12-digit watershed)	Medium Priority Status in ProTracts
<u>Medium Priority Category 2:</u> One or more of the conservation practices requested in the application will be applied on land physically located outside the NWQI watershed, AND The application contains “core” conservation practices (as identified for the pollutants of the eligible water quality initiative 12-digit watershed)	Medium Priority Status in ProTracts
<u>Low Priority Category:</u> All other applications – low priority applications will not be ranked for FY 2013 NWQI.	Low Priority Status in ProTracts

The priority determination of high, medium, or low must be recorded in ProTracts for this applicant.

D.C. Approval:		Date Approved:	
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Attachment E

Required National Water Quality Initiative State Ranking Questions and Example Local Questions

Required National Water Quality Initiative State Ranking Questions (Maximum State Points – 400)

States must enter all the following questions in ProTracts AERT for each approved NWQI subaccount and watershed:

2013 EQIP NWQI Ranking Questions	2013 Points
1. If the application is for development of a Conservation Activity Plan (CAP), the agency will assign significant ranking priority and conservation benefit by answering “Yes” to the following question. Answering “Yes” to question 1a will result in the application being awarded the maximum amount of points that can be earned for the State priority category.	
<hr/> 1a. Is the program application for development of a TSP prepared Conservation Activity Plan (CAP)? <u>If answer is “Yes”, do not answer any other State-level questions.</u> If answer is “No”, proceed with evaluation to address the remaining questions in this section. <hr/>	400
2. Water Quality – EPA Watersheds:	
2a. Does the application include core conservation practices that will be implemented within ¼ mile of a stream or water body that is threatened (i.e., receives significant runoff of excess nitrogen and/or phosphorous), on the EPA 303(d) list, or is impaired with a TMDL in place and therefore not on the 303(d) list (or other critical stream or water body authorized by the Regional Conservationist)?	100
3. Geographic Impacts:	
3a. Are core conservation practices planned on the offered acres? i. Greater than 75 percent of the offered acres are within the focused watershed AND ii. Greater than 75 percent of the offered acres have a core conservation practice planned for application	125
4. Collaborative Efforts:	
4a: Are core conservation practices planned within an existing State agency or other non-USDA water quality project area addressing the same or similar pollutants?	75
5. Effort to address watershed impairments:	

5a: Does this program application include the implementation of a system of conservation practices which address the primary watershed impairments?	50
6. High Risk Soils:	
6a: Are core conservation practices to be implemented on offered acres with a majority of soil types that are classified hydrologic group D (high runoff) or group A (high infiltration)?	50
Total Points:	400

EXAMPLE LOCAL QUESTIONS

- Required Local Level Ranking Criteria :**

1. If the application is for development of a Conservation Activity Plan (CAP), the agency will assign significant ranking priority and conservation benefit by answering "Yes" to the following question. Answering "Yes" to question 1a will result in the application being awarded the maximum amount of points that can be earned for the local priority category.	
1a. Is the program application for development of a TSP prepared Conservation Activity Plan (CAP)? If answer is "Yes", do not answer any other local level questions. If answer is "No", proceed with evaluation to address the remaining questions in this section.	250

States are encouraged to utilize questions that address specific pollutants, soil factors, and stream issues; questions that encourage use of a "systems approach"; and questions that address monitoring. For example: in developing local questions associated with "nutrients," States are encouraged to utilize questions that address the implementation of nutrient management and cover crops. Below are examples of questions that might be utilized for each of the recommended categories.

Examples of questions that address specific impairments:

- Will nutrient management 590 be implemented in conjunction with erosion control practices to control the loss of nitrogen and phosphorus from fields?
- Will a cover crop be utilized on at least 25 percent of the offered acres?
- Will livestock be excluded from all streams on the offered acres?

Examples of questions that address soil factors that influence water quality:

- Are over 75 percent of the offered acres on land with a soil vulnerability classification of "moderately high" or "high" as specified by the Vulnerability Assessment and Program Performance Tool? (Comment: Other approved matrices or tools could be incorporated or substituted to target vulnerable land.)
- Will the application of conservation practices reduce the STIR rating to less than ___ on over 75 percent of the offered acres?

Examples of questions that address streams issues:

- Are planned conservation practices within ¼ mile of a blue line stream on a USGS topographic map within the impaired watershed?

Examples of questions that utilize a systems approach:

- Will the implementation of one planned conservation practice on at least ___ percent of the offered acres result in the existence of a conservation system where at least one practice exists in each of the avoid, trap, and control categories?
- Will the implementation of two planned conservation practices on at least ___ percent of the offered acres result in the existence of a conservation system where at least one practice exists in each of the avoid, trap, and control categories?
- Will the implementation of three planned conservation practices on at least ___ percent of the offered acres result in the existence of a conservation system where at least one practice exists in each of the avoid, trap, and control categories?

Attachment F

National Water Quality Initiative Outcomes

1) Pilot Watersheds

During fiscal year 2013, States will use of the Water Quality Index for Runoff Water from Agricultural Fields (WQI_{ag}) in selected watersheds. WQI_{ag} will provide an overall score that may be used to establish trends in water quality over time. Additionally, the index will provide information at the subcomponent level to address field sensitivity, nutrient management, pest management, and soil health. Each State Conservationist will submit at least one proposed pilot watershed, along with pertinent watershed information, to the Regional Conservationists by **January 25, 2013**, using the FY 2013 Access Form (see Attachment A). A review team will be assigned that will review proposals and submit recommendations to the RCs as soon as feasible. Pilot watershed selections will be made as early as possible in February 2013.

During fiscal year 2013, training of State and field staff in the use and application of the Water Quality Index tool will be completed for any new watersheds in which the tool will be applied. This training will be provided by NHQ staff.

2) APEX and NPAD Reports

NHQ will also predict outcomes using CEAP databases developed from the APEX model. The national key performance measures (KPM) for water quality will be used, and all conservation practices will be aggregated from selected watersheds across the country and outcomes estimated from the CEAP data.

NHQ will also obtain output of information from the National Conservation Planning Database and ProTracts. Reports will be designed to produce acres of core conservation practices applied by watershed. These reports will provide data at the watershed level and on national and regional levels, and align with national KPM strategies.

3) Watershed Plans

Ideally, selected NWQI watersheds would have an existing watershed plan that has been developed cooperatively by local and stakeholders. To the extent possible, a watershed-based plan or inventory should exist in all selected watersheds. If there is no watershed-based plan in a selected watershed, States should either secure a plan or complete an inventory and assessment of the watershed.

For those selected watersheds with no watershed-based plan, States will complete an inventory and assessment documenting baseline conditions, previous efforts within the watersheds, and

any past trends in agricultural land use and conservation application. States should also document any climatic trends that might influence any previous data collection.

When preparing to measure outcomes, States should look for documentation of previous efforts and past trends. States should—

- 1) Utilize any archived water quality data (chemistry, physical, biological indicators) to define a trend. If insufficient data is present, a calibration period to collect water quality data will be necessary to establish a baseline.
- 2) Utilize archived climatological data to help characterize the hydrology.
- 3) Document prior and existing monitoring activities, and data sampling points.
- 4) Document previous program activity including state and local efforts.

For purposes of documenting the condition of the watershed at the beginning of the initiative, States should complete an initial watershed inventory and evaluation. This baseline condition will be the point of comparison for documenting outcomes for that watershed. States should include the following:

- 1) In order to assess the nonpoint source contribution, make an assessment of point source pollutant sources (they may represent 5–30 percent of the nutrient load).
- 2) Existing land use and land cover inventory (changes may occur and help explain the response, or lack of response, of water quality indicators).
- 3) Soil and topographic profile description (e.g., hydrologic groups and relief. Note: measuring outcomes will be very difficult in Karst geology where inter-basin pollutant movement occurs underground).
- 4) Streambank and bed erosion assessment (may account for as much as 70 percent of the phosphorus load). A riparian corridor assessment should be made simultaneously.
- 5) Level of conservation practice implementation; landowner attitude survey pre and post.
- 6) List of impaired streams with suspected pollutant sources. These streams are already identified as not meeting water quality standards.

4) National Framework

In fiscal year 2013, NRCS will begin implementing a national water quality monitoring plan. This plan will provide a strategy for identifying monitoring needs and establishing methods and protocols. The plan will be developed in collaboration with partnering agencies with experience in monitoring water quality.