



Natural Resources Conservation Service
760 South Broadway
Salina, Kansas 67401-4604

Phone: 785-823-4500
FAX: 785-823-4540
www.ks.nrcs.usda.gov

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KANSAS BULLETIN NO. KS300-12-25

SUBJECT: LTP–Environmental Quality Incentives Program–Ranking Process

Purpose: Provide guidance on distribution and use of the Fiscal Year (FY) 2012 Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) ranking criteria

Expiration Date: September 30, 2013

Ranking Categories

The FY 2012 Kansas EQIP eligible ranking categories for the regular EQIP allocation are as follows:

- Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan (CNMP) Conservation Activity Plan (CAP)—ranking not needed
- Nutrient Management Plan CAP—ranking not needed
- Irrigation Water Management Plan CAP—ranking not needed
- Forestland Health
- Forestland Health–Beginning Farmer/Ranchers (BF/R) (New)
- Forestland Health–Limited Resource Farmers/Ranchers (LRF/R) (New)
- Forestland Health–Socially Disadvantaged Farmers/Ranchers (SDF/R) (New)
- Grazing Lands Health
- Grazing Lands Health–BF/R
- Grazing Lands Health–LRF/R
- Grazing Lands Health–SDF/R
- Livestock Waste
- Livestock Waste–BF/R (New)
- Livestock Waste–LRF/R (New)
- Livestock Waste–SDF/R (New)
- Sedimentation Above Federal Reservoirs (limited to watersheds above a federal reservoir)

(more)

DIST: A, F, S, C. Nelson

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- Sedimentation Above Federal Reservoirs–BF/R (New)
- Sedimentation Above Federal Reservoirs–LRF/R (New)
- Sedimentation Above Federal Reservoirs–SDF/R (New)
- Tribal (limited to Tribal land or Tribal members)
- Water Quality/Cropland Health
- Water Quality/Cropland Health–BF/R
- Water Quality/Cropland Health–LRF/R
- Water Quality/Cropland Health–SDF/R
- Water Quantity/Quick Response Areas (QRA) (Limited to the QRAs)
- Water Quality/QRA—BF/R
- Water Quality/QRA—LRF/R
- Water Quality/QRA—SDF/R
- Water Quantity
- Water Quantity–BF/R (New)
- Water Quantity–LRF/R (New)
- Water Quantity–SDF/R (New)
- Wildlife Habitat *
- Wildlife Habitat–BF/R (New) *
- Wildlife Habitat–LRF/R (New) *
- Wildlife Habitat–SDF/R (New) *

* Limited to designated Greater Prairie-Chicken and Lesser Prairie-Chicken current range.

Changes to 2012 Ranking Categories

BF/R, LRF/R, or SDF/R may apply under their specific ranking category or the category of their resource concern, but not both on the same land.

Grazing Land Health and Water Quality/Cropland Health ranking categories have been changed from county allocations to management unit allocations. Each management unit will have its own ranking category.

Water Quantity and Water Quantity/QRA ranking categories no longer include the secondary resource concern of Fish and Wildlife–Threatened and Endangered Species, Declining Species, and Species of Concern.

Fish and Wildlife–Threatened and Endangered Species, Declining Species, and Species of Concern are still addressed within each category’s ranking as secondary concerns, with the exception of Wildlife Habitat. In other categories, the wildlife concern may be treated with available practices, provided an identified primary resource concern is being treated. Language regarding individual at-risk species was removed from all ranking categories and state ranking questions were revised to include only the species identified on the Statewide At-Risk Species Listing in Attachment 9.

Local ranking questions regarding completion of the self assessment worksheet were removed from all ranking categories and a question was added to provide points for those that requested a conservation plan for the application prior to August 31, 2011.

The Forestland Health ranking category added state issue questions relating to windbreaks that offer wind erosion protection to cultivated cropland and to windbreak condition class for existing windbreaks needing renovation.

The Grazing Land Health and Tribal ranking categories added local issue questions regarding participant attendance in grazing management schools and workshops.

The Water Quality/Cropland Health ranking category decreased state issue points for Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) areas and increased points for site specific potential soil loss index (PSLI) values.

Wildlife Habitat ranking category updated state issue questions regarding lesser prairie-chicken habitat to criteria based on the new Crucial Habitat Assessment Tool (CHAT).

Program Contracts System (ProTracts) Entry

All applications (eligible, ineligible, or cancelled) will be entered in the ProTracts. Eligible applications are those that have an EQIP priority natural resource concern with a planned treatment level that will meet or exceed Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) electronic Field Office Technical Guide (eFOTG) quality criteria, per Title 440-Conservation Programs Manual, EQIP, Part 515, Section KS515.81(A)(1). Only *eligible* applications will be ranked in ProTracts.

As with last year, all applications will select “Conventional” for the *Application Type*, with the exception of CAP applications which will select “Planning.” “Partnership” will NOT be used under this general sign-up.

Ranking Applications

- The ProTracts Ranking Tool has four sections: Efficiency, National Priorities, State Issues, and Local Issues.
- The Efficiency section is scored on the Conservation Planning Physical Effects (CPPE) value, practice service life, and practice average cost of the practices receiving financial assistance.
- National priorities are scored on whether the application is also addressing EQIP national priorities. The national priority questions have been revised by national headquarters. Guidance is being developed to assist you in answering these questions. It will be issued by state bulletin in the near future.
- State issues are questions that determine the application’s benefit to state priorities.
- The local issues questions determine the application benefits to priorities identified by local work groups.

Eligible land uses, state and local issue questions and points assigned, and additional requirements for each ranking category are outlined on Attachments 1 through 8.

Applications will be evaluated by location county. The location county is the county where the land is physically located. If an application is submitted for land located in multiple counties, the county where the majority of the land is located will be considered the location county and entered as such in ProTracts. Supervisory district conservationists are responsible for ensuring that the location county is entered correctly in ProTracts.

Applicants with Previous Cancelled or Terminated Contracts

All state issue ranking questions will be answered “No” for applicants who have had cancelled or terminated EQIP contracts in the past. A spot check will be completed by state office staff after contracts have been obligated. For cancellations or terminations that had extenuating circumstances, applicants may request a waiver from the state conservationist. Requests will be in writing and routed through the assistant state conservationist for field operations for review and recommendation.

Conservation Programs Geographic Information System Interface (CPGI)

Some of the state and local issue questions for each ranking category require the use of geo-spatial data. The CPGI tool was specifically designed to obtain the needed data for each EQIP ranking category. The tool will be used by all field offices to track location and evaluate all eligible EQIP applications. Only eligible EQIP applications will be entered in the CPGI tool. The application identification number in CPGI will match the application identification number from ProTracts. The CPGI tool is forthcoming.

Contact: Please forward your feedback and questions through established channels to Corey L. Nelson, Resource Conservationist, at (785) 823-4580.

(Signed) GAYE L. BENFER, *ACTING FOR*

ERIC B. BANKS
State Conservationist