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November 30, 2012

KANSAS BULLETIN NO. KS300-13-18

SUBJECT: LTP–Environmental Quality Incentives Program–Ranking Process

Purpose: Provide guidance on distribution and use of the fiscal year (FY) 2013 General Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) ranking criteria

Expiration Date: September 30, 2014

Ranking Categories

The FY 2013 General Kansas EQIP eligible ranking categories for the general EQIP allocation are as follows:

- Forestland Health* (by Area)
- Grazing Lands Health* (by Management Unit)
- Livestock Waste* (by Area)
- Sedimentation Above Federal Reservoirs* (limited to watersheds above a federal reservoir) (Statewide)
- Soil Health* (New) (by Management Unit)
- Stream System Restoration* (New) (Limited to targeted watersheds)—**Coming later in a separate signup**
- Tribal (limited to Tribal land or Tribal members) (Statewide)
- Water Quality* (New) (by Management Unit)
- Water Quantity* (by Area)
- Water Quantity/Quick Response Areas (QRA)* (Limited to the QRAs) (Statewide)
- Wildlife Habitat* (by Area)

*Limited Resource Farmers/Ranchers (LRF/R), Beginning Farmers/Rancher (BF/R), and Socially Disadvantaged Farmers/Ranchers (SDF/R) have separate ranking categories available. LRF/R, BF/R and SDF/R may apply under the ranking category specific to their resource concern or their specific ranking category, but not both.

(more)

DIST: A, F, S, C. Nelson, Volkman

Changes to FY 2013 Ranking Categories

- All conservation activity plan (CAP) ranking categories have been removed. CAPs are now made available as eligible practices under applicable ranking categories.
- A ranking question related to the enrolling in the Community Collaborative Rain, Hail and Snow Network (CoCoRaHS) program has been added to the Grazing Lands Health ranking category.
- Addressing poultry litter application and storage concerns have been added as a ranking criteria in the Livestock Waste ranking category. This will be specific to identified target areas.
- The (New) Stream System Restoration ranking category has been added with Soil Erosion—Streambank as the primary resource concern. Target watersheds will be identified and funding decisions will be made at the state level. Guidance will be forthcoming.
- The Soil Erosion—Streambank resource concern has been removed from the Forestland Health, Sedimentation above Federal Reservoirs, Tribal and Water Quality ranking categories.
- The Water Quality/Cropland Health ranking category has been separated for FY 2013 and Cropland Health has been renamed Soil Health. Funding decisions will be made at the management unit level for both ranking categories.
- The Water Quantity Quick Response Areas (QRAs)—QRAs will be ranked at the state level instead of by each Groundwater Management District (GMD) (one ranking category).
- The Wildlife Habitat (WLH) ranking category has been revised as a result of the unavailability of general Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP) funds. The ranking criteria is now focusing on upland grassland bird species identified by the Kansas Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Plan.

NOTE: CoCoRaHS guidance and the Kansas Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Plan can be found on the Kansas Share Point in the “EQIP 2013 Materials” folder.

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 signup.

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 10.

Species identified on the Statewide At-Risk Species Listing are in Attachment 11.

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 or email corey.nelson@ks.usda.gov.

(Signed) JAMES J. KRUEGER, ACTING FOR

ERIC B. BANKS
State Conservationist

Attachments