US Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

Agricultural Water Enhancement Program (AWEP)

NHQ Review Evaluation Guidance

Date Issued: March, 2010

AWEP Proposal Evaluation

Fiscal Year 2010 National Headquarters (NHQ) Review Evaluation Guidance

Background

The Agricultural Water Enhancement Program (AWEP), authorized under the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), is a voluntary program intended to promote the conservation of ground and surface water and improve water quality. AWEP allows for proposals from potential partners who seek to enter into partnership agreements with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to promote the conservation of ground and surface water and improvement of water quality. All AWEP funds will be administered by the NRCS through financial assistance contracts with eligible agricultural producers. Partner proposals will be received and evaluated per the requirements of the Notice of Request for Proposals (RFP).

Legal Authority:

- Section 1240I of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 establishes the Agricultural Water Enhancement Program.

Eligible Partners:

Partners that are eligible to participate in AWEP include, but are not limited to entities such as federally recognized Indian Tribes, States, units of local government, agricultural or silvicultural associations, or other such groups of agricultural producers (NGOs must meet IRS requirements). Individual producers are not eligible to submit AWEP proposals.

Partner Proposals:

To participate in AWEP, a potential partner must submit a proposal to the Chief. The proposal must contain the information set forth in the Notice of Request for Proposals (RFP). Five copies of the proposal must address and include information in the RFP as follows:

1. *Proposal Cover Sheet and Summary.*
2. *Project Natural Resource Objectives and Actions.*
3. *Partnership Capacity.*
4. *Lands to be treated.*
5. *Producer Information.*
6. *Proposal Implementation Plan and Schedule.*
7. *Letter of Review*: From the NRCS State Conservationist.

The RFP includes more detail and specific questions to be addressed and the criteria to be used for evaluation. This guidance incorporates the evaluation criteria and process to be used by the Program Manager, Review Panel and Review Board.

Partner Proposal Evaluation:

The purpose of this guidance is to provide a process by which proposals submitted by eligible partners are evaluated and competitively ranked to allow selection and approval by the Chief. . National level applications will be evaluated by staff designated by the Deputy Chief for Programs, in cooperation with the Deputy Chiefs for Science and Technology and Soil Survey and Resource Assessment. This guidance will also be made available to the public on the national AWEP website: http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/awep/.

General Evaluation, Ranking and Implementation Process:

1. Submission of partner proposals:
   a. All AWEP Proposals are either mailed or hand-delivered to:

   Gregory K. Johnson, Director
   Financial Assistance Programs Division
   USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
   "AWEP Proposal"
   1400 Independence Ave. SW, Rm 5239-S
   Washington, DC 20250

   b. Note: AWEP proposals must also be supported by a letter of review from State Conservationists for all states in the proposed project area.

2. Initial Eligibility Review by Program Manager: AWEP Program Manager (PM) ensures that proposals received meet basic eligibility criteria as set forth in the Notice of Request for Proposal. PM organizes proposals by category, priority, readies materials for review and takes following actions:
   a. Verifies complete application submitted (format, length, copies, etc.)
   b. AWEP basic screening worksheet completed
   c. Letter to partner:
      i. Proposal received – Complete and in review process
      ii. Proposal received – Incomplete or does not meet requirements of basic screening criteria.
   d. Program Manager will refer proposals to Review Panel(s)

3. Review Panel Actions: Members of the national review panel will evaluate and rank proposals individually using the Request for Application evaluation criteria. Each proposal will then be evaluated by the panel as one group. Final ranking will be by consensus of the panel members. Consensus comments and recommendations will be developed and recorded by the designated review team lead with assistance from the PM.
   a. Individual review
   b. Group review and consensus development
   c. Ranking recommendations
   d. Review team leader and AWEP PM assembles final report and ranking

4. AWEP Review Board Actions: At the national level, the Deputy Chief for Programs will chair the Review Board meeting to explain proposed project rankings and their strengths and weaknesses. The AWEP Review Board will review and confirm that the Review Panel rankings are consistent with program purposes and objectives. The AWEP Review Board will make final recommendations for funding to the Chief.

5. Chief Final Review and Selection: Chief will review all findings, ranking and recommendations and make final selection for funding of partner proposals.
   a. Final selection of proposals to be funded. Chief directs the Deputy Chief for Programs or designated AWEP PM to:
      i. Send notification letter to partner and deadline for approval of agreement.
      ii. Coordinate development of partner agreement.
   b. STC and Partner approve/sign agreement.
   c. Allocation of AWEP funds to FFIS and coordination of announcement of AWEP program availability with State(s) and partner for producer application.

The following types of review groups will be established:

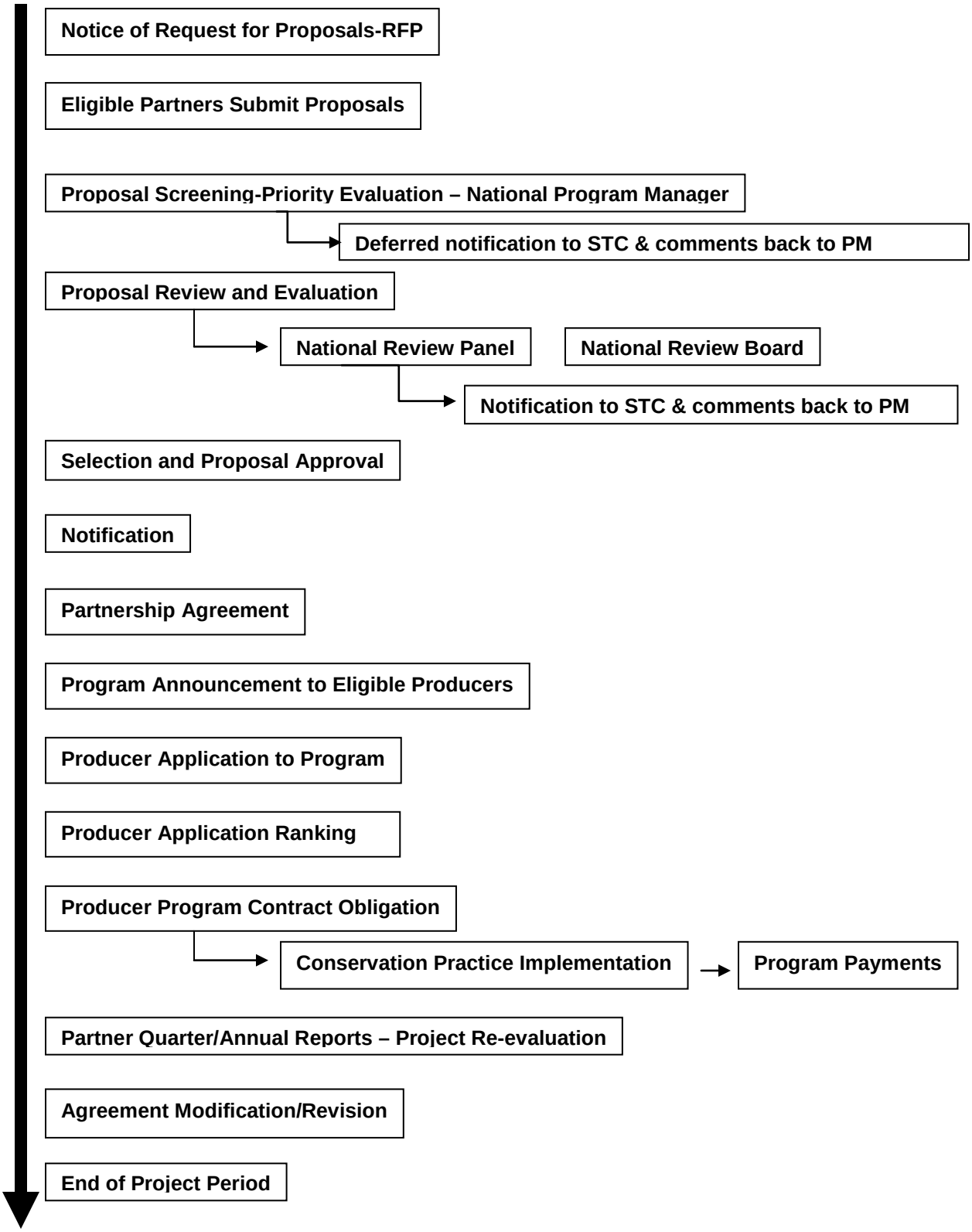
- **National Review Panel(s) -** Program managers, program specialists, and technical specialists from States, National Headquarters and National Centers will be designated to assist with review of eligible partner proposals.
- **National AWEP Review Board** – Comprised of NRCS national leadership: Chaired by the Deputy Chief for Financial Assistance and Community Development (FACD), Deputy Chief for Easements and Landscape Planning (ELP), Deputy Chief for Science and Technology, Deputy Chief for Soil Survey and Resource Assessment, one Regional Assistant Chief (RAC), and one State Conservationist (STC). The National AWEP Review Board will certify the Review Panel evaluations and make final funding recommendations to the Chief.

Note: Review Panels will not include any representatives from outside the agency. Members of Review Panels will be subject to requirements for confidentiality and may only discuss proposals with assigned Program Managers and other review panel members, and any leadership designated by the Deputy Chief for FACD.

Additional AWEP information and guidance for agreements and program administration can be obtained from:

- Director, Financial Assistance Programs Division (FAPD), phone (202) 720-1845.
- http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/awep/

General AWEP Process Flowchart:



Implementation Timeline:

Milestone or Task	Who	Deadline
1. Publish RFP Federal Register	Farm Bill Coordinator	April 1, 2010
2. Proposal Submission	Partners	May 17, 2010
3. Letters of "Receipt" to Partner	National AWEP Program Manager	May 24, 2010
4. Complete Evaluation Screening-Priority	National AWEP Program Manager	June 7, 2010
5. Email notification to STCs of "Referred" and "Deferred" List	National AWEP Program Manager	June 11, 2010
6. STC response back to National AWEP Program Manager	State Conservationist(s)	June 14, 2010
7. Issue "Referred" or "Deferred" Letters to Partners	National AWEP Program Manager	June 16, 2010
8. Review Panel – Evaluation of eligible proposals	National Review Panel	June 21-23, 2010
9. Email notification to STCs of Initial Ranking	National AWEP Program Manager	June 30, 2010
10. STC comments and response back to National AWEP Program Manager	State Conservationist(s)	July2, 2010
11. Evaluations and recommendations for approval to Review Board	National AWEP Program Manager	July 5-7, 2010
12. Review Board Actions	National Review Board	July 8-9, 2010
13. Final evaluation, recommendations, priority approval to Chief	National AWEP Program Manager	July12-14, 2010
14. Final selection by Chief	Chief	July 15-16, 2010
15. Formal Announcement of Awards	Chief	July 22, 2010
16. Approval or denial letters to partners.	National AWEP Program Manager	July 22-23, 2010
17. NRCS State Conservationists announce approved project area(s).	State Conservationist(s).	July 23, 2010
18. NRCS POC and partner complete development of agreement.	NRCS POC and Partner	July 26-28, 2010
19. Partner and NRCS State Conservationist(s) sign/approve partner agreements.	State Conservationist(s) and Partner	July 28, 2010
20. NRCS National Office allocation.	Chief or designee	July 28, 2010
21. NRCS State Conservationists announces application periods and creates funding pool accounts in ProTracts for each approved project.	State Conservationist(s)	July 29, 2010
22. NRCS State Conservationists allocate (or reallocate multi-state) AWEP to approved projects in ProTracts.	State Conservationist(s)	July 29, 2010
23. NRCS ranks and approves plans and contracts for AWEP projects	State Conservationist(s)	August 12, 2010
24. NRCS obligates AWEP contracts	State Conservationist(s)	August 27, 2010

Review Panel and AWEP Review Board Information:

- Copies of proposals are reviewed by the designated AWEP Program Manager (PM) in advance of the Review Panel meeting to ensure proposals meet program requirements. The PM shall notify the partner applicant in writing that the proposal was received and prepares one of the following letters for signature by the Division Director, FAPD.
  - Letter notifying the participant the application was received, is complete and is in process of evaluation.
  - Letter notifying the participant the application was received but was incomplete and/or does not meet basic AWEP program requirements. The application may be deferred.
- **STC Contact:** The PM will provide notification to the STC prior to sending deferral letters to partners. The STC may provide comment to the PM.
- **Screening-Prioritization:** The AWEP PM will screen, organize and assign priority (High, Medium, Low) for all eligible proposals. The PM will transmit the proposals to members of the Review Panel for evaluation based upon the proposals priority status. High priority proposals will be ranked first, Medium second, Low last. Depending upon funding availability, the agency may choose not to evaluate or rank lower priority proposals based upon funding availability. The PM will notify STCs of initial screening/priority results and STC may provide comment.
- **Proposals will first be evaluated individually** by individual review panel members prior to the group Review Panel meeting. Each member must complete an Individual Reviewer Scoring Sheet and Individual Commentary Sheet for each proposal. *(The blank forms are included in this guidance.)* The PM will provide Panel members with a list of prioritized proposals and funding requested. The panel will evaluate proposals based upon the highest priority and until the available funding is exhausted. This means that if funding is exhausted after ranking prioritized proposals, no additional proposals need to be ranked as there is little chance of the proposal to be funded.
- **Review Panel Actions:** For each proposal, the review panel will discuss the proposals and the preliminary individual scores and agree to final scores, establish consensus "strengths and weaknesses" commentary report ("Group Consensus Commentary Sheet"), and consensus recommendations (Recommended, Consider, or Not Recommended) for each proposal which will be evaluated and ranked.
- **STC Contact**: The PM will provide STCs with the preliminary list of ranked proposals and recommendations. The STC may provide the PM with additional comment. All ranking, consensus recommendations and STC comments will be organized and provided to the Review Board and Chief.
- **Review Panel Facilitators** are either selected/assigned from one of the Review Panel members, or by the designated AWEP Program Manager. The assigned facilitator may be responsible for arranging meeting locations, keeping the team on task, on time to meet deadlines, and will record the final score, strengths and weaknesses on the "Review Panel Consensus Commentary Sheet" developed by the Review Panel for each proposal.
- **Accurate and thorough completion of these documents is critical, as they will be used to provide information to the AWEP Review Board, the Chief, and to provide feedback to applicants following award selections.** (The initial score for each proposal is determined by the review team members. Concurrence is needed for the final score on the "Group Consensus Commentary Sheet.")

Additional Review Panel, Approval Guidelines and Miscellaneous Information

All members of review panels, facilitators, and other review officials must adhere to the following guidelines:

- Prior to evaluating proposals, each evaluator must sign and submit a Certification and Acknowledgement indicating an understanding of the evaluation procedures and requirements. This certification must be read and understood by the evaluator and returned prior to receiving any proposals. Adherence to the certification is required.
- Evaluators may contact the AWEP Program Manager to obtain clarifications regarding an application.
- Evaluators should not discuss with persons outside the agency aspects related to the Review Panel proceedings, even after selection of awards. Questions regarding the review process should be directed to the designated Program Manager. Evaluator identities will be held in the strictest confidence.
- Evaluators should not directly contact a partner applicant; however questions could be directed to the designated Program Manager who may contact the partner for clarification.
- Evaluators may not accept any invitations or gratuities (i.e., meals, gifts, favors, etc.) from any applicant. If an evaluator is offered any invitations, gratuities, or job offers by or on behalf of any applicant, the evaluator will immediately report it to the designated National Program Manager.
- Proposals will be evaluated only against the published criteria in the Notice of Request for Proposals (RFP). No new criteria are to be considered by evaluators.
- All proposals will be individually evaluated against the published criteria and initially ranked without consultation between evaluators.
- Screening worksheets and individual and group consensus worksheets are the property of the NRCS for internal use of the agency. Information developed during the evaluation process is not released to the public. Final ranking lists of eligible proposals may be posted to the NRCS national AWEP website. Agency decisions regarding evaluation and ranking scores are not appealable.

Forms and Worksheets Attachments for Program Manager and Review Team Members:

1. Attachment 1: AWEP Screening Eligibility Criteria Worksheet (Completed by PM)
2. Attachment 2: Evaluator Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest Certification
3. Technical Rating Standards (scoring guidance for reviewers)
4. "Individual Reviewer Scoring Sheet" (Reviewers make copies and complete for each proposal)
5. "Individual Commentary Sheet" (Reviewers make copies and complete for each proposal)
6. "Review Panel Consensus Commentary Sheet" (Facilitators make copies and compile for each proposal)

Agricultural Water Enhancement Program (AWEP)

Fiscal Year 2010 AWEP Eligibility Screening Criteria Worksheet – Attachment 1

Introduction:
This worksheet shall be completed by the designated AWEP Program Manager (PM) for each partner proposal submitted by the established deadline date and before referral to the Review Panel. This worksheet will provide the PM with guidance for appropriate response to the partner applicant and must be completed in order to provide a timely response for acceptance or denial due to ineligibility. Proposals will also be assigned a **priority** (High, Medium, Low) which will establish the grouping order by which proposals will be evaluated.

Detailed AWEP Application Screening Criteria Worksheet			
Applicant Name:		Date Rec	
Address:		State(s)	
City, State ZIP:		County	
Contact person-email:		Phone	
Program Manager:		Application #	

Screening Criteria – All answers must be "YES" to refer the application for evaluation and prioritization

Line	Minimum Requirement (See RFP for details)	Yes	No	Remarks
1	Proposal delivered or submission postmarked on or before RFP deadline?			"No" = Defer Proposal
2	Partner is an eligible entity? (Federally recognized tribe, State, unit of government, agricultural or silvicultural association or other group (NGO) of agricultural producers – see RFP – Individual producers are not eligible)			"No" = Defer Proposal
3	Land associated with proposal is eligible (Controlled by producers-See RFP)?			"No" = Defer Proposal
4	The proposal is not a request for direct NRCS FA funding to the partner entity with no funding to producers?			"No" = Defer Proposal
5	The proposal will involve more than one EQIP eligible producer?			"No" = Defer Proposal
	COMPLETE PROPOSAL (Addressing all the following):			
6	The proposal addresses one or more priority agricultural water enhancement activities? • Water quality or water conservation plan development including resource condition assessment and modeling. • Water conservation restoration or enhancement including activities for conversion from irrigated to dryland farming. • Conversion of irrigated land to less-intensive crops or dryland farming. • Water quality or quantity restoration or enhancement practices. • Irrigation system improvements or efficiency enhancements. • Practices to address drought (e.g. water storage). • Other water quality or conservation proposal on ag. lands.			
7	The Proposal is complete by addressing partner capacity: • Demonstrates ability to commit to long-term effort to promote water conservation or quality improvement. • Demonstrates ability to coordinate efforts among producers. • Shows ability to provide non federal funds or other resources. • Partner provides support for monitoring and evaluation for project. • Provides capacity to deliver final project performance report. • Proposal includes criteria for ranking producer applications. • Describes collaboration efforts to achieve project goals for each partner, including roles, responsibilities, capabilities, etc. • Describes water enhancement activities to be carried out and practices to be applied within project time period, NTE 5 years. • Describes the AWEP funds needed for entire project & annually. • Describes the amount and source of non-federal resources to be leveraged by the partner. • Proposal includes a project implementation schedule.			

8	The Project Proposal Does Not Exceed Five Years.			
9	The Proposal describes the lands to be treated: • Includes a map of project area. • Description of the water quality/quantity concerns to be addressed. • Description of the water enhancement objectives to be achieved. • The total number of acres anticipated to be treated. • The proposed enhancement activities to be implemented.			
10	The Proposal describes Producer participation: • Proposal includes the number of producers likely to participate. • Proposal includes the total number of producer in the project area.			
11	The Proposal includes a letter of review from the STC(s).			
12	**The Proposal is complete and each category above is "Yes":**			"Yes" to all items = Refer for priority assignment and project evaluation
	Special Considerations Noted:			
13	Proposal Includes Indian Land (Federally recognized Tribal land).			
14	Proposal is located in Drought Exception D-4 Area (See State/County List)			
15	Proposal requests consideration for AGI waiver for projects of Special Environmental Significance			
	Priority Assignment:			
A	Proposal which includes or will address (meet all listed items): • Practices to assist producers to convert from irrigated to dryland farming. • Proposal leverages other partner funding along with AWEP funding. • Proposal is located in a priority region per RFP. • Proposal will address both water conservation and water quality issues.			Assign "High Priority"
B	Water conservation related proposal which includes (meet all listed items): • Practices to assist producers to convert to less-water intensive crops. • Proposal leverages other partner resources along with AWEP funding. • Proposal is located in a priority region per RFP.			Assign "Medium Priority"
C	Water conservation or water quality related proposals: • All other proposals which are not High or Medium priority.			Assign "Low Priority"

All minimum proposal application, applicant, and criteria have been met. Refer for evaluation ☐ or Not referred ☐

Priority: ☐ High _☐ Medium ☐ Low Reviewer: _____ Date: _____

Other Comments:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

ATTACHMENT 2

CERTIFICATION AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

EVALUATOR CONFIDENTIALITY AND CONFLICT OF INTEREST CERTIFICATION

CONFIDENTIALITY

In anticipation of my participation as a member of a review panel for the evaluation of proposals submitted in response to the subject solicitation, I certify that I will not disclose, either during the proceedings of the evaluation or at any subsequent time, any information concerning the content of proposals (unless such information is otherwise publicly made available) or the evaluation process, to anyone who is not authorized access to the information by the National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Selection Official or by law or regulation, and then only to the extent that such information is required in connection with such person's official responsibilities, except pursuant to the order of a court of competent jurisdiction. Furthermore, I will report immediately to the NRCS Program Manager or Contracting Officer any communication directed to me from any outside source concerning either the content of proposals or the evaluation process.

Whenever the NRCS provides me with an application for evaluation, I agree to use the information contained in the application only for evaluation purposes and to treat the information confidentially. Furthermore, I agree to abide by any restrictive markings on the application to protect technical data and other data including trade secrets and/or privileged or confidential commercial, financial, or personnel information which the applicant does not want disclosed to the public or to its competitors. Upon completion of the evaluation, I agree to return all paper copies of proposals in my possession and to delete all electronic copies of the same. Finally, unless authorized by the NRCS Program Manager or Contracting Officer, I agree not to contact the originator of the application concerning any aspect of its contents.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

I certify that I am not aware of any matter which might reduce my ability to review and evaluate proposals for financial assistance in an objective and unbiased manner or which might place me in a position of conflict, real or apparent, between my responsibilities as an evaluator and other interests. In making this certification, I have considered all my stocks, bonds, other financial interests and employment arrangements (past, present, or under consideration) and, to the extent known by me, all the financial interests and employment arrangements of myself or any other members of my immediate family. Furthermore, I agree to disclose to the NRCS Program Manager and the NRCS Contracting Officer any actual or perceived conflicts of interest as soon as I become aware of them.

If, after the date of this certification, any person, firm, or organization with which, to my knowledge, I or other members of my immediate family) have a financial interest, or with which I have (or had) an employment arrangement, submits a proposal or otherwise becomes involved in, or is discovered to be involved in, the subject solicitation process, I will notify the NRCS Program Manager and the NRCS Contracting Officer, and thereafter, until advised to the contrary, I will not participate further in any way (by rendering advice, making recommendations, voting, or otherwise) in the evaluation process.

_____ _____
Signature Date

_____
Printed Name

*Certification to be maintained in the official file of the designated Program Manager.

Points of emphasis for FY 2010 review

FY 2010 AWEP

RANKING STANDARDS

For the purposes of the NHQ Review evaluation, a **strength** is an aspect of a project proposal that, when compared to a stated evaluation criterion, leaves virtually no doubt regarding the applicant's capability to perform the criterion.

A **weakness** is an aspect of a project proposal that, when compared to the evaluation criterion, provides evidence that the applicant will not be capable of fulfilling the criterion successfully. A **minor weakness** is one, which raises doubts regarding the applicant's ability to satisfy the criterion, but can be easily correctable. A **significant weakness** is one, which leaves no doubt regarding the applicant's inability to satisfy the criterion and cannot be corrected without a major revision to the application. The combination of several minor weaknesses within a criterion may become a significant weakness. A **deficiency** is a material failure of an applicant to address a Solicitation requirement or a combination of significant weaknesses in the application, providing evidence that the risk for unsuccessful performance of the statement of work is raised to an unacceptable level.

The Panel will use a point scale system to score the project proposals on the following worksheets. Each of the criteria can receive a maximum of 25 points. The additional "commentary" provided by the review team shall utilize the following concepts to help categorize the strengths and weaknesses of the proposal.

Superior: Virtually no practical way to improve the application regarding this criterion. Addresses all criteria comprehensively and has strengths with no significant weaknesses. Proposal leaves practically no doubt regarding the applicant's capability to fulfill the criterion.

Good: Applicant comprehensively addresses all aspects of the criterion and there are no significant weaknesses. Proposal demonstrates applicant's capability to fulfill the criterion.

Satisfactory: Applicant addresses all aspects of the criterion, may have few, but correctable weaknesses, and will likely be able to fulfill the criterion.

Marginal: Applicant fails to address some aspects of the criterion, has many potentially correctable weaknesses, but leaves some doubt as to the ability to fulfill the criterion.

Unsatisfactory: Applicant fails to address most aspects of the criterion, has significant weaknesses, and correcting these weaknesses would require a major revision. Proposal does not demonstrate applicant's ability to fulfill the criterion.

The Panel will only evaluate AWEP project proposals by comparing submitted data against the Evaluation Criteria. Further, no evaluation of the project is made by comparison of one proposal to another. No new criteria may be added or considered.

The following AWEP scoring worksheet shall be used by Review Panel members to score proposals using the following procedure. The PM will provide Panel members with a list of prioritized proposals and funding requested. The panel will evaluate proposals based upon the highest priority and until the available funding is exhausted. This means that if funding is exhausted after ranking prioritized proposals, no additional proposals need to be ranked as there is little chance of the proposal to be funded.

FY 2010 AWEP Proposals

INDIVIDUAL REVIEWER SCORING WORKSHEET

Resource Concern: _____ Application #: _____

Project Name: _____

Reviewer: _____

No.	Evaluation Criteria	Score
1	**Producer Participation** - Proposal includes a high percentage of producers actively farming or managing working agricultural or nonindustrial private forest lands included in the area covered by the agreement? • 80% or more of eligible producers in project area are likely to participate – 25 pts • 60%-79% of eligible producers in project area are likely to participate – 20 pts • 40%-59% of eligible producers in project area are likely to participate – 15 pts • 20%-39% of eligible producers in project area are likely to participate – 10 pts • 10%-19% eligible producers in project area are likely to participate – 5 pts • Less than 10% of eligible producers in project area are likely to participate – 0 pts	
2	**Resource Improvement and Agricultural Activities:** - Proposal will result in significant application of conservation practices to address agricultural water conservation activities <u>or</u> water quality issues? • Proposal will address water quantity/quality activities on 80% or more of the land in project area – 25 pts • Proposal will address water quantity/quality activities on 50% to 79% of the land in project area – 20 pts • Proposal will address water quantity/quality activities on 49% or less of the land in project area – 15 pts	
3	**Partner Monitoring and Evaluation:** - Proposal includes contributions, activities or efforts by the partner to assist producers develop water quality or water conservation plans which include resource condition assessment and modeling. 25 pts - Proposal does not include partner provided activities for planning, resource assessment and modeling. 0 pts	
4	**Regulatory Compliance:** • Proposal will substantially assist producers in meeting water conservation related Federal, State or local regulatory requirements 25 pts • Proposal will assist producers meet some water conservation related regulatory requirements 15 pts • Proposal will not assist producers meet water conservation related regulatory requirements 0 pts	
5	**Project Completion:** • Proposal includes provisions to help program participants complete the application of the conservation practices and/or activities in program contracts in two to three years - 25 pts • Proposal includes provisions to help program participants complete the application of the conservation practices and/or activities in program contracts in four to five years - 20 pts • Proposal includes provisions to help program participants complete the application of the conservation practices and/or activities in program contracts in six or more years - 0 pts	
6	**Groundwater Depletion:** • Proposal includes activities by partner, using non-federal resources, to reduce on-farm groundwater depletion through efforts in cooperation with other agencies, partners or water management districts in project area (e.g. reduced groundwater pumping, retirement of water rights, other partner activity) 25 pts • Proposal does not include any partner activities as previously described. 0 pts	

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No.	Evaluation Criteria	Score
7	**General Project Management** (Select as appropriate not to exceed 20 pts): • Milestones and partner deliverables are clearly identified and achievable – 5 pts • Timeline and implementation schedule is reasonable and achievable – 5 pts • Project staff has technical expertise needed – 5 pts • Budget is reasonable and justified– 5 pts	
8	**Proposal Leverages Non-Federal Resources** (Does not include producer contributions through contracts): • Proposal includes provisions for partner contribution of both financial AND technical assistance to eligible program participants. 50 pts • Proposal includes provisions for partner contribution of financial assistance OR technical assistance to eligible program participants. 25 pts. • Proposal does not include any partner contribution of technical assistance or financial assistance to eligible program participants. 0 pts	
9	**Proposal Includes Ranking Criteria:** • Proposal offers appropriate project area criteria that NRCS could use in ProTracts AERT to prioritize and rank agricultural producer EQIP program applications. (No criteria offered = 0 pts.) 25 pts	
10	**Partner Collaboration (Agricultural producers may not be counted as a "partner"):** • Proposal identifies two or more partners who will collaborate to help achieve project objectives – 25 pts • Proposal identifies one additional partner who will collaborate to help achieve project objectives – 15 pts	

11	**Project Priority Area (Refer to AWEP Priority Area Map & County List):**
	• Proposal addresses water quantity resource concerns within one of the following regions: – 75 pts
	  • **Eastern Snake River:** Idaho
	  • **Puget Sound:** Washington
	  • **Ogallala Aquifer:** South Dakota, Nebraska, Wyoming, Colorado, Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico
	  • **Sacramento River Basin:** California, Oregon
	  • **Upper Mississippi River Basin:** South Dakota, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Missouri
	  • **Red River of the North Basin:** North Dakota, Minnesota, South Dakota
	  • **Everglades:** Florida (Not located within AWEP priority area = 0 pts.)	

12	**Conversion to Dryland Farming (For Water Conservation Related Projects) Proposal Will Promote Use of the Following Practices to Support Conversion on Cropland:** **Conservation Crop Rotation (328); Residue Management (329, 344, 345, 346); Nutrient Management (590); Pest Management (595); Well Decommissioning (351).** • Proposal will promote use of all the listed practices for conversion activities: 25 pts. • Proposal will promote use of four or more of the listed practices: (less than four = 0 points) 10 pts	
13	**Conversion to Dryland Farming (For Water Conservation Related Projects) Proposal Will Promote Use of the Following Practices to Support Conversion of Cropland to Grazed Land:** **Pasture & Hayland Planting (512); Forage Harvest Management (511); Range Planting (550); Prescribed Grazing (528); Nutrient Management (590); Fence (382); Pipeline (516) and Watering Facility (614).** • Proposal will promote use of all the listed practices for conversion activities: 25 pts. • Proposal will promote use of four or more of the listed practices: (less than four = 0 points) 10 pts	
14	**On Farm Water Conservation and Water Quality Practices:** • Proposal includes efforts to promote on-farm conservation practice implementation or support of: -Conversion of flood surface water irrigation systems to drip or micro-jet system, and -Implementation of complete new tailwater recovery (447). 50 pts • Proposal includes efforts to promote on-farm conservation practice implementation or support of: -Conversion of open ditch, surface mainlines/laterals to buried or surface "no-leak" systems, and -Replacement of existing buried leaky mainlines or laterals, and -Conversion of flood surface irrigation systems to sprinkler system. 20 pts • All other proposed irrigation system improvements or project water quality related. 10 pts	
	Total Score (maximum 445 points)	

This ranking score and process provides a numerical ranking of the partner proposal, but is not the only consideration used for selection or approval of funding. Additional evaluation is completed by the review team to provide "commentary" and other strengths and weaknesses of the proposal that will be considered by the Review Board and Chief. The numerical rating, commentary, STC letter of review and any other information deemed appropriate by the Chief may be considered in the evaluation and approval process. The evaluation and commentary shall specifically address the following requirements of the RFP proposal requirements and ranking considerations:

Proposal addresses one or more priority agricultural water enhancement activities such as:

- Water conservation restoration or enhancement
- Conversion of irrigated land to less-intensive or dryland
- Water quantity restoration or enhancement
- Irrigation system improvements or efficiency enhancements
- Practices to address drought (e.g. water storage)
- Other water quality or conservation proposal on agricultural lands.
- Water quality or water conservation plan development, including resource condition assessment and modeling.

Proposal partner capacity, land treatment and producer participation:

- Demonstrates ability to commit to long-term effort to promote water conservation or quality improvement.
- Demonstrates ability to coordinate efforts among producers.
- Shows ability to provide non federal funds or other resources.
- Partner provides support for monitoring and evaluation for project.
- Provides capacity to deliver final project performance report.
- Proposal includes criteria for ranking producer applications.
- Describes collaboration efforts to achieve project goals for each partner, including roles, responsibilities, capabilities, etc.
- Describes water enhancement activities to be carried out and practices to be applied within project time period, NTE 5 yrs.
- Describes the AWEP funds needed for entire project & annually.
- Describes the amount and source of non-federal resources to be leveraged by the partner.
- Proposal project implementation schedule.
- Includes a map of project area.
- Description of the water quantity concerns to be addressed.
- Description of the water enhancement objectives to be achieved.
- The total number of acres anticipated to be treated.
- The proposed enhancement activities to be implemented.
- Proposal includes the number of producers likely to participate.
- Proposal includes the total number of producer in the project area.

FY 2010 AWEP Proposals

INDIVIDUAL COMMENTARY WORKSHEET

Project Name: _____ Application Number: _____

Partner Name: _____

Reviewer: _____ **Score:** _____

(Do not use the enter key in the boxes. Use the arrow down key to start a new statement.)

Strengths of proposal as related to RFP criteria:

Weaknesses of proposal as related to RFP criteria:

Review Panel Consensus Commentary Worksheet

Partner Name: _____ **Project Number** _____

Project Name: _____

Facilitator/Leader: _____ **Combined Consensus Score:** _____

(Do not use the enter key in the boxes. Use the arrow down key to start a new statement.)

Strengths of proposal as related to RFP criteria:
Weaknesses of proposal as related to RFP criteria: