

Project Name and Acronym: ABC: Improving Forest health for At-Risk Wildlife Resources in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan.

Project Description/Summary:

Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) is a partnership that leverages capabilities and resources, targets assistance where it is most needed, cooperatively engages state and local partners, and works collaboratively with agricultural producers, forest land managers, and Tribes. **Improving Forest health for Wildlife Resources** will promote voluntary, incentive-based conservation on private and Tribal lands. This project is part of a national and international conservation initiative by government agencies and private conservation organizations to make unnecessary the potential listing of the Golden-winged Warbler (GWWA) under the Endangered Species Act. Together, MN, WI and MI, have the largest remaining breeding population of GWWA in the world and are critical to rebuilding populations rapidly. The GWWA, identified as a species of conservation concern in U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), State Wildlife Agency, Joint Venture, and other conservation organization plans, needs quality young forest with mature forest nearby to breed and successfully raise young. Multi-state (MN, WI, MI). NRCS funding requested may be implemented within Golden-winged Warbler and focal areas identified by the Golden-winged Warbler Working Group and the Wildlife Management Institute within the following counties:

Approved or Participating States Counties: Multi-state (MN, WI, MI). NRCS funding requested may be implemented within Golden-winged Warbler identified by the Golden-winged Warbler Working Group and the Wildlife Management Institute within the below counties. All conservation practices scheduled must be located entirely **within** one or more of the following counties:

Minnesota

- Beltrami, Itasca, St. Louis, Cass, Becker, Hubbard, Crow Wing, Carlton, Pine, Mille Lacs, Lake of the Woods, Clearwater, Wadena, Roseau, Lake, Kanabec, Morrison, Koochiching, Aitken

Wisconsin

- Taylor, Rusk, Oneida, Langlade, Price, Lincoln, Iron, Ashland, Vilas, Forest, Florence, Marinette, Oconto, Shawano, Menominee, Sawyer, Bayfield, Washburn, Douglas, Burnett

Michigan

- Marquette, Baraga, Iron, Dickinson, and Menominee counties.

Program Contact Information:

Project Coordinator: Nick Vira, (651) 602-7931, Nick.Vira@mn.usda.gov

Minnesota EQIP Program Contact: Brenda Tonn, (651) 602-7883, Brenda.Tonn@mn.usda.gov

Michigan EQIP Contact: Becky Otto, 517-324-5257, Becky.Otto@mi.usda.gov

Wisconsin EQIP Contact: Matt Otto, (608) 662-4422, matt.otto@wi.usda.gov

Protracts Requirements:

1. Subaccount Guidance:

CPM 512.83 requires that separate fund accounts be established for all programs and initiatives administered in Protracts. States must select the correct WLFW species account type from the choices in Protracts to provide for consistent analysis and the ability to track program delivery. Subaccounts will be created in Protracts to support RCCP for each State approved for the GWWA.

Program: RCCP-EQIP
Account: ABC: Improving Forest Health for Wildlife

2. Application, Evaluation, and Ranking Tool Guidance – Choice Lists and Matrix Data:

- a. Approved Land Types – States must assign the following land uses and land use modifier that apply as eligible for RCCP in the Protracts AERT ranking tool:

Land Use Type
Crop
Forest
Pasture
Associated Agricultural Lands

Land Use Modifier
Wildlife

- b. States must assign natural resource concerns from the following list for RCCP in Protracts AERT:

Resource Concern
Fish and Wildlife - Inadequate Habitat – Cover Shelter

- c. Approved Conservation Practices to be populated in Protracts AERT: Contracts must include at least one of the applicable core practices, or must be completing a conservation system that supports core practices that are documented as already implemented on the land proposed for the application.

Core Practices		G-W Warbler
647 - Early Successional Habitat Development & Management		X
666 - Forest Stand Improvement		X

Supporting Practices that States may offer to support this Project:

Supporting Practices		G-W Warbler
314 - Brush Management		X
315 - Herbaceous Weed		X
327 - Conservation Cover		X
338 - Prescribed Burning		X
394 - Fire Break		X
612-Tree Shrub		X

490-Tree Shrub Site Prep		X
655 - Forest trails and landings		X

3. Screening, Application, Evaluation, and Ranking Tool Guidance – Ranking Criteria Questions:

States will populate the approved conservation practices in Protracts AERT and associate all core and supporting practices with resource concerns where CPPE values are positive.

The total ranking points associated with the Project are distributed in AERT and approved ranking questions are as follows:

AERT Level	Maximum Points	Point Percentage
National Level Ranking Questions	250	25%
State Level Ranking Questions	400	40%
Local Level Ranking Questions	250	25%
Efficiency Score	100	10%
Total Points for this initiative:	1,000	100%

National Level Ranking Criteria Requirements (250 Points):

National ranking questions are established in Protracts by the national office.

State Level Ranking Criteria Requirements (400 Points):

Question Number	Question	Points
1	Wildlife Habitat – Will the proposed project improve wildlife habitat by implementing one or more of the following conservation practices: 647 - Early Successional Habitat Development & Management, 666 - Forest Stand Improvement?	150
2	Will the application result in the implementation of conservation practices that occur in a RCPP GWW identified priority area?	150
3	Will practices in the application result in a forest stand consisting in three or more age classifications?	75
4	Conservation Implementation - Does the proposed project schedule all conservation practices in the contract on the CPA-1155 within 2 years of date of obligation?	25

Local Level Ranking Criteria Requirements (250 Points):

Local ranking questions are approved and entered into Protracts at the State level by each State. (HSI questions are still being worked on)

Question Number	Question	Points
-----------------	----------	--------

1	Wildlife Habitat – The application is within the State Specific Focal Area, and will create early successional habitat, for the Golden Winged Warbler resulting in: (Choose one of the following)	
1a	HSI post treatment score equal or greater than .75	150
1b	HSI post treatment score equal or greater than .625 and less than .75	75
1c	HSI Post treatment greater than .5 but less than .625	25
2	Wildlife Habitat – Percent of the application treatment acreage that involves aspen management: (Choose one of the following)	
2a	33-49%	25
2b	50-74%	50
2c	75% and greater	100

Screening Criteria Worksheet: Only priority determinations resulting in a high or medium rating will be funded. High priority determinations will be ranked and funded prior to medium determinations.

Fiscal Year 2015

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

Instructions:

This screening worksheet must be completed for each eligible producer applying for the American Bird Conservancy Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) EQIP sign-up. Applications will be accepted on a continuous basis; however, application periods are established for purposes of evaluation, ranking, and funding decisions. The goal of this screening tool is to ensure that conservation technical assistance and the EQIP program benefits are managed efficiently to address priority conservation needs related to this initiative.

Completion of this worksheet and documentation does not constitute an 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, or 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>High Priority Category:</u> Project has proceeded through Step 8 (Implement the Plan) of the Planning Process by the application batching date. Step 8 includes obtaining all necessary and State specific permits, land rights, surveys, final designs, and inspections for practices prior to practice implementation.		High
<u>Medium Priority Category:</u> Project has proceeded through Step 4 (Analyze Resource Data) of the Planning Process by the application batching date. Step 4 provides a clear understanding of the baseline conditions and will help to judge how effective a project is after it has been put into place.		Medium
<u>Low Priority Category:</u> All applications that do not qualify as “high” or “medium” priority.		Low

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

D.C. Approval:		Date Approved:	
----------------	--	----------------	--