

## Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watersheds Initiative (MRBI) Project Proposals - Criteria for Watershed Selection

To ensure that there is adequate capacity and demand, in addition to a justified need for accelerated funding in proposed priority watersheds (12-digit HUCs), STCs should consider the following questions:

- **Is the watershed identified on the State's list of priorities in the State nutrient reduction strategy, or other State or regional plan, or is it within an MRBI Focus Area? (required)**
- Is there a clear link between the primary resource concerns in the watershed and the ability of conservation to effectively address the resource concerns?
- Are there committed partners in place who can leverage funding and resources for activities such as watershed planning, outreach, providing additional financial assistance, technical assistance, modeling, or monitoring?
- Does the watershed have a sufficient number of acres needing treatment, a sufficient number of producers to warrant additional funding, or both?
- Is there a demonstrated demand for water quality-related conservation among producers in the area?
- Is there sufficient technical capacity in the watershed to plan and implement conservation on a watershed scale?

There must be a watershed plan or assessment (refer to *Attachment B: NWQI/MRBI Watershed Assessment Guidance*) that provides the following:

- Sufficient watershed assessment to guide the siting and implementation of conservation practices at the HUC-12 level for greatest water quality benefit.
- Identification of critical source areas or vulnerable acres within the watershed for identified pollutants of concern (a map showing these areas within the watershed is required). **States will need GIS files for critical source areas for use in CART.**
- Established watershed goals for water quality improvement, with specific metrics that can establish progress towards these goals.
- Implementation needs to meet water quality objectives, and associated costs. Ideally this will include an evaluation of treatment level to date.
- Outreach strategies for implementation on vulnerable acres.

Priority watersheds will NOT be considered for selection without a watershed assessment that meets these criteria. There is no specific format requirements for assessments, and in some cases the required assessment elements may be met using more than one available document. States may propose watersheds for a one-year "planning phase" to receive technical assistance in development of watershed assessments prior to receiving financial assistance.