NH Ranking Criteria for NRCS Programs – Fiscal Year 2025

Application Overview

Any applicant may submit an application for participation in ACEP, EQIP, CSP, or RCPP. The NRCS State Conservationist or Area Director, in consultation with the State Technical Committee, Tribal Conservation Advisory Councils, Local Work Groups, and other stakeholders, has developed the following ranking criteria to prioritize and select applications that best address the applicable program purposes and priority natural resource concerns in **NH**.

The NRCS State Conservationist or Area Director will establish application batching periods and select the highest ranked applications for funding, based on applicant eligibility and the NRCS ranking process. In Fiscal Year **2025**, NRCS will use the Conservation Assessment Ranking Tool (CART) to assess and rank all eligible applications for NRCS conservation programs. The minimum threshold for continuous selection will be 50% of the total available points or 100 out of the 400 total available points. A manual calculation will allow conservation partners that don't have access to CART the ability to screen applications based on the following New Hampshire ranking criteria and forecast potential for continuous selection versus selection after established batching periods.

Inventory and Assessment in CART

CART is a decision support system designed to provide a consistent, replicable framework for the conservation planning process based on geospatially referenced information, client-provided information, field observations, and NRCS conservation planner expertise. CART is designed to assist NRCS conservation planners as they assess site vulnerability and existing conditions, and identify natural resource concerns for a unit of land.

CART assessments of existing management and conservation efforts are compared against conservation planning criteria thresholds to determine the additional level of conservation efforts needed to address identified natural resource concerns. NRCS uses the results to identify conservation planning activities for the client. NRCS also uses CART to consolidate resource data and program information to prioritize program delivery and report outcomes of NRCS investments in conservation.

In general, resource concerns fall into one of three categories for the assessment method used in CART to assess and document a resource concern:

- **Client Input/Planner Observation:** A streamlined list of options is presented to the planner to document the client's activities and the planner's observation of the resource concerns present. These observations are compared to the conservation planning criteria thresholds.
- **Procedural/Deductive:** A large group of resource concerns fall into this category and are assessed using a resource concern-specific evaluation tool or a list of inventory-like criteria. Due to the variability in State tools, assessment questions and answers will be broad in nature to allow States to align them with State conditions.
- **Predictive:** The remaining resource concerns are assessed using a predictive interactive model simulation. The CART systems attempt to replicate the outcomes related to the assessment threshold outcomes compared to the model outputs.

After identifying resource concerns and describing existing conditions, planned conservation practices and activities can be added to the existing condition to determine the state of the proposed management system. Practices that are needed to support primary conservation practices and activities are also identified, but do not add conservation management points to the total.

If the client is interested in financial assistance through an NRCS conservation program, the inventory and assessment information, along with client decisions related to conservation practice adoption, are directly and consistently transferred from the assessment portion of CART to the ranking portion of CART. Based on the transferred assessment information and the conservation practices proposed for implementation, CART identifies the appropriate program ranking pool(s).

Ranking in CART

In general, NRCS program ranking criteria uses the following guiding principles:

- Degree of cost-effectiveness of the proposed conservation practices and activities;
- The level of performance of proposed conservation practices and activities;
- Treatment of resource concerns or national priority resource concerns;
- Magnitude of the environmental benefits resulting from the treatment of resource concerns reflecting the level of performance of the proposed conservation practices and activities; and
- Compliance with Federal, State, local, or tribal regulatory requirements with regards to natural resources.

CART uses a set of National Ranking Templates developed for each NRCS program and initiative. The National Ranking Templates contain four parameters that are customized for each program to reflect the national level ranking criteria. The four parameters are:

1. **Land Uses** – NRCS has developed land use designations to be used by planners and modelers at the field and landscape level. Land use modifiers more accurately define the land's actual use and provide another level of specificity and help denote how the land is managed. Land use designations and modifiers are defined in Title 180, National Planning Procedures Handbook, Part 600.
2. **Resource Concerns** – The resource condition that does not meet minimum acceptable condition levels as established by resource planning criteria. This implies an expected degradation of the soil, water, air, plant, or animal resource base to the extent that the sustainability or intended use of the resource is impaired. Because NRCS quantifies or describes resource concerns as part of a comprehensive conservation planning process, which includes client objectives, human and energy resources are considered components of the resource base.
3. **Practices** – A specific treatment used to address resource concerns, such as structural or vegetative measures, or management techniques that are planned and implemented in accordance with applicable standards and specifications.
4. **Ranking Component Weights** – A set of five components comprise the ranking score for an individual land-based assessment. The five components are:
    a. **Vulnerability** – Site vulnerability is determined by subtracting the existing condition and existing practice scores from the thresholds. This score is weighted by ranking pool to address the resource concerns prioritized by that ranking pool.
    b. **Planned Practice Effects** – The planned practice effect score is based on the sum of the planned practice on that land unit that addresses the resource concern. This score is

weighted by ranking pool to address the resource concerns prioritized by that ranking pool.

c. **Resource Priorities** – National and State resource priorities are established to address the most critical land and resource considerations and are based on NRCS national and State priorities identified with input from national, State, and local stakeholders.
d. **Program Priorities** – National and State program priorities are established to maximize program effectiveness and advance program purposes and are based on NRCS national and State priorities identified with input from national, State, and local stakeholders.
e. **Cost Efficiency** – Summation of 'Planned Practice Points' divided by the log of the 'Average Practice Cost'.

NOTE: The points for vulnerability, planned practice effects, and cost efficiency are garnered from the assessment portion of CART.

NH adopted a State-specific ranking pool within the above-described National Ranking Template parameters. The State ranking pools contain a set of questions that are divided into the following sections – applicability, category, program questions, and resource questions. Ranking pool customization allows States to focus funding on priority resource concerns and initiatives identified at the State level with input from NRCS stakeholders. Each eligible application may be considered for funding in all applicable ranking pools by program.

NRCS Resource Concerns

The following table lists the 47 resource concerns NRCS uses during the Conservation Planning process.

Categories	NRCS Resource Concerns
Soil	1. Sheet and rill erosion
	2. Wind erosion
	3. Ephemeral gully erosion
	4. Classic gully erosion
	5. Bank erosion from streams, shorelines, or water conveyance channels
	6. Subsidence
	7. Compaction
	8. Organic matter depletion
	9. Concentration of salts or other chemicals
	10. Soil organism habitat loss or degradation
	11. Aggregate instability
Water	12. Ponding and flooding
	13. Seasonal high-water table
	14. Seeps
	15. Drifted snow
	16. Surface water depletion
	17. Groundwater depletion
	18. Naturally available moisture use
	19. Inefficient irrigation water use
	20. Nutrients transported to surface water
	21. Nutrients transported to groundwater
	22. Pesticides transported to surface water

	23. Pesticides transported to groundwater
	24. Pathogens and chemicals from manure, biosolids, or compost applications transported to surface water
	25. Pathogens and chemicals from manure, biosolids, or compost applications transported to groundwater
	26. Salts transported to surface water
	27. Salts transported to groundwater
	28. Petroleum, heavy metals, and other pollutants transported to surface water
	29. Petroleum, heavy metals, and other pollutants transported to groundwater
	30. Sediment transported to surface water
	31. Elevated water temperature
Air	32. Emissions of particulate matter (PM) and PM precursors
	33. Emissions of greenhouse gasses (GHGs)
	34. Emissions of ozone precursors
	35. Objectionable odors
	36. Emissions of airborne reactive nitrogen
Plants	37. Plant productivity and health
	38. Plant structure and composition
	39. Plant pest pressure
	40. Wildfire hazard from biomass accumulation
Animals	41. Terrestrial habitat for wildlife and invertebrates
	42. Aquatic habitat for fish and other organisms
	43. Feed and forage imbalance
	44. Inadequate livestock shelter
	45. Inadequate livestock water quantity, quality, and distribution
Energy	46. Energy efficiency of equipment and facilities
	47. Energy efficiency of field operations

Ranking Pool Report

Ranking Pool	NH IRA ACEP-WRE FY25				
Program	ACEP-WRE	**Pool Status**	Draft	**Tags**	IRA
Template	IRA ACEP-WRE	**Template Status**	Active	**National Pool**	No
Last Modified By	Brooke Stubbs	**Last Modified**	09/13/2024	**Include States**	NH (Admin)

Land Uses and Modifiers

Land Use	Grazed	Wildlife	Irrigated	Hayed	Drained	Organic	Water Feature	Protected	Urban	Aquaculture
Associated Ag Land	--	--	--	--	N/A	--	--	--	--	--
Crop	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Forest	--	--	--	N/A	N/A	--	--	--	--	--
Other Rural Land	--	--	--	N/A	N/A	--	--	--	--	--
Pasture	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Range	--	--	N/A	--	N/A	--	--	--	--	--
Water	N/A	--	N/A	N/A	N/A	--	--	--	--	--

Resource Concern Categories

Categories			
Category	**Min %**	**Default %**	**Max %**
Air quality emissions	10	10	60
Aquatic habitat	10	15	70
Concentrated erosion	0	5	60
Degraded plant condition	0	5	60
Field pesticide loss	0	5	60
Field sediment, nutrient and pathogen loss	0	5	60
Long term protection of land	10	15	70
Pest pressure	0	5	60
Source water depletion	0	5	60
Storage and handling of pollutants	0	5	60
Terrestrial habitat	10	15	70
Weather resilience	0	5	20
Wind and water erosion	0	5	15

Air quality emissions

Resource Concern	Min %	Default %	Max %
Emissions of greenhouse gases - GHGs	100	100	100

Aquatic habitat

Resource Concern	Min %	Default %	Max %
Aquatic habitat for fish and other organisms	50	67	100
Elevated water temperature	0	33	50

Concentrated erosion

Resource Concern	Min %	Default %	Max %
Bank erosion from streams, shorelines or water conveyance channels	0	70	100
Classic gully erosion	0	15	50
Ephemeral gully erosion	0	15	50

Degraded plant condition

Resource Concern	Min %	Default %	Max %
Plant productivity and health	0	50	100
Plant structure and composition	0	50	100

Field pesticide loss

Resource Concern	Min %	Default %	Max %
Pesticides transported to groundwater	0	50	75
Pesticides transported to surface water	25	50	100

Field sediment, nutrient and pathogen loss

Resource Concern	Min %	Default %	Max %
Nutrients transported to groundwater	0	35	100
Nutrients transported to surface water	0	28	100
Pathogens and chemicals from manure, biosolids or compost applications transported to groundwater	0	4	15
Pathogens and chemicals from manure, biosolids or compost applications transported to surface water	0	4	100
Sediment transported to surface water	0	29	100

Long term protection of land

Resource Concern	Min %	Default %	Max %
Loss of functions and values	85	95	100
Threat of conversion	0	5	15

Pest pressure			
Resource Concern	**Min %**	**Default %**	**Max %**
Plant pest pressure	100	100	100

Source water depletion			
Resource Concern	**Min %**	**Default %**	**Max %**
Groundwater depletion	25	40	60
Surface water depletion	40	60	75

Storage and handling of pollutants			
Resource Concern	**Min %**	**Default %**	**Max %**
Nutrients transported to groundwater	0	45	100
Nutrients transported to surface water	0	55	100
Petroleum, heavy metals and other pollutants transported to groundwater	0	--	50
Petroleum, heavy metals and other pollutants transported to surface water	0	--	100

Terrestrial habitat			
Resource Concern	**Min %**	**Default %**	**Max %**
Terrestrial habitat for wildlife and invertebrates	100	100	100

Weather resilience			
Resource Concern	**Min %**	**Default %**	**Max %**
Drifted snow	0	--	25
Naturally available moisture use	0	10	25
Ponding and flooding	0	45	100
Seasonal high water table	0	35	100
Seeps	0	10	25

Wind and water erosion			
Resource Concern	**Min %**	**Default %**	**Max %**
Sheet and rill erosion	0	85	100
Wind erosion	0	15	100

Practices

Practice Name	Practice Code	Practice Type
Brush Management	314	Conservation Practices

Practice Name	Practice Code	Practice Type
Clearing and Snagging	326	Conservation Practices
Conservation Cover	327	Conservation Practices
Prescribed Burning	338	Conservation Practices
Cover Crop	340	Conservation Practices
Critical Area Planting	342	Conservation Practices
Dam, Diversion	348	Conservation Practices
Well Decommissioning	351	Conservation Practices
Dike and Levee	356	Conservation Practices
Diversion	362	Conservation Practices
Windbreak/Shelterbelt Establishment and Renovation	380	Conservation Practices
Fence	382	Conservation Practices
Field Border	386	Conservation Practices
Riparian Herbaceous Cover	390	Conservation Practices
Riparian Forest Buffer	391	Conservation Practices
Filter Strip	393	Conservation Practices
Firebreak	394	Conservation Practices
Stream Habitat Improvement and Management	395	Conservation Practices
Aquatic Organism Passage	396	Conservation Practices
Dam	402	Conservation Practices
Grade Stabilization Structure	410	Conservation Practices
Land Clearing	460	Conservation Practices
Land Smoothing	466	Conservation Practices
Access Control	472	Conservation Practices
Mulching	484	Conservation Practices
Tree/Shrub Site Preparation	490	Conservation Practices
Obstruction Removal	500	Conservation Practices
Pumping Plant	533	Conservation Practices

Practice Name	Practice Code	Practice Type
Range Planting	550	Conservation Practices
Drainage Water Management	554	Conservation Practices
Access Road	560	Conservation Practices
Trails and Walkways	575	Conservation Practices
Streambank and Shoreline Protection	580	Conservation Practices
Channel Bed Stabilization	584	Conservation Practices
Structure for Water Control	587	Conservation Practices
Nutrient Management	590	Conservation Practices
Pest Management Conservation System	595	Conservation Practices
Subsurface Drain	606	Conservation Practices
Surface Roughening	609	Conservation Practices
Tree/Shrub Establishment	612	Conservation Practices
Underground Outlet	620	Conservation Practices
Restoration of Rare or Declining Natural Communities	643	Conservation Practices
Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management	644	Conservation Practices
Upland Wildlife Habitat Management	645	Conservation Practices
Shallow Water Development and Management	646	Conservation Practices
Early Successional Habitat Development-Mgt	647	Conservation Practices
Windbreak/Shelterbelt Renovation	650	Conservation Practices
Forest Trails and Landings	655	Conservation Practices
Constructed Wetland	656	Conservation Practices
Wetland Restoration	657	Conservation Practices
Wetland Creation	658	Conservation Practices
Wetland Enhancement	659	Conservation Practices
Forest Stand Improvement	666	Conservation Practices
Well Plugging	755	Interim Conservation Practices
Stream Crossing	578	Conservation Practices

Practice Name	Practice Code	Practice Type
Fuel Break	383	Conservation Practices
Woody Residue Treatment	384	Conservation Practices
Road/Trail/Landing Closure and Treatment	654	Conservation Practices
Drainage Ditch Covering	775	Interim Conservation Practices
Herbaceous Weed Treatment	315	Conservation Practices
Structures for Wildlife	649	Conservation Practices
Wildlife Habitat Planting	420	Conservation Practices
Long-Term Protection of Land - Permanent Easement	LTPPE	Easements
Long-Term Protection of Land - Maximum Duration Allowed by State Law	LTPMAS	Easements
Long-Term Protection of Land - 30-Year Easement	LTP30YE	Easements
Long-Term Protection of Land - 30-Year Contract	LTP30YC	Easements
Acquisition Process - Title Search	LTAPTS	Easements
Acquisition Process - Environmental Database Records Search	LTAPERS	Easements
Acquisition Process - Full Phase I	LTAPFP1	Easements
Acquisition Process - Appraisal	LTAPA	Easements
Acquisition Process - Appraisal Update	LTAPAU	Easements
Acquisition Process - Appraisal Technical Review First Review	LTAPTR1	Easements
Acquisition Process - Appraisal Technical Review Second Review	LTAPTR2	Easements
Acquisition Process - Boundary Survey	LTAPBS	Easements
Acquisition Process - Closing Services	LTAPCS	Easements
Acquisition Process - Ingress Egress	LTAPIE	Easements

Ranking Weights

Factors	Algorithm	Allowable Min	Default	Allowable Max
Vulnerabilities	Default	5	10	10
Planned Practice Effects	Default	5	5	10
Resource Priorities	Default	40	40	40
Program Priorities	Default	45	45	45
Efficiencies	Default	0	0	0

Display Group: NH IRA ACEP-WRE FY-25 (Draft)

An asterisk will be displayed to show that it is a conditional section or conditional question.

Survey: Applicability Questions

Section: Applicability		
Question	**Answer Choices**	**Points**
Did the applicant apply for IRA ACEP-WRE enrollment?	YES	--
	NO	--

Survey: Category Questions

Section: Category		
Question	**Answer Choices**	**Points**
The proposed easement most closely aligns with which of the following IRA ACEP-WRE priorities?	Highly organic soils and high carbon mineral soils	--
	Restored and managed as native forest habitat	--
	Native forest habitat to be maintained as native forest habitat	--

Survey: Program Questions

Section: Program - All Categories		
Question	**Answer Choices**	**Points**
1. Describe the self-certification of the applicants from the NRCS-CPA-1200?	Historically Underserved (HU), including Socially Disadvantaged Farmer or Rancher (SDFR), Beginning Farmer or Rancher (BFR), Veteran Farmer or Rancher (VFR), or Limited-Resource Farmer or Rancher (LRFR)	25
	Applicant is a covered producer participating in the CRP Transition Incentives Program (CRP-TIP)	5
	Not Historically Underserved	0
	Blank	0

Section: Program - Priority Soils*		
Question	**Answer Choices**	**Points**

Section: Program - Priority Soils*

Question	Answer Choices	Points
1. What percentage of the proposed easement area intersects with Priority Area 1 (red on the map)	Greater than or equal to 75%	40
	Greater than or equal to 50% and less than or equal to 74%	20
	Greater than or equal to 25% and less than or equal to 49%	8
	Otherwise	0
2. What percentage of the proposed easement area intersects with Priority Area 2 (yellow on the map)	Greater than or equal to 75%	15
	Greater than or equal to 50% and less than or equal to 74%	8
	Greater than or equal to 25% and less than or equal to 49%	3
	Otherwise	0
3. What percentage of the proposed easement area intersects with either Priority Area 1 and/or Priority Area 2?	Greater than or equal to 25% and less than or equal to 49%	5
	Intersects either Priority area	2
	Otherwise	0
4. What percentage of the proposed easement area will be restored to native forest as a planned practice under the Wetland Reserve Plan of Operations and/or is currently native forested habitat that will be maintained as native forest habitat?	Greater than or equal to 75%	10
	Greater than or equal to 50% and less than or equal to 74%	7
	Greater than or equal to 25% and less than or equal to 49%	3
	Greater than or equal to 24%	0

Section: Program - Reforestation *

Question	Answer Choices	Points
1. What percentage of the proposed easement area will be restored to native forest as a planned practice under the Wetland Reserve Plan of Operations?	Greater than or equal to 75%	40
	Greater than or equal to 50% and less than or equal to 74%	20
	Less than 50%	0
2. What percentage of the proposed easement area is currently forested habitat that will be maintained as forested habitat?	Greater than or equal to 40%	20
	Greater than or equal to 20% and less than or equal to 39%	8
	Less than or equal to 19%	0
3. Does the proposed easement area intersect with the highly organic soils priority area 1 and/or priority area 2 by 25% or more?	Yes	10
	No	0

Section: Program - Maintained Native Forest Habitat*

Question	Answer Choices	Points
1. The majority of the existing forest habitat is:	Bottomland Forest / Forested Wetland	--
	Upland Forest	--
	CRP Planted to Trees	--

Section: Program - Maintained Native Forest Habitat*		
Question	**Answer Choices**	**Points**
2. What percentage of the proposed easement area will be restored to native forest?	Greater than or equal to 40%	20
	Greater than or equal to 20% and less than or equal to 39%	8
	Less than or equal to 19%	0
3. What percentage of the proposed easement area is currently forested habitat that will be maintained as forested habitat?	Greater than or equal to 75%	40
	Greater than or equal to 50% and less than or equal to 74%	20
	Less than or equal to 49%	0
4. Does the proposed easement area intersect with the highly organic soils priority area 1 and/or priority area 2 by 25% or more?	Yes	10
	No	0

Survey: Resource Questions

Section: Resource		
Question	**Answer Choices**	**Points**
1. Proximity of other lands permanently protected for the purpose of wildlife and habitat conservation in relation to the proposed easement area?	Adjacent (Touching along a shared boundary)	10
	Within 0.5 miles	7
	Within 1 mile	5
	Within 2 miles	2
	Greater than 2 miles	0
2. Habitat restoration will address elements of the recovery plan of how many State or Federally Threatened or Endangered Species?	3 or more	10
	2	5
	1	2
	0	0
3. What percentage of hydrological restoration will provide hydrologic conditions suitable for the needs of wetland dependent wildlife species that occur in the area?	Greater than or equal to 50%	10
	Greater than or equal to 20% and less than 50%	4
	Less than 20%	0
4. What percent of altered hydrology is restorable?	Greater than or equal to 75%	15
	Greater than or equal to 50 and less than 75%	10
	Greater than or equal to 25 and less than 50%	5
	Less than 25%	0
5. Is the proposed easement area included in States 303d list for impaired waters?	YES	10
	NO	0
6. Will the restored or enhanced wetlands of the proposed easement area provide surface water filtering to remove sediments and associated pollutants from runoff of adjacent non-easement land in agricultural production?	YES	5
	NO	0

Detailed Assessments

Name	Type	Jurisdiction	Status