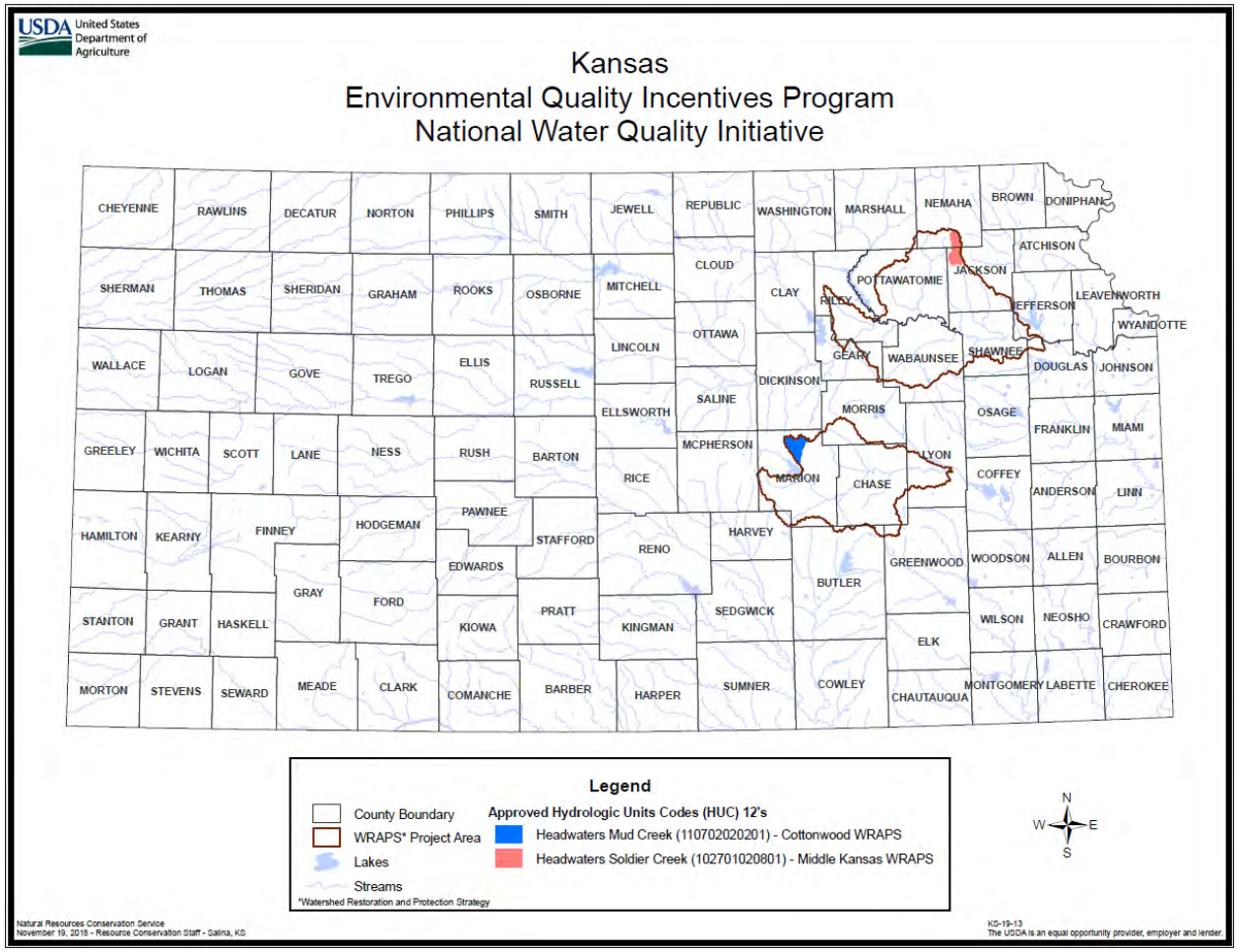
NATIONAL WATER QUALITY INITIATIVE

Background

National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI) funding will be used to assist producers with addressing high-priority water resource concerns in small watersheds. The NWQI will accelerate efforts to improve water quality in hydrologic unit code (HUC) 12-digit watersheds with targeted waters emphasizing treatment of nutrient, sediment, and pathogen concerns.

Approved Watersheds

The purpose of this initiative is to advance implementation of treatments in certain Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) identified impaired watersheds in an accelerated manner. The following are the participating watersheds for FY 2019 NWQI.



Approved Land Use

- Crop, Forest, Range, Pasture, Farmstead

Primary Resource Concerns

- Water Quality Degradation – Nutrients in Surface Waters
- Water Quality Degradation – Excessive Sediment in Surface Waters
- Water Quality Degradation – Excessive Pathogens and Chemicals from Manure, Bios-solids, or Compost Applications in Surface Water

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Secondary Resource Concerns

These resource concerns may only be addressed if a primary resource concern is identified and being addressed.

- Water Quality Degradation – Nutrients in Groundwater
- Water Quality Degradation – Salts in Groundwater
- Water Quality Degradation – Salts in Surfaces Waters
- Water Quality Degradation – Excessive Pathogens and Chemicals from Manure, Bio-solids, or Compost Applications in Groundwater
- Water Quality Degradation – Pesticides in Groundwater
- Water Quality Degradation – Pesticides in Surface Waters
- Water Quality Degradation – Elevated Water Temperature
- Fish and Wildlife Habitat – Inadequate Habitat (Water)

Priority

- All applicants who provide documentation they are participating in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) land tenure provisions and are competing in the designated Environmental Quality Initiatives Program (EQIP) beginning farmer or rancher (BF/R) or socially disadvantaged farmer or rancher (SDF/R), will be assigned **HIGH** priority. Applicants certifying as veteran beginning farmer or rancher (VBF/R) and participating in CRP land tenure provisions will have their applications selected for funding prior to any other "High" priority applicants.
- The national screening criteria worksheet located on the last page of this attachment is required and all eligible applications must have an assigned priority of "High," "Medium," or "Low" recorded in ProTracts as specified in the worksheet.

Additional Requirements

- Field offices (FOs) are responsible for the planning of core and supporting conservation practices (CPs) with the approved resource concerns in ProTracts Application Evaluation Ranking Tool (AERT) as indicated in the eligible practice list.
- A "system approach" must be used in the conservation plan that incorporates selection of CPs which address the concept of "avoiding, controlling, or trapping" (ACT) pollutants.

Conservation Practices (CPs) and Avoiding, Controlling and Trapping (ACT):

The initiative emphasizes a "systems approach" to address priority natural resource concerns. A cornerstone of this approach is to encourage producers to implement a system of CPs that has been determined to address specific high-priority resource concerns in selected watersheds as well as incorporate selection of CPs that address ACT. The concept of ACT is defined as:

- A (Avoiding): Avoidance helps manage nutrients and sediment source control from agricultural lands, including animal production facilities. CPs such as Nutrient Management (590), Cover Crop (340), and Conservation Crop Rotation (328) help producers avoid pollution by reducing the amount of nutrients available in runoff or leaching into priority water bodies and watersheds.

  CPs such as cover crops and crop rotation help take up nutrients to avoid potential runoff and pollution. Crop rotations that include differing crops, such as legumes, can limit amounts of commercial nutrients applied.

- C (Controlling): Land treatment in fields or facilities that prevents the loss of pollutants includes CPs such as conservation tillage and residue management, which improve infiltration, reduce runoff, and control erosion. Specific CPs such as No-till/Strip/Till/Direct Seed (329), Mulch Tillage (345), and Ridge Till (346), are foundation practices to recommend to producers in priority watersheds. CPs such as Cover Crop (340), will also do double duty by helping with "Avoiding" as well as "Controlling." If producers plan fall application of manure or fertilizers without application of a cover crop, consideration should be given as to the need for Drainage Water Management (554). Other facilitating CPs, such as Terraces (600) or Strip cropping (585), help control erosion and may manage runoff to reduce nutrients loading.

- T (Trapping): The last line of defense against potential pollutants at edge of field, or in facilities to trap or treat. CPs such as Contour Buffers (332), Filter Strips (393), and the suite of wetland practices to create, enhance, and/or restore wetlands (658, 659, and 657) all serve to trap and uptake nutrients before entering water bodies.

Planning considerations to support "Avoiding":
Apply fertilizer (chemical, manure, etc.) at the appropriate rate and time, with the appropriate placement and method. For example:

  - Rate: Use adaptive management techniques over time to track residual soil nutrient levels with soil testing.
  - Time: Apply fertilizer in the spring instead of fall, unless there is a winter cover crop in place.
- Placement: Apply fertilizer to the root zone for enhanced uptake by plants.
  - Method: Properly calibrate fertilizer application equipment to ensure the correct amount of fertilizer is applied.
- Develop a nutrient management plan to identify nitrogen and phosphorus management actions that will reduce losses of nitrogen and phosphorus.
- When calculating optimal rate of application, make sure to credit other sources that contribute nitrogen and phosphorus to the soil, such as previous legume crops, irrigation water, and organic matter.
- Properly store fertilizer (e.g., in a storage building with impermeable floors).
- Compost manure to reduce the overall volume for disposal.

Planning considerations to support "Controlling":

- Plant cover crops to absorb and store nitrogen and phosphorus in the fall and winter and to prevent erosion.
- Use no-tillage, ridge-tillage, or other reduced-tillage practices in place of conventional tillage.
- Use irrigation systems (e.g., sprinklers, low-energy precisions applications, surges, and drips) to apply water uniformly and with greater efficiency; this reduces water loss and transport of nitrogen and phosphorus out of the field.
- When designing a drainage system, consider the factors that affect design size and layout to meet the water management needs of the land, which include the water-holding capacity of the soil, root depth, rain distribution, and how water flows through the land.
- Consider rotating crops to minimize use of fertilizer in some cases.
- Use stream crossings, fencing, and watering facilities to keep pastured animals out of

water bodies.
- Divert roof runoff and other uncontaminated storm water away from animal confinement and manure storage areas.

Planning considerations to support "Trapping":
- Create or restore wetlands and riparian forest buffers to trap nitrogen and phosphorus before they reach water bodies.
- Route soil drainage water, including tile drainage, through wetlands, riparian forests, or grass buffer strips to allow for nitrogen and phosphorus removal before flowing into rivers or streams.
- Install a controlled drainage system that will keep the water table high during the off-season, which increases the breakdown of nitrates into nitrogen gas (overall this reduces nitrogen in drainage water).
- Consider augmenting a drainage system with a bioreactor filled with wood chips that helps remove nitrates from water before being released to streams.
- Install a pump to reuse drainage water stored in a holding pond (along with the nitrogen and phosphorus in the water) during dry periods.
- Plant a vegetative buffer along drainage ditches to capture more nitrogen, phosphorus, and sediment from runoff before entering the waterway.
- Ensure that all runoff from animal confinement areas and areas used to store manure, feed, and bedding is captured and retained.
- Ensure waste storage facilities, such as stacking pads, lagoons, and holding ponds are designed to store the amount of waste produced at the operation, as well as account for larger storms that could result in overflow.

Core Conservation Practices	Code	Avoiding	Controlling	Trapping
Waste Storage Facility	313	X	X	
Animal Mortality Facility	316		X	
Composting Facility	317	X	X	
Conservation Crop Rotation	328	X		
Conservation Cover	327	X		
Residue and Tillage Management, No Till	329		X	X
Contour Farming	329		X	X
Contour Buffer Strips	332			X
Cover Crop	340	X		X
Critical Area Planting	342		X	X
Residue and Tillage Management, Mulch Till	345		X	X
Well Water Testing	355	X		
Waste Treatment Lagoon	359		X	
Waste Facility Closure	360	X		
Anaerobic Digester	366		X	
Field Border	386		X	X
Riparian Herbaceous Cover	390			X

Riparian Forest Buffer	391			X
Filter Strip	393		X	X
Grade Stabilization Structure	410		X	X
Grassed Waterway	412		X	
Irrigation Water Management	449		X	
Access Control	472	X		
Prescribed Grazing	528	X		
Heavy Use Area Protection	561	X		
Trails and Walkways	575		X	
Nutrient Management	590	X		
Terrace	600		X	
Tree/Shrub Establishment	612	X		X
Waste Treatment	629		X	
Waste Transfer	634	X		
Vegetated Treatment Area	635			X
Water and Sediment Control Basin	638		X	X
Constructed Wetland	656			X

Supporting Conservation Practices	**Code**	**Avoiding**	**Controlling**	**Trapping**
Agrichemical Handling Facility	309	X		
Alley Cropping	311		X	X
Brush Management	314	X	X	
Herbaceous Weed Control	315	X		
Prescribed Burning	338	X		
Sediment Basin	350		X	
Water Well Decommissioning	351	X		
Dike	356		X	X
Diversion	362		X	
Roofs and Covers	367	X	X	
Pond	378			X
Windbreak/Shelterbelt Establishment	380		X	X
Silvopasture Establishment	381	X		
Fence	382	X		
Dam	402		X	X
Hedgerow Planting	422	X		X
Irrigation Ditch Lining	428	X	X	
Irrigation Pipeline	430		X	
Irrigation System, Microirrigation	441	X		
Irrigation System, Sprinkler	442	X		

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Irrigation System, Surface & Subsurface	443	X		
Precision Land Forming	462			X
Irrigation Land Leveling	464	X	X	
Lined Waterway or Outlet	468		X	
Mulching	484		X	X
Forage Harvest Management	511	X	X	
Forage and Biomass Planting	512	X		X
Livestock Pipeline	516	X	X	
Pumping Plant	533	X		
Range Planting	550			X
Roof Runoff Structure	558	X		
Access Road	560	X		
Spring Development	574	X		
Stream Crossing	578	X		
Structure for Water Control	587		X	X
Amendments for the Treatment of Agricultural Waste	591	X	X	
Integrated Pest Management	595	X		
Herbaceous Wind Barriers	603		X	
Surface Drain, Field Ditch	607		X	
Surface Drain, Main or Lateral	608		X	
Surface Roughening	609	X		
Watering Facility	614	X		
Underground Outlet	620		X	
Waste Separation Facility	632		X	
Water Well	642	X		
Restoration and Management of Declining Habitats	643	X		
Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management	644		X	
Windbreak/Shelterbelt Renovation	650		X	X
Wetland Restoration	657		X	
Wetland Creation	658		X	
Wetland Enhancement	659		X	

NATIONAL WATER QUALITY INITIATIVE

NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

A screening worksheet must be completed for each eligible EQIP application.

Instructions: This screening worksheet must be completed for each eligible producer applying for EQIP National Water Quality Initiative assistance. Applications will be accepted on a continuous basis; however, an application period has been established for purposes of evaluation, ranking, and funding decisions. The goal of this screening tool is to ensure that conservation technical assistance and EQIP program benefits are managed efficiently to address priority conservation needs related to this national initiative.

Completion of this worksheet and documentation does not constitute 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, and low) must be recorded in ProTracts application priority. Upon request, a copy of the 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:	
Ineligible Category: The EQIP application is associated with land that is not located primarily within the boundaries of the approved watershed for the National Water Quality Initiative. (Enter application in ProTracts, but do not rank. Offer alternative program assistance.)	Application Status is "Ineligible"
High Priority Category: All of the conservation practices requested in the application will be implemented on land physically located inside the NWQI watershed, *AND* The application includes core conservation practices (as identified for the pollutants of the eligible water quality initiative 12-digit watershed) on more than 25 percent of the offered acres – *OR* – The application is for a conservation activity plan (CAP).	High Priority Status in ProTracts
Medium Priority Category 1: All of the conservation practices requested in the application will be applied on land physically located inside the NWQI watershed, *AND* The application contains core conservation practices (as identified for the pollutants of the eligible water quality initiative 12-digit watershed).	Medium Priority Status in ProTracts
Medium Priority Category 2: One or more of the conservation practices requested in the application will be applied on land physically located outside the NWQI watershed, *AND* The application contains core conservation practices (as identified for the pollutants of the eligible water quality initiative 12-digit watershed). This status is not applicable to applications that are not located primarily within the boundaries of an approved NWQI watershed.	Medium Priority Status in ProTracts
Low Priority Category: All other applications – low priority applications will not be ranked.	Low Priority Status in ProTracts

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

D.C. Approval:		Date Approved:	

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State Ranking Questions

1. If the application is for development of a Conservation Activity Plan (CAP), the agency will assign significant ranking priority and conservation benefit by answering "Yes" to the following question. Answering "Yes" to question 1a will result in the application being awarded the maximum amount of points that can be earned for the state priority category.

    a. Is the program application for development of a Technical Service Provider (TSP) prepared CAP? If answer is "Yes," do not answer any other State-level questions. If answer is "No," proceed with evaluation to address the remaining questions in this section. (400 points)

2. Does the application include core conservation practices (CPs) that will be implemented within one-quarter mile of a stream or water body that is threatened (i.e., receives significant runoff of excess nitrogen and/or phosphorous), on the EPA 303(d) list, or is impaired with a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) in place and therefore not on the 303(d) list (or other critical stream or water body authorized by the Regional Conservationist)? (100 points)

3. Are core CPs planned on the offered acres? Greater than 75 percent of the offered acres are within the focused watershed AND greater than 75 percent of the offered acres have core CPs planned for application. (125 points)

4. Are core CPs planned within an existing state agency or other non-U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) water quality project area addressing the same or similar pollutants? (75 points)

5. Does this program application include the implementation of a system of CPs which address the NWQI primary resource concerns? (50 points)

6. Are core CPs to be implemented on offered acres with a majority of soil types that are classified hydrologic group D (high runoff) or group A (high infiltration)? (50 points)

Local Ranking Questions

1. Is the program application for development of a TSP prepared CAP? If answer is "Yes," do not answer any other local–level questions. If answer is "No," proceed with evaluation to address the remaining questions in this section. (250 points)

2. Does this program application include CPs 328, 329, and 340 on all of the cropped acres? (100 points)

3. Answer ONE of the following questions regarding the ACT "systems approach" to conservation planning.

    a. Does this program application include CPs that cumulatively include all three concepts of avoiding, controlling, and trapping? (100 points)

b. Does this program application include CPs that cumulatively include two of the three concepts of avoiding, controlling, and trapping? (50 points)

4. Participant requested a conservation plan for this application prior to August 31, 2018. (50 points)