
United States Department of Agriculture

# Conservation Assessment Ranking Tool (CART)

Keith Griswold

Assistant State Conservationist for Programs

# Why is NRCS changing to CART?


# Customer requests, Congress, and Secretary of Agriculture

*Streamlining*

**2018 Farm Bill =>**
- Streamline
- 16-times

**USDA Secretary =>**
- Streamline Programs
- Increase Efficiency
- Improve Customer Service


**NRCS Chief Priorities =>**
- Implement 2018 Farm Bill
- Streamline our process and program delivery
- Improve Customer Service

Customers/Partners/Field Offices/NRCS of Future =>
Simplify - Streamline

# How did AERT work for contracting?

USDA
United States Department of Agriculture

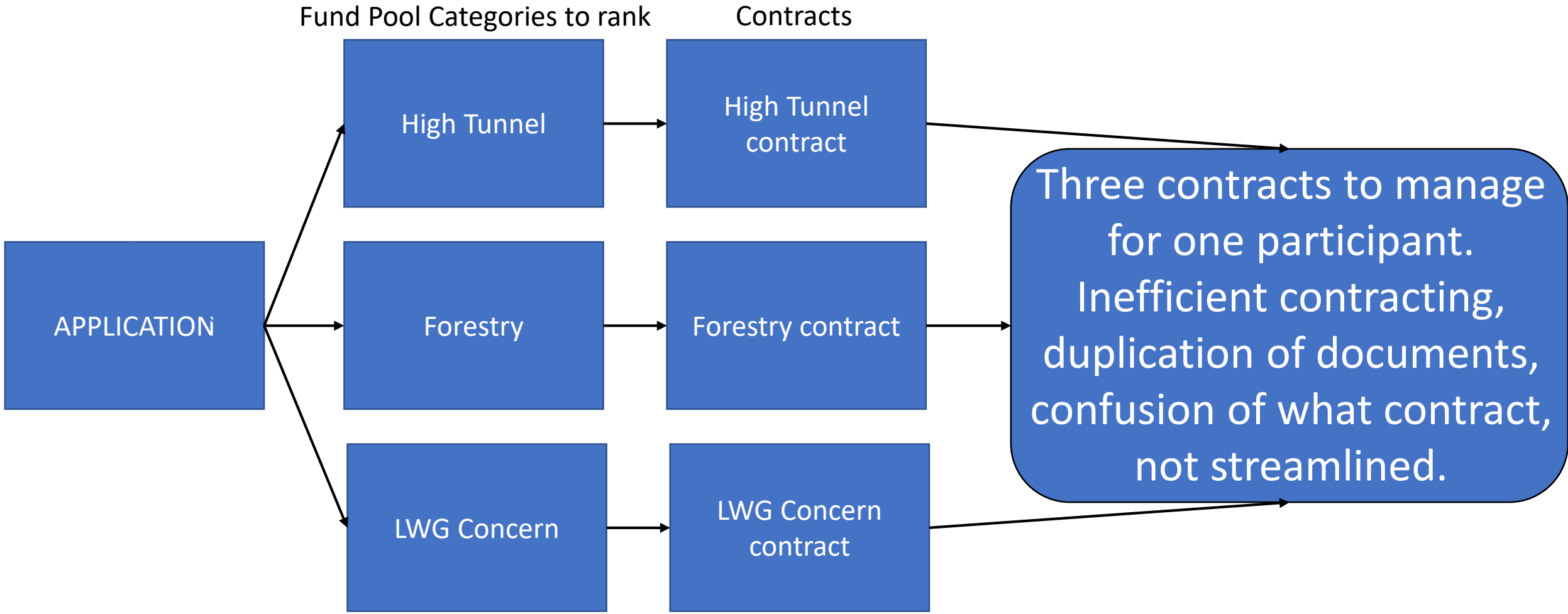
# For every AERT fund pool applied for, on average 55 questions had to be answered by NRCS staff.

**National Priorities Addressed**

| Issue Questions | Responses |
|---|---|
| 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 national priority category. | |
| 1. a. Is the program application to support the development of a Conservation Activity Plan (CAP)? If answer is "Yes", do not answer any other national level questions. If answer is "No", proceed with evaluation to address the remaining questions in this section. | Yes O or No O |
| Water Quality Degradation – Will the proposed project improve water quality by: (select all that apply) | |
| 2. a. Implementing the practices in a Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan (CNMP)? | Yes O or No O |
| 2. b. Implementing the practices in a Nutrient Management Plan (NMP)? | Yes O or No O |
| 2. c. Reducing impacts from sediment, nutrients, salinity, or pesticides on land adjoining a designated "impaired water body" (TMDL, 303d listed waterbody, or other State designation | Yes O or No O |
| 2. d. Reducing the impacts from sediment, nutrients, salinity, or pesticide on non-impaired water body"? | Yes O or No O |
| 2. e. Implementing practices that improve water quality through animal mortality and carcass management? | Yes O or No O |
| Water Conservation – Will the proposed project conserve water by: (select all that apply) | |
| 3. a. Implementing irrigation practices that reduce aquifer overdraft. | Yes O or No O |
| 3. b. Implementing irrigation practices that reduce on-farm water use? | Yes O or No O |
| 3. c. Implementing practices in an area where the applicant participates in a geographically established or watershed-wide project? | Yes O or No O |
| 3. d. Implementing practices that reduce on-farm water use as a result of changing to crops with lower water consumptive use, the rotation of crops, or the modification of cultural operations? | Yes O or No O |
| Air Quality - Will the proposed project improve air quality by: (select all that apply) | |
| 4. a. Meeting on-farm regulatory requirements relating to air quality or proactively avoid the need for regulatory measures? | Yes O or No O |
| 4. b. Implementing practices that reduce on-farm emissions of particulate matter (PM2.5, PM10)? | Yes O or No O |
| 4. c. Implementing practices that reduce on-farm generated greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide (CO2), methane (CH4), and nitrous oxide (N2O)? | Yes O or No O |
| 4. d. Implementing practices that increase on-farm carbon sequestration? | Yes O or No O |
| Soil Health :– Will the proposed project improve soil health by: (select all that apply) | |
| 5. a. Reduce erosion to tolerable limits (Soil "T")? | Yes O or No O |
| 5. b. Increasing organic matter and carbon content, and improving soil tilth and structure? | Yes O or No O |
| Wildlife Habitat – Will the proposed project improve wildlife habitat by: (select all that apply) | |
| 6. a. Implementing practices benefitting threatened and endangered, at-risk, candidate, or species of concern. | Yes O or No O |
| 6. b. Implementing practices that retain wildlife and plant habitat on land exiting the Conservation | Yes O or No O |

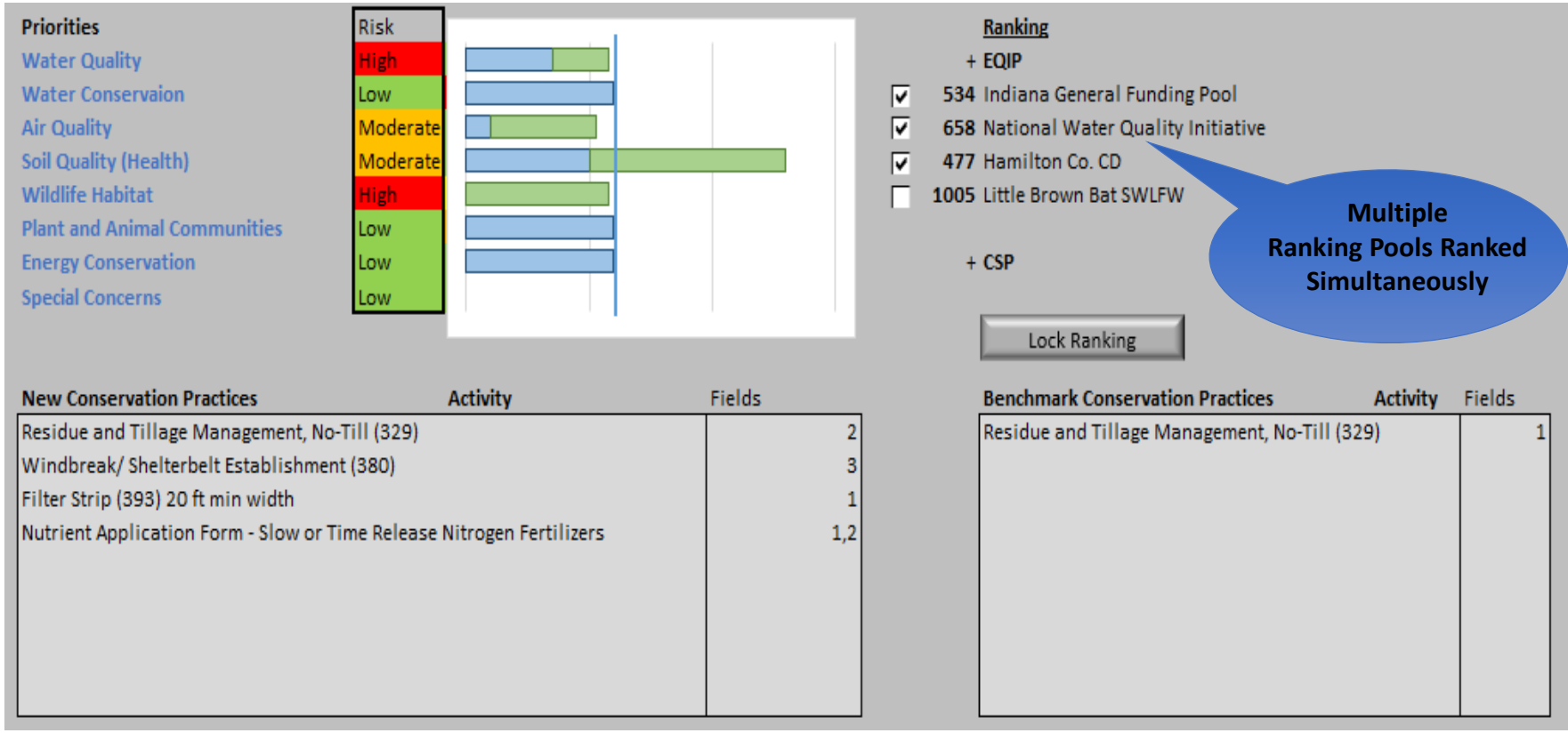
55 Questions

# AERT example:



# How will CART work for contracting?

# Every CART fund pool questions will be asked and answered only once by NRCS staff.



- CART will create a *Plan Assessment of* multiple conservation practices, which may be eligible under multiple *Ranking Pools, then merged into ONE Contract*.

- CART will assure a practice is not funded twice on the same land unit by separate funding sources

- CART eliminates > 30,000 duplicate applications nationwide

- CART eliminates repeat questions to improve efficiency (Streamline)

# CART example: