



## **Natural Resources Conservation Service - Wisconsin National Water Quality Initiative Big Green Lake Watershed (040302010902) Plan of Operations**

The National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI) is a Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) initiative to work with agricultural producers to implement voluntary conservation practices to improve water quality in high-priority watersheds while maintaining agricultural productivity. NWQI is designed to help individual agricultural producers take actions to reduce the runoff of sediment, nutrients, and pathogens into waterways where water quality is a critical concern. The goal is to implement conservation practices in focused watersheds in a concentrated area so that agriculture no longer contributes to the impairment of water bodies within these priority watersheds.

Within NWQI eligible producers may receive assistance through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) for installing on-farm conservation practices. Eligible land is determined by NRCS and is based on an identified resource concern. Eligible producers may apply for financial assistance for conservation practices that will address the identified resource concerns.

### **Eligible Watershed Area:**

An eligible watershed area for the initiative is the Big Green Lake Watershed (see Attachment A). The Watershed Boundary Dataset is the delineation used to identify the 12-digit hydrologic unit watershed boundary.

In order to be eligible for funding, over 50% of the NWQI-EQIP contract acreage must be located within the boundary of the watershed.

### **Eligible Practices and Payment Rates:**

See the documents posted on the [NRCS Wisconsin NWQI webpage](#) for the list of eligible conservation practices and payment rates for the NWQI-EQIP sign-up. Applicants who certify they are a Beginning Farmer, Limited Resource Farmer, Socially Disadvantaged Farmer, or Veteran Farmer are eligible to receive a higher practice payment rate.

In order to be eligible for funding, the application must include at least one core conservation practice; or the application must be for an eligible Conservation Activity Plan (CAP).

### **Application Period:**

EQIP applications are accepted on a continuous basis throughout the year. The NWQI-EQIP sign-up period application deadline(s) are available on the NRCS-WI NWQI web site. All eligible applications received by the application deadline will be evaluated and ranked for funding consideration.

Interested agricultural producers may apply in person, by telephone, fax, email, or letter at the Green Lake County Service Center. The following is the contact information for the Green Lake County Service Center:

Green Lake Service Center  
W1740 North Street, Suite 100  
Green Lake, WI 54941

Contact: Caleb Zahn, District Conservationist  
Phone: (920) 294-6140 x105  
Fax: (855) 819-6163  
Email: [caleb.zahn@wi.usda.gov](mailto:caleb.zahn@wi.usda.gov)

### **Fund Pools:**

The following fund pool has been established for the NWQI-EQIP sign-up:

NWQI – Big Green Lake

Producers applying for available financial assistance will be competing for funds within this fund pool.

Applications for Conservation Activity Plans (i.e. Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan, Drainage Water Management Plan CAP, Irrigation Water Management Plan CAP, and Nutrient Management Plan CAP) will be a single stand-alone application and will not be included in an application that contains non-CAP conservation practices.

A separate application form (i.e. NRCS-CPA-1200) does not need to be submitted if the applicant already has a deferred or current-year EQIP application.

### **Resource Concerns:**

Addressing water quality degradation resource concerns in the Big Green Lake Watershed via implementation of core conservation practices is the priority for the NWQI-EQIP sign-up and

is reflected in the application ranking tool. Fish and Wildlife – Inadequate Habitat will also be an eligible secondary natural resource concern that may be addressed through the initiative.

The eligible resource concerns include:

**Primary Natural Resource Concerns:**

Water Quality Degradation
Nutrients in Surface Water
Excessive Sediment in Surface Water
Excess Pathogens and Chemicals from Manure, Bio-solids or Compost Applications in Surface Water

**Secondary Natural Resource Concerns:**

Water Quality Degradation
Nutrients in Groundwater
Excess Pathogens and Chemicals from Manure, Bio-solids or Compost Applications in Groundwater
Pesticides in Groundwater
Pesticides in Surface Water
Elevated Water Temperature
Fish and Wildlife – Inadequate Habitat
Inadequate Habitat – Water

**Land Use Types:**

The following land use types are eligible for financial assistance through NWQI: Crop, Forest, Pasture, and Farmstead.

**Application Screening:**

All applications will receive a High, Medium, or Low application priority as identified on the document titled “NWQI Screening Criteria Worksheet” which is posted on the [NRCS Wisconsin NWQI webpage](#). The application priority will be assigned based upon the application status on the application deadline.

**Application Ranking:**

Scoring of applications will be done according to the application ranking document posted on the NRCS Wisconsin NWQI webpage. All rankings will be conducted in ProTracts. Only those applications which are identified as High or Medium priority will be ranked.

Applications identified as High priority will rank ahead of applications identified as Medium priority. Medium priority applications will only be ranked and approved for funding if there is an insufficient quantity of High priority applications to fully obligate the Wisconsin financial assistance allocation. Low priority applications will not be ranked. In the event of application ranking score ties, the application that has the higher tracking code (i.e. random number generated in ProTracts) will receive funding priority.

**Funding:**

NRCS will allocate the available NWQI-EQIP funds based on the numerical ranking system set forth on the Wisconsin NRCS website. Applications will be selected for plan development and contracted in ranked order according to the application priority and ranking score as funds allow.

If there are insufficient funds available to fund an application, applications not selected for contracting will be deferred to the next EQIP application ranking period.