Ranking Categories– SOIL HEALTH
(BEGINNING FARMER/RANCHER,
LIMITED RESOURCE FARMER/RANCHER,
SOCIALLY DISADVANTAGED FARMER/RANCHER)

**Primary Resource Concern—**

- **Soil Quality Degradation—Organic Matter Depletion**
- **Soil Quality Degradation—Compaction**
- **Insufficient Water–Inefficient Moisture Management**

**Secondary Resource Concern—**

- **Fish and Wildlife—Inadequate Habitat (Threatened and Endangered Species, Declining Species, Species of Concern Addressed as a Special Environmental Concern) (only species identified for this ranking category on the Statewide At-Risk Species Listing are eligible for this resource concern. Reference:**
- **http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/ks/programs/financial/eqip/**

**Eligible Land Uses—**

- **Crop**

**Additional Requirement**

- **The following requirements must be met when addressing Soil Quality Degradation–Organic Matter Depletion and Soil Quality Degradation—Compaction:**
  - **Conservation Practice (CP) 328, Conservation Crop Rotation; CP 329, Residue and Tillage Management, No-Till/Strip Till/Direct Seed; and CP 340, Cover Crop are required in the conservation plan and will receive financial assistance if not already established, per program policy.**
- **The following requirements must be met when addressing Insufficient Water—Inefficient Moisture Management:**
  - **CP 328, Conservation Crop Rotation and CP 329, Residue and Tillage Management, No-Till/Strip Till/Direct Seed are required in the conservation plan and will receive financial assistance if not already established, per program policy.**

**State Issues–**

1. Answer the following question 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 to support the development of a CAP? If the answer is "Yes," do not answer any other state level questions. If the answer is "No," proceed with evaluation to address the remaining questions in this section. (400 points)

2. Crop types are defined as winter broadleaf, winter grass, summer broadleaf, and summer grass. Answer EACH of the following two questions related to cropping rotation. If none apply, leave the answers "NO":

   (a) There are four crop types in the planned cropping rotation (cash crops). (10 points)

   (b) Cover crops are included in the cropping rotation (at least one during a three-crop type cycle or two during a four-crop cycle). (15 points)

3. Answer the following question related to Kansas Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategy (WRAPS) Action Plans.

   Any part of the unit of concern is located in a Priority WRAPS implementation area. (25 points)

4. If applicable, answer ONE of the following two questions related to Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDL). If none apply leave the answers "NO".

   (a) Greater than or equal to 50 percent of the unit of concern is located within a Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) identified high priority (HP) TMDL watershed for dissolved oxygen (DO), but it is NOT a TMDL watershed targeted to meet the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Strategic Plan. (50 points)

   (b) Any part of the unit of concern, but less than 50 percent, is located within a KDHE identified high priority TMDL watershed for dissolved oxygen, but it is NOT a TMDL watershed targeted to meet the EPA Strategic Plan. (25 points)

5. If applicable, answer ALL of the following questions related to at risk species. If none apply leave the answers "NO":

   (a) Any part of the unit of concern is located within a Watershed Boundary Dataset (WBD) 12–digit watershed that contains an at-risk aquatic species **and** treatment of the resource concern will have a direct benefit to the at-risk aquatic species habitat. Only AQUATIC species identified for this ranking category on the Statewide At-Risk Species Listing are eligible for this resource concern. (5 points)

   Reference:
   http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/ks/programs/financial/eqip/

(b) Any part of the unit of concern is located within 300 feet of a stream that contains an at-risk aquatic species **and** treatment of the resource concern will have a direct benefit to the at-risk aquatic species habitat. Only AQUATIC species identified for this ranking category on the Statewide At-Risk Species Listing are eligible for this resource concern. (10 points)

Reference:
http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/ks/programs/financial/eqip/

(c) Any part of the unit of concern is located within a terrestrial at–risk species habitat area, Bobwhite Quail Initiative areas, or pheasant initiative area and treatment of the resource concern will have a direct benefit to the terrestrial at-risk species habitat, pheasant initiative area, or bobwhite quail habitat. Only bobwhite quail, pheasants, or TERRESTRIAL species identified for this ranking category on the Statewide At-Risk Species Listing are eligible for this resource concern. (10 points)

Reference:
http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/ks/programs/financial/eqip/

(d) Any part of the unit of concern is located within a Greater Prairie-Chicken (GPC) or Lesser Prairie-Chicken (LPC) priority habitat area and native grass and forbs will be planted according to Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) electronic Field Office Technical Guide (eFOTG) standards and specifications on a minimum of 40 contiguous acres. (25 points)

6. If applicable, answer ONE of the following three questions related to the Erosion Index (EI). If none apply, leave the answers “NO”:

(a) EI $\geq$ 8.0 for ALL soils (100 percent) in the unit of concern. (50 points)

(b) EI $\geq$ 8.0 for ANY soil on greater than or equal to 50 percent of the unit of concern, but not ALL soils (less than 100 percent), in the unit of concern. (40 points)

(c) EI $\geq$ 8.0 for ANY soil, but less than 50 percent, in the unit of concern. (30 points)

7. If applicable, answer ONE of the following four questions related to Soil Quality Degradation–Organic Matter or Compaction resource concerns. If none apply, leave the answers “NO”:

(a) Unit of concern will be converted to a management system that meets the planning criteria for the soil quality degradation - organic matter depletion matrix and a Soil Tillage Intensity Rating (STIR) greater than or equal to 0 and less than 5.0, as determined by Revised Universal Soil Loss Equation 2 (RUSLE 2) erosion prediction model. (100 points)

(b) Unit of concern will be converted to a management system that meets the planning criteria for the soil quality degradation - organic matter depletion matrix and a STIR greater than or equal to 5.0 and less than 7.5, as determined by Revised Universal Soil Loss Equation 2 (RUSLE2) erosion prediction model. (90 points)

(c) Unit of concern will be converted to a management system that meets the planning criteria for the soil quality degradation - organic matter depletion matrix and a STIR greater than or equal to 7.5 and less than 10.0, as determined by RUSLE2 erosion prediction model. (80 points)

(d) Unit of concern will be converted to a management system that meets the planning criteria for the soil quality degradation–organic matter depletion matrix and a STIR greater than or equal to 10.0 and less than 30.0, as determined by RUSLE2 erosion prediction model. (60 points)

8. If applicable, answer ONE of the following four questions related to Available Water Storage Index (AWSI). (No points are available for those units of concerns with VERY HIGH available water storage.) If none apply, leave the answers “NO”:

(a) The AWSI for the dominant soil condition in the unit of concern is VERY LOW. (100 points)

(b) The AWSI for the dominant soil condition in the unit of concern is LOW. (90 points)

(c) The AWSI for the dominant soil condition in the unit of concern is MEDIUM. (80 points)

(d) The AWSI for the dominant soil condition in the unit of concern is HIGH. (60 points)

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**Local Issues–**

Answer the following questions related to the application:

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

2. Application includes at least one CP with a lifespan of 10 years or greater, as documented in the eFOTG. (50 points)

3. CPs are scheduled to be completed within four years. (50 points)

4. Participant requested a conservation plan for this application prior to August 31, 2013. (50 points)

5. Application was deferred from a previous funding period in the Program Contracts System (ProTracts). (50 points)

6. Greater than or equal to 33.3 percent of the unit of concern will be planted to native grass and forbs according to NRCS eFOTG standards and specifications. (25 points)

7. Native plant species will be used in a financially-assisted vegetative CP. (25 points)