# **AGRICULTURAL CONSERVATION EASEMENT WETLANDS RESERVE EASEMENT (FY 2018)**

**INDIANA**

## RANKING FORM and PRELIMINARY PLAN (v. 1.1)

***(All information must be completely filled out)***

[GENERAL INFORMATION](#GENERAL_INFORMATION_g)

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **NAME:** |  |  | **COUNTY/GARC Region:** |  |
| **ADDRESS:** |  |  | **DATE:** |  |
|  |  |  | **FARM NO:** |  |
|  |  |  | **TRACT NO:** |  |

**TYPE OF EASEMENT** (check one) **TYPE OF OWNERSHIP** (check all that apply)

Permanent  Private Individual  Beginning Farmer

30 Year  Private Entity  Limited Resource Producer

Organization  Minority

**PREFERED RESTORATION METHOD** Veteran Farmer

Landowner Contract  Federal Contract

[SUMMARY OF RANKING FACTOR SCORES](#SUMMARY_SCORES_g)

1. **HYDROLOGY** (max. 50 pts.)       pts.
2. **WILDLIFE** (max. 12 pts.)       pts.
3. **VEGETATION** (max. 3 pts.)       pts.
4. **FOCUS REGION** (max. 10 pts.)       pts.
5. **CONNECTIVITY** (max. 4 pts.)       pts.
6. **WATER QUALITY** (max. 3 pts.)       pts.
7. **CROPPING HISTORY** (max. 5 pts.)       pts.
8. **OPERATION & MAINTENANCE** (max. 3 pts.)       pts.
9. **COST** (max. 10 pts.)       pts.
10. **PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS** (*max.* ***-****10 pts*.)       pts.
11. **EASEMENT DURATION** (*max.* ***-****2 pts*.)       pts

**TOTAL SCORE: (max. 100 pts.)** **pts.**

**[SIGNATURES](#SIGNATURES_g)**

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Landowner (required) Date District Conservationist (required) Date

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Wetland Team Leader (required) Date FWS (required) Date

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_

IDNR (optional) Date Other Date

[EASEMENT AREA INFORMATION](#EASEMENT_INFO_g)

1. **LOCATION:** Section       Twp       Range       Quad       HUA (12-digit code)
2. **PORTION OF TRACT ENTERED INTO WRE EASEMENT:** (check one)   Whole  Portion
3. **EASEMENT AREA: Habitat Restorable (acres) Habitat Existing (acres)**

Upland:       Upland:

Palustrine Open Water/Unknown:       Palustrine Open Water/Unknown:

Palustrine Forested:       Palustrine Forested:

Palustrine Emergent:       Palustrine Emergent:

Other Riparian:       Other Riparian:

**Subtotal:       Subtotal:**  **TOTAL Easement Acres:**

1. **ELIGIBILITY:**

**528.105 Eligibility Category (acres)**

C. Farmed or PC Wetlands:       H. Inclusions/Atypical:

E. Riparian Areas (link):       I. Adjacent Lands:

G. Restored Wetlands:

F. CRP (must be included in above categories also):

Portion of acreage in CRP trees (pending waiver):      

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Eligible Acres** | **Match Acres** |
| **Acres Hydric Agricultural Land** | **Acres Upland Agricultural Land**  **Acres Non-Agricultural Land** |
| **Total Eligible + Match =** | **Ratio Eligible to Match =** **:** |

1. **VALUATION: Acres Agricultural Land GARC       Acres Non-Agricultural GARC**

*If acres listed as agricultural land under #5. do not match the agricultural land acres under #4, please provide substantiated evidence the land not receiving the Agland GARC rate has a history of agricultural production.*

*Suitable sources:*  *Aerial photos*  *FSA Records*  *Producer Records*  *Other*

1. **habitat existing Acres:** How will “Habitat Existing Acres” (item #3 above) contribute to the functions and values of the restored wetland? (Check all that apply)

Provides species-specific upland habitat for targeted species (explain below)

Increases habitat value by providing additional nesting habitat, etc.

Provides buffering and filtering from surrounding land uses

Reduces the fragmentation of, or increases the area of, the wetland complex

*Other (explain) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*

1. **RIPARIAN CORRIDOR:** If the easement area is being enrolled as a riparian corridor, is the area dependent upon the acceptance of other “Associated Applications”?  Yes  No

If yes, list application number(s):\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

If no, list existing Agreements or areas that the riparian area will connect: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. **Hydric soils:** Hydricsoils must be confirmed by a Soil Scientist.

How were the hydric soils confirmed? (check one)  Onsite  In office (if so, explain below)

Acres Agland in Subclass W\_\_\_\_\_\_ ; in Land Capability class \_\_IV, \_\_V, \_\_VI, \_\_\_VII, \_\_\_VIII

Are the soils hydric by flooding?  Yes (Provide a copy of the 7-day floodline map)

[RANKING FACTORS](#RANKING_FACTORS_g)

1. **[HYDROLOGY](#HYDROLOGY_g)** (add sections A and B)
2. Percent of the Habitat Restorable acres on which the hydrology will be restored **to historic conditions**:

90 – 100% of the Habitat Restorable acres will be restored 20 pts.

75 – 89% of the Habitat Restorable acres will be restored 15 pts.

50 – 74% of the Habitat Restorable acres will be restored 10 pts.

10 – 49% of the Habitat Restorable acres will be restored 5 pts.

Less than 10% of the restorable acres will be restored 0 pts.

**NOTE:** Sites will receive 20 points where the historic hydrology is still present on the *Eligible Acres*.

1. Percent of the *hydric* Habitat Restorable acres that will meet wetland criteria after restoration:

90 – 100% of the Habitat Restorable acres will meet wetland criteria 30 pts.

75 – 89% of the Habitat Restorable acres will meet wetland criteria 20 pts.

50 – 74% of the Habitat Restorable acres will meet wetland criteria 10 pts.

0 – 49% of the Habitat Restorable acres will meet wetland criteria not eligible

HYDROLOGY:       pts.

1. [WILDLIFE](#WILDLIFE_g) (add sections A, B, and C; show calculations)
2. The Threatened and Endangered (T&E) Species data from Customer Service ToolKit indicates that a T&E Species could be positively impacted by the restoration. **List the species code:**       **. List habitat requirements (must be included in restoration plan):**

|  |
| --- |
|  |

……………….……9 pts.

1. Forested sites (> 20 acres) either existing or to be restored that reduce habitat fragmentation, and are adjacent to existing woodland or forested habitat (>20 acres).

or

Emergent**/**herbaceous sites (< 0.5 miles apart) will contribute to a wetland complex 3 pts.

1. Size: multiply the total easement acres by 0.1

**Example:** 40 acres x 0.1 = 4 points.

      acres x 0.1 =       points (maximum 10 pts.)       pts.

**WILDLIFE:       pts.**

(Round to nearest 0.1; total max. = 12 pts.)

1. **[VEGETATION](#VEGETATION_g)** (choose one)

Percent of the total easement area that be developed to a predominance of historic native vegetation after restoration. Acreage includes existing vegetation in “Habitat Existing” acres, as well as those areas planted, seeded or allowed to naturally re-vegetate. List target vegetative community if restoration includes the excavation of organic (muck) soils:

90% or greater of the site will be developed to historic native vegetation or naturally regenerate 3 pts.

70% to 90% of the site will be developed to historic native vegetation or naturally regenerate 1 pts.

Less than 70% of the site will be developed to historic native vegetation not eligible.

**VEGETATION:       pts.**

1. **[FOCUS REGION](#FOCUS_REGION_g)** (calculate using sections A and B)

See [map of Indiana WRE Focus Regions](#Focus_Region_Map) and the [Priority Areas](#Priority_Areas) within each region.

##### Focus Regions I & II weighting factor = 2.5

###### Focus Regions III weighting factor = 1.5

# Focus Region IV weighting factor = 1.0

1. Priority Area 1 4 pts.

Priority Area 2 3 pts.

Priority Area 3 2 pts.

Priority Area 4 1 pts.

Region IV only: All sites have a Priority Area 3 2 pts.

**Focus Region**       **x Priority Area**       **=** **FOCUS REGION:       pts.**

(Round to nearest 0.1; max. 10 pts.)

1. **[CONNECTIVITY](#CONNECTIVITY_g)** (choose one)

Contiguous with a permanently protected area 4 pts.

Within 0.0 – 0.5 mile of a permanently protected area 3 pts.

Within 0.5 – 2.5 miles of a permanently protected area 2 pts.

Within 2.5 – 5.0 miles of a permanently protected area 1 pts.

Greater than 5 miles from a permanently protected area 0 pts.

**CONNECTIVITY:       pts.**

1. **[WATER QUALITY](#WATER_QUALITY_g)** (add sections A-E.)

The restored wetland is located within the following areas:

1. Natural & Scenic Rivers and Outstanding State Waters and “Species at Risk” 1 pts.
2. Vulnerable Groundwater Resources and Karst 1 pts.
3. Watersheds for Community Surface Water Supplies 1 pts.
4. Located within the Wabash River 100-yr Floodplain 1 pts.
5. Located within the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) 1 pts.

**WATER QUALITY:       pts.**

(max 3 pts)

1. **[CROPPING HISTORY](#CROPPING_HISTORY_g)** (choose one)

Number of years since the last cropping or forage operation.

0 – 5 years 5 pts.

5 to 10 years 2 pts.

Greater than 10 years 0 pts.

**CROPPING HISTORY:       pts.**

1. **[OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE](#O_and_M_g)** (choose one)

**NOTE:** See the Indiana Invasive Species Council current list invasive species. <http://www.entm.purdue.edu/iisc/invasiveplants.php>

Minimal or no management will be required to maintain the restored wetland conditions. 3 pts.

All of the following must be true:

* 1. No water level manipulation is required.
  2. Control structure(s) are not designed for water level manipulation. [(see note in guidance section)](#NGO_NOTE)
  3. Levees will only need normal maintenance and are not expected to be inundated within a 10-year period.
  4. Any upland component consists of woodland/tree planting, or grassland, IF prairie was an historic component of the site.
  5. Invasive species are not expected to significantly impact the wetland

Minimal management will be required to maintain the restored wetland conditions. 2 pts.

All of the following must be true:

1. No water level manipulation is required.
2. Control structure(s) may or may not be designed for water level manipulation. [(see note in guidance section)](#NGO_NOTE)
3. Levees will only need normal maintenance and are not expected to be inundated within a 10-year period.
4. Any upland component is woodland/tree planting, or grassland, IF prairie was an historic component of the site.
5. Invasive species make up less than 15% of the easement area, and are not expected to jeopardize wetland function

Long-term management is required to maintain restored wetland conditions. 1 pts.

At least one of the following is true:

1. Water level manipulation (such as use of drop logs) is required in most years to restore wetland functions. [(see note in guidance section)](#NGO_NOTE) Pumping is not required.
2. Levees are expected to be inundated within a 10-year period.
3. At least part of any upland component is grassland in an area where prairie was not typically an historic component.
4. Invasive species make up >15% of the easement area, and may jeopardize wetland function

Intensive management is required to maintain restored wetland conditions. 0 pts.

The following is true:

1. Invasive species comprise 15-50% and are expected to jeopardize the restored wetland function or the easement area.

Restoration success unlikely, or cost prohibitive not eligible

At least one of the following is true:

1. Invasive species comprise greater than 50% of the easement
2. NRCS portion of restoration costs to reach hydrology and vegetation restoration expectations listed in questions 1 and 3 will exceed an average of $1100 per acre
3. Any hydrologic restoration will result in off-site flooding or impact neighboring drainage in a manner that cannot be remediated.
4. Offsite actions to improve public drainage ways will eliminate wetland hydrology on property. (include lateral effect calculations on page 8, or attach separate sheet)

**OPERATION & MAINTENANCE:       pts.**

1. **[COST](#COST_g)** (fill in data, then add sections A and B)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1. **Restoration** |  | 1. **Easement Cost Per Acre** |  |
| a. Estimated Total Restoration Cost |  | g. Agland GARC |  |
| b. Landowner Contribution |  | h. Agland Acres |  |
| c. Partner Contribution |  | i. Total Agland Value  [multiply line “g” x line “h”) |  |
| d. Total NRCS Contribution  [subtract lines “b”+“c” from line “a”] |  | j. Non-agland GARC |  |
| e. Total Enrolled Acres |  | k. Non-agland Acres |  |
| f. Average NRCS Restoration Cost/acre  [divide line “d” by line “e”] |  | l. Total Non-agland Value  [multiply line “j” x line “k”) |  |
|  |  | m. Total Easement GARC Value  [add line "i” + line “l”] |  |
|  |  | n. Total Landowner Offer |  |
|  |  | o. Estimated Appraisal Value |  |
|  |  | p. Total Enrolled Acres |  |
|  |  | q. Total lowest per acre Easement Value  [lowest value from line “m”, “n” or “o”, divided by line “p”] |  |

##### If average restoration cost/acre is < $200 6 pts.

##### If average restoration cost/acre is $201 - $450 4 pts.

##### If average restoration cost/acre is $451 - $700 3 pts.

##### If average restoration cost/acre is $701 - $1000 2 pts.

If average restoration cost/acre is > $1000) 0 pts.

##### If average easement cost is < $2100/acre 4 pts.

If average easement cost is $2100 - $3100/acre 3 pts.

If average easement cost is $3101 - $4100/acre 2 pts.

If average easement cost is > $4101/acre 1 pts.

**COST (A+B):       pts.**

1. [**PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS**](#Previous_Application)(choose one)
   1. Landowner withdrew previous WRP/WRE Agreement, or NRCS terminated the Agreement. -10 pts.
   2. Previous applications completed, or if cancelled or terminated, were cancelled due to no fault of the landowner. 0 pts.

**Previous Applications:       pts.**

1. **[EASEMENT DURATION](#EASEMENT_DURATION_g)** (choose one)
   1. Permanent Easement 0 pts.
   2. 30-Year Easement -2 pts.

**EASEMENT DURATION:       pts.**

**Due Diligence Questions**

*This questionnaire does not replace but rather supplements other forms such as the Hazardous Substance Checklist and the Preliminary Certificate of Inspection and Possession Form.*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | YES | NO |  |
| 1 |  |  | Does NRCS have a copy of the Deed? |
| 2 |  |  | Has a minimum 2 year ownership been confirmed? Waiver? |
| 3 |  |  | Are there any co-owners on the land, including a spouse? |
| 4 |  |  | Is the land owned by an entity? Have all sub-entities and members with an interest in the entity filed AGI (n/a FY2014 only) and HEL/WC Compliance Certifications? |
| 5 |  |  | Has the entity registered for a DUNS number? |
| 6 |  |  | A SAMS number? |
| 7 |  |  | Is there a POA or Signatory authority Document? Only a legal document or the NRCS CPA-09 is valid for the easement transaction. The document must list real estate, or similar language. |
| 8 |  |  | Does the landowner have *recorded* legal access to the property or access via an immediately adjacent public road? |
| 9 |  |  | Does access to the property cross any parcel(s) not owned by the landowner? |
| 10 |  |  | Does the landowner desire that private access be maintained through the easement? |
| 11 |  |  | Will the WRE easement create any land parcel with blocked access? (Land locked. Also consider future parcel sales.) |
| 12 |  |  | Are there any known and/or visible boundary disputes with regards to the property? |
| 13 |  |  | Are there any mortgages and/or liens (recorded or unrecorded) against the property?  *Please discuss that all liens will need to be removed or subordinated prior to closing and no new liens may be placed on the property until after the closing.* |
| 14 |  |  | Are the property taxes paid current? |
| 15 |  |  | Have any of the mineral interests in the property been leased and/or sold? |
| 16 |  |  | Are there any ditches or tile drain easements on the property? |
| 17 |  |  | If yes- are they regulated, legal ditches? |
| 18 |  |  | Are there private *“farmer*” ditches or tile drains on the property? |
| 19 |  |  | Do any of these drainage mechanisms drain an upstream landowner? |
| 20 |  |  | Is there evidence of existing or previously existing utilities on the property? |
| 21 |  |  | Is there any evidence of roads, paths or thoroughfares across the property? |
| 22 |  |  | Are there any contracted issues pending (including land contracts, rental contracts, etc.) on the property? |
| 23 |  |  | Is there any type of conservation easement agreement or protection interest with regards to the property already in place? |
| 24 |  |  | Is the land in any state or federal programs (CRP, EQIP, CSP, DNR easement, etc.)? |
| 25 |  |  | Have any CRP trees been planted on the property- including expired contracts? |
| 26 |  |  | If there are CRP trees, is a waiver request going to be submitted? |

Landowner Initials\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  
NRCS Initials\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Additional Comments :** |  |
|  | |
|  | |
|  | |
|  | |
|  | |

**Lateral Effect Calculations: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Send Approved Application Packet to: Attn: Beth Clarizia**

**State Easement Program Manager**

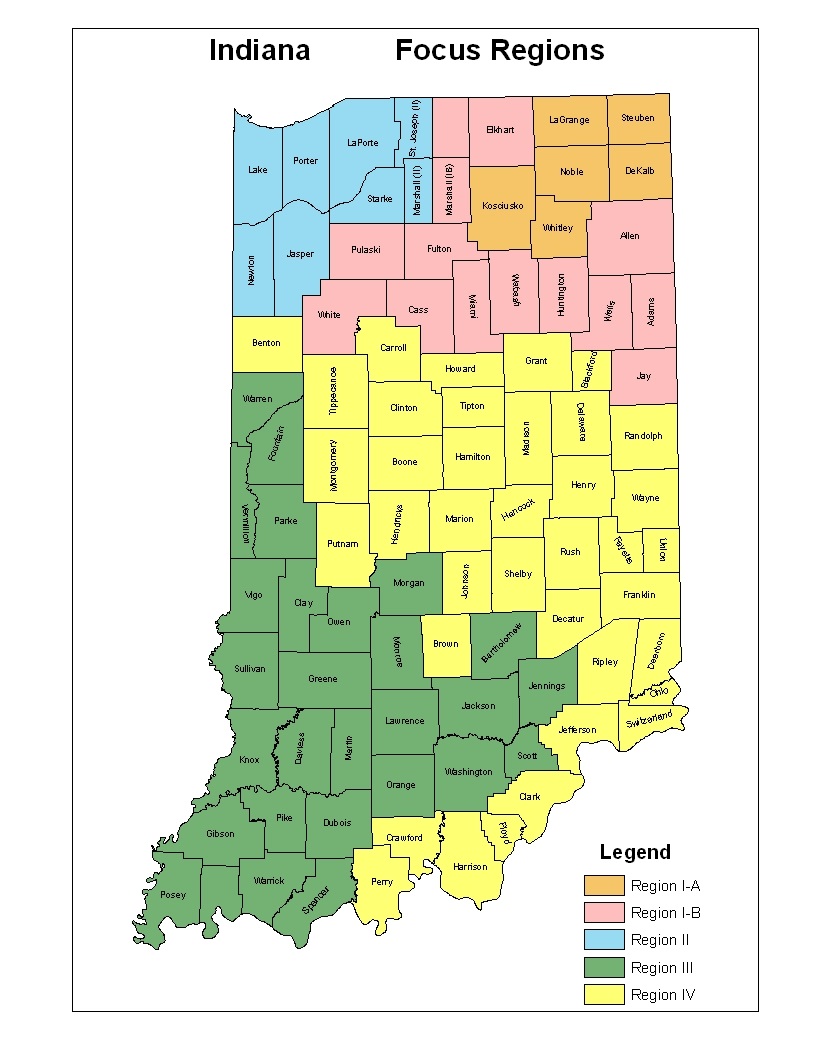
**Natural Resources Conservation Service**

**6013 Lakeside Blvd.**

Indianapolis, IN 46278

**Phone: (317) 295-5821**

[(Return to Ranking)](#FOCUS_REGION)

****

**WRE**

**INDIANA PRIORITY AREAS**  [(Return to Ranking)](#FOCUS_REGION)

**AGRICULTURAL CONSERVATION EASEMENT- WETLAND RESERVE EASEMENTS**

**Focus Region I (Northeast Indiana)**

**Priority Area 1**

* Depressional wetlands in Area A (LaGrange, Steuben, Noble, DeKalb, Whitley & Kosciusko)
* Fish Creek Watershed (DeKalb and Steuben)

**Priority Area 2**

* Depressional wetlands in Area B (Elkhart, Allen, Adams, Jay, Wells, Huntington, Wabash, Miami, Cass, White, Pulaski, Marshall, and St. Joseph)
* Tippecanoe River Bottoms (Kosciusko, Marshall, Fulton, Pulaski, and White)

**Priority Area 3**

* Wabash River Bottoms (Jay, Adams, Wells, Huntington, Wabash, Miami, Cass, and Carroll)
* Maumee, St. Joseph, and St. Mary's River Bottoms (Allen)

**Priority Area 4**

* All other areas within Region I

**Focus Region II** (**Kankakee River)**

**Priority Area 1**

* Sites within the 8 digit- Kankakee Watershed (portions of Lake, Porter, LaPorte, St. Joseph, Marshall, Starke, Jasper, Newton)

**Priority Area 2**

* Depressional wetlands within Region II

**Priority Area 4**

* All other areas within Region II

**Focus Region III (Southwest Indiana)**

**Priority Area 1**

* Patoka River Bottoms (Dubois, Gibson, Pike)
* Muscatatuck River Bottoms (Jennings, Jackson, Washington, and Scott)
* Wabash River Bottoms (Posey and Gibson)
* Greenfield Bayou (Vigo and Sullivan)
* Areas within a 5 mile radius of Goose Pond Fish and Wildlife Area(Greene)

**Priority Area 2**

* Beanblossom Bottoms (Monroe)
* White River Bottoms (Knox, Greene, Gibson, Daviess, Jackson, and Pike)
* Wabash River Bottoms (Fountain, Knox, Parke, Sullivan, Vermillion, Vigo, and Warren and Tippecanoe County)

**Priority Area 3**

* Pigeon Creek Bottoms (Gibson and Warrick)
* Busseron Creek Bottoms (Sullivan)

**Priority Area 4**

* All other sites within Region III

**Focus Region IV**

**Priority Area 3 –** All sites in Focus Area IV have a Priority Area 3 except Wabash bottoms in Tippecanoe Co. See Focus Region III above.

[(Return to Ranking)](#RANKING_FACTORS)

INDIANA

## WRE RANKING FORM GUIDANCE (FY 2016) (v. 1.0)

GENERAL INFORMATION [(return to Ranking)](#GENERAL_INFORMATION)

**COUNTY:** The county where the project is located determines the **County Cap** for the Cost Factor score.

**TYPE OF EASEMENT**: The landowner must decide which option they want:

1. Permanent easement
2. 30-year easement

**TYPE OF OWNERSHIP:**  Check the appropriate categories:

1. Private (an individual landowner, or corporation)
2. Organization (such as The Nature Conservancy)
3. Local, State, Federal Government entities are not eligible for WRE.

**RESTORATION METHOD:** Landowner Agreement or Federal Contract

1. Beginning Farmer
2. Limited Resource Producer
3. Minority
4. Veteran Farmer

SUMMARY OF RANKING FACTOR SCORES [(return to Ranking)](#SUMMARY_SCORES)

Transfer all scores from the eleven (11) factors and total them in this section. The maximum allowable point score is listed for each factor.

**SIGNATURES**  [(return to Ranking)](#SIGNATURES)

The landowner, Area Easement Program Specialist, District Conservationist, and US Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS) signatures are required to complete the application. The Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) signature is recommended, but optional.

EASEMENT AREA INFORMATION [(return to Ranking)](#EASEMENT_INFO)

1. **LOCATION:** Fill in the requested data for the site where the project is located.
2. **PORTION OF TRACT ENTERED INTO ACEP-WRE EASEMENT:** Check whether the proposed easement area is the entire Tract, or is only a portion of the Tract.
3. **EASEMENT AREA:** Enter the appropriate acres for each category.
   1. Habitat Restorable/Existing includes Upland, Palustrine Open Water/Unknown, Palustrine Forested, Palustrine Emergent, and Other Riparian. The definitions for these categories are the ones used when entering data into the NEST software.
   2. Include the number of acres currently enrolled in CRP. Areas planted to trees under CRP are only eligible with an approved waiver.
   3. Enter the total number of acres to be included in the easement. This number should be the sum of the Habitat Restorable acres plus the Habitat Existing acres.
4. **ELIGIBILTY:**  List the acres being considered based on eligibility. Eligibility criteria can be found in the ACEP Program Manual under 440.527.105

Acres that are eligible to be enrolled into ACEP-WRE include: wetlands farmed under natural conditions; Farmed Wetlands (FW); Prior Converted Cropland (PC); Commenced Conversion Wetlands; Farmed Wetland Pasture (FWP); and Lands substantially altered by flooding. That is as long as the acres have a cropping history AND restoration is possible.

If a site cannot be restored further, then it is not eligible for ACEP-WRE as “stand alone” (i.e. *Habitat Restorable*) acres, but can still be included as *Habitat Existing* acres (see 3b under Ranking Factors below).

However, if a site has additional hydrology restoration potential, then it can be considered as *Habitat Restorable* acres. If a PC site has only partially reverted back to a wetland, only to the point of saturation for example, and if the historic conditions would have been 18 inches of standing water, then the site IS eligible because further hydrology restoration is possible.

Program Exception: wetlands which have been restored through federal, state or private restoration efforts (such as through FWS) are still eligible. This also assumes that the site would have been ACEP-WRE-eligible prior to the restoration, and that it meets NRCS wetland restoration standards. NOTE: wetlands that meet these criteria will be awarded 2 points under the [CROPPING HISTORY](#CROPPING_HISTORY) factor. Also note that timber stands established under a CRP contract and pastureland established to trees under a CRP contract are not eligible unless approved through the waiver process.

For additional information see [Program Eligibility Requirements](http://directives.sc.egov.usda.gov/ViewRollUp.aspx?hid=17111&sf=1).

*Habitat Existing* acres do not meet the cropping history requirements, but are included as part of the proposed easement because they provide additional habitat value. See Section 6 instructions below.

1. **VALUATION:** The eligible acres mat not strictly determine the valuation. There may be acres that meet the hydric cropland eligibility, that have been out of production for more than 10 years. This section provides a place to clarify the valuation acres. Total easement acres in Sections 3, 4, & 5 should all be equal.
2. **habitat existing Acres:** Check the appropriate functions and values that will be provided by the *Habitat Existing* acres. Explain as necessary. Examples include situations where the acres will: provide filtering of surrounding agricultural runoff; provide additional waterfowl nesting habitat, escape cover, or other species-specific habitat requirements such as den or maternity trees.
3. **Riparian Corridor:** To be considered riparian acres, the land must be along a waterway and connect two or more parcels of protected land. This may be connecting two existing easements, or two existing permanently protected areas. Some applications that are being enrolled as riparian corridors are eligible only if they associated with another application made at the same time. If proposed easement falls into this category, then the associated agreement number must be listed. If there are existing easements or site, then include Agreement numbers or property names (and managing owner) in this section. Riparian zones may not be larger than 300 feet from top of bank, 600 feet if both sides of the watercourse are included.
4. **Hydric soils:** Hydricsoils must be confirmed by a Soil Scientist. The methodology of the confirmation must be identified. If the hydric soils were not confirmed onsite, explain what resources were used to make the determination. Also list acres of agland that are in subclass W in land capability class IV-VII.
5. **Landowner Objectives:**  This section was previously included on in the ranking form. It has been moved to the preliminary restoration plan. [(return to Ranking)](#EASEMENT_INFO)

RANKING FACTORS [(return to Ranking)](#RANKING_FACTORS)

1. **HYDROLOGY**

**A. Percent of the *Habitat Restorable* acres on which the hydrology will be restored to historic conditions.** This factor is calculated by dividing the number of *Habitat Restorable* acres where the hydrology will be restored, by the total number of *Habitat Restorable* acres. The criteria found in the Indiana FOTG Standards (657) *Wetland Restoration* and (659) *Wetland Enhancement* will be used to restore hydrology. Sites with the highest percentage of restorable acres are scored highest. Sites will receive 30 points where the historic hydrology is still present on the *Habitat Restorable* acres.

**Historic Conditions.** To the extent practicable, the restored site will meet the hydric soil, hydrology, and vegetative habitat conditions that previously existed on the site historically. **“**Historically” means the site conditions that existed at the time that the site was modified by settlers (normally for agricultural purposes). Tools that may be used to determine historic conditions include on-site soil investigations, US General Land Office (GLO) Surveys, historic photographs, topographic maps, and local remnant wetlands.

In some situations, historic conditions can be estimated by the extent of hydric soils. For example, for a drained depressional wetland in Northern Indiana, the historic condition is achieved when all of the hydrology has been restored to all of the hydric soil within the basin. In this example, it may require two feet of water in the center of the basin to restore the hydrology completely to the hydric soil on the basin’s perimeter.

No more than 30% of the site may be restored to an alternative hydrologic regime per NPM 440.528.132.B. This is an active effort to develop an alternative hydrology (i.e. deep water wetland where an ephemeral wetland once existed). If landscape level changes have altered the hydrology, making restoration to historic conditions infeasible, base percentages on what is feasible under current circumstances.

**Sites with existing levees (**[**also see table below**](#Levee_Table)**).** The following criteria applies to all levees or control structures that will remain in place after the restoration (whether Corps levees or “farmer” levees). It is assumed that the existing levee will reduce the natural hydrologic regime of the stream or river. **On a site where a levee is not expected to reduce the natural hydrologic regime, an alternative method of assessment can be used as approved by an engineer. The hydrology for the site will then be ranked accordingly.**

1. Well-drained soils. Where levees or other control structures have reduced the natural hydrologic regime of a stream or river (land-side), the site will receive 10 points for Part A (historic conditions) of the HYDROLGY Section. For example, sites with Haymond Soil along the Wabash River that are located inside (i.e. protected by) a Corps levee should only receive 10 points.

Sites that are located on the stream-side of a levee will receive the full 20 points. For example, sites located along the Wabash River located outside of (i.e. not protected by) an Army Corps of Engineer levee should receive 20 points because the hydrology is unaffected by the levee.

1. Poorly-drained soils. Where levees or other control structures have reduced the natural hydrologic regime of a stream or river (land-side), the site will receive 15 points for Part A (historic conditions) of the HYDROLGY Section. For example, sites with Suman Soil along the Kankakee River located inside (i.e. protected by) a levee will receive 15 points.

Sites that are located on the stream-side of a levee will receive the full 20 points. For example, sites located along the Kankakee River located outside of (i.e. not protected by) an Army Corps of Engineer levee should receive 20 points because the hydrology is unaffected by the levee.

HYDROLOGY Part A: Score for Sites with Levees

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Well-drained Soils (ED, WD, MWD) | Poorly-drained Soils (SPD, PD, VPD) |
| Site on Land-side of Levee | 10 | 15 |
| Site on Stream-side of Levee | 20 | 20 |

Key for table above:

ED = Excessively Drained

WD = Well Drained

MWD = Moderately Well Drained

SPD = Somewhat Poorly Drained

PD = Poorly Drained

VPD = Very Poorly Drained

B. Percent of the *Habitat Restorable* acres that will meet wetland criteria after restoration. This factor is calculated by dividing the number of *Habitat Restorable* acres that will meet all three wetland criteria after restoration, by the total number of *Habitat Restorable* acres. In other words, the *Habitat Restorable* acres must meet the wetland criteria of hydric soil, hydrology and hydrophytic vegetation.

**Lateral Effect.** In some situations, drains may be present that cannot be plugged or filled to fully restore hydrology on a site (such as in the case of a legal drain). The lateral affect of such existing drainage must be calculated to determine the hydrologic impact of the drainage. The lateral drainage effect of an open ditch or tile drain is assumed to be a distance from the drain that is the number listed as the maximum drain spacing in the *Indiana Drainage and Wet Soil Management AY 300 guide*. **The soil series must also be verified on-site by a Soil Scientist.**

**Where a site is exceptional**, that is, the drainage characteristics do not match what is expected, an alternative method of assessment can be used as approved by an engineer. The intent of using an alternative method is that the method should only be used to narrow the area of drainage, to allow more area into ACEP-WRE. Alternative methods could include scope and effect (for a very shallow ditch, for example), or soil borings that show an unexpected restrictive layer, or review of aerial photos for a couple of normal or dry years within the last five (5) years that show wetness.

**Sites that contain organic soils (a.k.a. muck).** See IN FOTG Standard [(659) *Wetland Enhancement*](http://efotg.nrcs.usda.gov/references/public/IN/Wetland_Enhancement.pdf) for requirements on enhancing hydrology by lowering the soil surface on drained organic soils. The purpose must be to establish an approximation of the historic vegetative community, and will only be allowed where typical hydrology enhancement methods are not feasible because of the presence of existing legal drains, or because of unavoidable negative impacts on adjacent landowners. The target vegetative community will be identified.

**Off-site impacts.** The potential off-site impacts of hydrology restoration on areas outside the easement must also be considered. If, for example, hydrology cannot be restored to the eligible acres without backing water or adversely affecting the drainage on an adjacent neighbor, then the criterion for this ranking factor is not met and points will not be given.

[**(Return to Ranking)**](#HYDROLOGY)

1. **WILDLIFE**

This ranking factor combines the scores from the three criteria listed below.

1. Threatened and Endangered (T&E) Species. Only data from the T&E Species data layer in Customer Service Toolkit will be used to meet this criterion. The only exception is where T&E specialists, such as the FWS or IDNR, certify in writing that a T&E Species not found in ToolKit is likely to utilize the easement area. The habitat requirements of the T&E will be listed and included in the restoration plan. The code for the T&E Species will be listed. Contact the NRCS State Biologist for further assistance.
2. Fragmentation/complexity. In general, sites associated with other blocks of habitat reduce habitat fragmentation and provide greater species diversity. Forested sites or sites that will be reforested, and that are contiguous or very closely associated with other blocks of forest or wetland habitat, meet this criterion. The site must contain or plan restoration of forested habitat at least 20 acres in size adjacent to at least 20 acres of existing forested habitat. Emergent sites that are within 0.5 miles of another wetland also meet this criterion.
3. Size. In general, larger blocks of habitat will support a higher population, and a greater diversity of wildlife species. Higher point values are given to larger sites.

[**(Return to Ranking)**](#WILDLIFE)

1. **VEGETATION**

This factor evaluates the potential to restore a site to its historic vegetation. The intent is to meet the vegetative habitat conditions that previously existed on the site historically. “Historically” means the site conditions that existed at the time that the site was modified by settlers (normally for agricultural purposes). Tools that may be used to determine historic conditions include US General Land Office (GLO) Surveys, historic photographs, topographic maps, and local remnant habitat. No more than 30% of the site can be developed to an alternative plant community per NPM 440.528.132.C. Landowners must be aware of this requirement and the resulting requirements of the restoration plan. It is recognized that a variety of successional stages in a landscape is beneficial. Restoration may include the installation of an early successional community, such as an understory planting, that may be maintained in the early successional condition indefinitely, but will consist of species that would be supported in a habitat where trees and shrubs will eventually establish (i.e. a mix of grasses and forbs that can tolerate shade)

[**(Return to Ranking)**](#VEGETATION)

1. **FOCUS REGION**

The areas identified as Focus Regions for ACEP-WRE in Indiana consist of the northeast depressional wetlands, the Kankakee watershed, and the southwest bottomland hardwoods. Region IV consists of the area outside these three regions. Within each of the Focus Regions, four Priority Areas have been identified as the most important wetland areas of each region. The selection for the Priority Areas was based on several considerations including: the number of wetlands present, previous landowner’s interest in ACEP-WRE, federal, state, or private programs that complement ACEP-WRE, and the opportunity for wetland restoration. The weighting factors applied to Regions I and II are designed to offset higher land costs in these Regions.

The Focus Region score is calculated by multiplying the weighting factor by the Priority Area points.

[**(Return to Ranking)**](#FOCUS_REGION)

1. **CONNECTIVITY**

The purpose of this factor is to give priority to easements that will result in expanding existing blocks of wildlife habitat. Larger blocks of habitat generally have higher populations and provide greater species diversity. “Permanently Protected Areas” are those areas that, because of ownership or easement, are expected to remain in protected status for a minimum of 30 years. These areas should contain a significant amount of wildlife habitat and conform to the general intent of ACEP-WRE. Examples include: state, county and municipal parks, state-owned fish and wildlife areas, recorded ACEP-WRE easements, state and national forests, and natural lakes, land trust or conservation organization permanently protected properties.

**Data layers available at F:\geodata\environmental\_easements** **include:**

* + ACEP-WRE easements **(**easements\_a\_in.shp)
  + Areas managed by IDNR (Managed\_Lands\_IDNR\_IN.shp).
  + National Conservation Easement Database: nced\_a\_in\_2015\_07.shp. NOTE: this database includes NRCS easements and may or may not be up-to-date. It is for reference only. Only the NRCS generated layer should be used for official boundary inquires.

[**(Return to Ranking)**](#CONNECTIVITY)

1. **WATER QUALITY**

The purpose of this factor is to give priority to those easements that will contribute to improvements in water quality. A maximum of 3 points is possible.

The three (3) factors used for the water quality criteria include:

1. Watersheds of Natural and Scenic Rivers-Outstanding State Waters (te\_nsrivers4w.shp)
2. Watersheds for Community Surface Water Supplies (surf\_wat1w.shp)
3. Vulnerable Groundwater Resources and Karst, and (g\_karst3w.shp)

**These data layers are available at F:\geodata\project\_data\nrcs\WRP\_WQ**. Points are given for those easements that lie within each water quality delineated area.

In addition, properties in priority water quality locations, such as the 100 year floodplain of the Wabash River and the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative may earn additional points.

[**(Return to Ranking)**](#WATER_QUALITY)

1. **CROPPING HISTORY**

Check the appropriate category indicating how long it has been since a crop has been produced on the easement area. “Crops” also include hayland or pasture. When distinguishing between agricultural (ag) and non-ag County Caps, only fields that have been cropped within the last 10 years will be considered ag land (i.e. to have a “cropping history”).

It may be necessary to request *FSA-578 Report of Acreage* to determine crop history.Other options to support crop history include aerial photos, producer records and reports, etc.

[**(Return to Ranking)**](#CROPPING_HISTORY)

1. **OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE**

This factor assumes that sites requiring lower levels of maintenance will maintain structural integrity longer, and require less resource input from landowners and NRCS. The following assumptions are made:

1. Water level manipulation requires personnel and expertise to accomplish.
2. Control structures with fixed water levels cannot be used for water level manipulation. Note: If a public agency or NGO commits (in writing) to the management of ALL control structures on the site, then this item meets the criteria for awarding more points in this section.
3. Levees that are expected to be inundated within a 10-year period will require more maintenance than those that will not be inundated.
4. Grasslands located in areas that were not historically prairie require more maintenance than woodland.
5. Invasive species are associated with high operation and maintenance. High infestations of invasive species have costs and management needs that exceed the benefits gained by the easement.
6. In some instances, restoration is too costly or infeasible. NRCS will not contribute more than the maximum of $1100 per acre of easement.
7. In some instances, the potential future repair of public drainage ways could have negative impacts on the easement. If public drain (ditch, tile, etc.) is present on the property, or potentially drains property, provide lateral effect/ scope and effect calculations for anticipated full drainage capacity. Assume failing or degraded drainage systems will be repaired to full capacity in the calculation. If a fully repaired drainage way will reduce hydrology on the proposed easement but not eliminate it, adjust hydrology score accordingly. If the public drain will be relinquished or abandoned, and therefore drainage capacity could be removed, make note and do not count against the score.

[**(Return to Ranking)**](#O_and_M)

1. **COST**

This factor assigns points to projects with low restoration and acquisition (easement) costs. Contributions from the landowner or outside sources can be used to show a reduction in NRCS’s share. Please fill in all appropriate data. For restoration cost per acres, the landowner or partner contribution may be $0. For the easement payment, the landowner offer or appraisal value may be Not Applicable (NA). In areas where an appraisal is need, use the 2016 GARC rates, or $5000, whichever is lower, to estimate the appraised value for 2017. In these appraisal areas, values g-m are Not Applicable (NA). Follow formulas in each cell for determining the final scores.

[**(Return to Ranking)**](#COST)

1. **Previous Application**
2. If a landowners has had previous WRP agreements with NRCS, but has requested cancellation of the agreements prior to closing, or NRCS has terminated the agreement due to reasons other than those outside the control of the landowner, the total final score will be reduced by 10 points. Examples: A landowner refuses to take action to provide clear title; the landowner withdraws to try to enroll again in a different Fiscal Year with a higher GARC value; etc. There may or may not be cost-recovery depending on when the agreement is cancelled. These actions are avoidable, and therefore costly to the government in time and expense.
3. If the landowner has had previous agreements, and they resulted in an easement, or they were cancelled or terminated due to no fault of the landowner (generally resulting in the waiving of cost-recovery), no points will be lost. Examples: Despite documented efforts made by the landowner, clear title could not be provided; after additional examination, it is determined restoration is not feasible; etc.

[**(Return to Ranking)**](#Previous)

1. **Easement Duration**

Permanent easements are given preference over 30-year easements.

[**(Return to Ranking)**](#EASEMENT_DURATION)

