

# Minnesota State Technical Committee (MSTC)

## Watershed Selection Criteria

### 3.1.2018

These criteria are sufficiently general to be applied to future watershed project selections and are designed to be weighted differently for different purposes/programs, especially with regard to “restoration” v. “protection.” To be used for actual project reviews these criteria would be further delineated with specific indicators as needed and rated based on specific program criteria.

#### **Criteria Based Upon MSTC Watershed Subcommittee Discussion--Summary**

1. Documentation
  - a. 303d listing (if required, no points given)
  - b. WRAPS, TMDL, or other identification of pollution issues
  - c. Comprehensive watershed planning
2. Local Readiness
  - a. Willingness
  - b. Capability (partnership infrastructure)
  - c. Or, what plan to plan
3. Multiple benefits: high needs and/or opportunities [or restoration potential]

#### **Criteria –Details**

Each criterion has been assigned a specific number of available points based on a maximum potential score of 100. The three categories of criteria were assigned 40, 40, and 20 points, respectively. The breakout of possible points is shown below for each criterion.

1. Documentation of pollution issues and Planning (Maximum of 40 points)
  - a. 303d listing,
    - i. Necessary for National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI) so no points given for NWQI
    - ii. Other programs possible points, based on a specific program
  - b. Describe monitoring, research, and other evaluations completed to identify pollution issues and sources of pollutant loads leading to the water quality impairment.
    - i. Identify whether one or more of the following is present and describe the information relevant to the proposal:
      1. Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategies (WRAPS) report (completed or on public notice);
      2. Total maximum daily load (TMDL) and implementation plan;
      3. Groundwater Restoration and Protection Strategies (GRAPS); or

4. Other research and documentation related to loads and impairments.

Possible points:

- 0 No description of additional information.
- 3 Moderate description of information and/or limited connection to the proposal.
- 7 Excellent description of information with a direct link to the proposal and its priorities.

ii. A comprehensive analysis of hydrological function has been completed at the landscape level and the proposal describes how the analysis will support the project.

Possible points:

- 0 No hydrologic function analysis described.
- 3 Moderate description of an analysis and its application to the project.
- 6 Excellent description of an analysis and its application to the project.

c. Comprehensive watershed planning:

i. A comprehensive watershed management plan such as One Watershed One Plan (1W1P), county comprehensive local water management plans, watershed district plans, and watershed management organization plans has been completed that addresses the proposed watershed.

Possible points:

- 0 No watershed or water described.
- 4 Plan addresses the proposed watershed in a general way.
- 8 Plan addresses the proposed watershed as a priority and/or provides prioritized, targeted, and measurable information supporting the management approach proposed in the proposal.
- 11 Plan addresses the proposed watershed as a priority and provides prioritized, targeted, and measurable information supporting the management approach proposed to address the identified critical source area.

ii. The plan includes landscape and management practice targeting analyses that have or will be completed in the plan area. The plan or proposal describe the scale at which the analyses will or have been completed.

Possible points:

- 0 No analysis completed or planned.
- 3 Analysis completed or planned at a relatively large scale.
- 7 Analysis completed or planned at HUC12 or smaller scale.

iii. The plan includes sufficient data collection and monitoring to reasonably assess, evaluate, and measure the success of the proposed project.

Possible points:

- 0 No water quality or flow monitoring completed or planned.
- 3 Water quality and flow monitoring included in plan, but not for the proposed watershed.

6 Water quality and flow monitoring in plan can be utilized to evaluate a water quality change with the completion of the proposal.

- d. Planning project proposals only: The proposal describes the approach to be used in developing a comprehensive project plan and the resources that will be committed to doing work.

Possible points:

- 0 The approach and resources for developing a comprehensive project plan are only generally described.  
3 The approach and resources for developing a comprehensive project plan are described in detail.

- e. Extra Points: The watershed being proposed has documented sensitive aquifers and a state-approved high vulnerability Drinking Water Supply Management Areas (DWSMAs).

Additional points:

- 5 1 or more sensitive aquifers/ high vulnerability DWSMAs have been clearly identified and will be addressed within the proposal.

2. Local Readiness (Maximum of 40 points)

- a. Leadership: Identify project lead organization and person(s).

Possible points:

- 0 No lead identified.  
6 Lead identified.

- b. Capacity:

- i. Partnerships among organizations are important for project success. List partners and their agreed-to roles and responsibilities within the proposed project. (See Appendix B)

Possible points:

- 0 No partners listed.  
2 1 – 2 partners listed with descriptions of the partnerships.  
4 3 + partners listed with descriptions of the partnerships.

- ii. Formal agreements have been signed among partners or resolutions of support have been passed by the boards of the organizations involved.

Possible points:

- 0 No letters of supports or formal agreements.  
3 Letters of support.  
5 Signed formal agreements and/or 4+ letters of support.

- c. Willingness:

- i. Farmers and/or landowners have made current commitments for project activities that will lead to priority load reductions.

Possible points:

- 0 No current commitments.

- 3 1 – 4 farmers/landowners have made current commitments for high priority projects; for priority load reductions, identified within 1/b/i. above.
- 5 5 + farmers/landowners have made current commitments for high priority projects; for priority load reductions, identified within 1/b/i. above.

ii. Describe the organized local farm (agriculture) leadership present to promote the implementation of the necessary practices. (See Appendix B)

Possible points:

- 0 No agricultural leadership on board for proposed project
- 3 1 – 2 agricultural leadership organizations documented by letters of support.
- 5 3 + agricultural leadership organizations documented by letters of support.

d. Identify other sources of funds that have been secured or applied for to complement the USDA financial assistance.

Possible points:

- 0 No other sources identified.
- 2 1 other source identified.
- 4 2 or more other sources identified.

e. State current outreach activities.

Possible points:

- 0 Current outreach not stated.
- 2 Current outreach stated in proposal.

f. Specify a plan of action to continue/expand outreach and one-on-one engagement with farmers and landowners.

Possible points:

- 0 No plan of action.
- 2 Plan of action was talked about in general terms.
- 4 A detailed plan of action was specified within the proposal.

g. Specify a plan for community involvement to build support for the watershed project. State how, when and methods of communication.

Possible points:

- 0 No plan mentioned.
- 2 A general plan with little details was mentioned.
- 5 A detailed plan with the how, when and methods of communication identified.

**3. Multiple benefits: high needs and/or opportunities [or restoration potential]**  
**(Maximum of 20 points)**

a. Water Quality is a must; however, state and explain any additional environmental benefits for which the project would improve. Such as: wildlife

and/or pollinator habitat, soil health, carbon storage with perennial vegetation, flood reduction, drinking water improvements or other environmental conditions.

Possible points:

- 0 No additional benefits identified.
- 3 1-2 additional benefits identified.
- 7 3 + additional benefits identified.

- b. Is there a documented need to protect and enhance watersheds within the project area that are not yet impaired, that this project would help enhance?

Possible points:

- 0 No documented need for protection at this time.
- 6 Documented need for protection prior to any impaired waters label.

- c. How does the proposal support other plans and programs (including but not limited to the MN Prairie Conservation Plan, MN Prairie Pothole Plan, MN State Wildlife and/or Pollinator Habitat Plan, state or local drinking water plans, water supply plans) that pertain to the area and how do those plans help meet such goals?

Possible points:

- 0 No supporting plans mentioned.
- 3 Supporting plans mentioned but in a general context.
- 7 Supporting plans identified with documented explanation of how multiple plans will work together to meet a common goal.

## Appendix A

A comprehensive approach to watershed planning and implementation includes the following:

- a. TMDL allocations or watershed goals clearly articulated.
- b. Baseline monitoring data.
- c. Documentation of baseline land uses and farming practices used in the watershed.
- d. An analysis of where problems are on the landscape, using conservation targeting that also informs implementation.
- e. Analyses of what's needed to get from the impairment to the goal through modeling of expected impacts of BMPs, targeted landscape diversification into perennials, improved hydrological function through water retention on land or other drainage practices, alternative cropping systems, etc., targeted to priority management zones.
- f. Watershed planning processes: How do those plans come together to form a whole?
- g. Macro and micro targeting: How many fields must be treated with a suite of practices to achieve the goal at the HUC12, HUC 8 or other watershed scale?
- h. A plan for evaluation of performance that distinguishes between outcomes (such as tons of sediment reduced) and outputs (such as number of erosion control practices implemented).
- i. Implementation readiness among project partners and with farmers;
- j. Related edge-of-field monitoring projects in operation.
- k. Planning, integration and adjusting predictions and implementation plans across scales and time as informed by modeling, farmer outreach, and monitoring.

## **Appendix B**

Potential watershed partners and agricultural organizations that may support a watershed project.

A **partner** is any person, entity, group, or organization assisting NRCS in a collaborative effort to promote or conduct outreach, provide technical and/or financial capacity or administrative capacity to implement a watershed project. Partner efforts by agricultural organizations can be especially effective in implementing a project.

A partial list of organization types include the following:

- Local units of government
- State government agencies
- Federal government agencies
- Agriculture industries
- Non-agriculture industries
- Agriculture organizations and associations
- University and Extension programs
- Hunting, fishing, and environmental organizations
- Foundations
- Community-based organizations