

## **307.23 Great Lakes Restoration Initiative**

### **Initiative Name and Acronym: Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI)**

**Initiative Description/Summary:** NRCS activities under GLRI are part of a multiagency effort to restore and protect the Great Lakes and are funded through a reimbursable interagency agreement (IA) between the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and NRCS. These activities are implemented through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA) Program, consistent with the Agricultural Act of 2014.

GLRI activities have been guided by the ***Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Action Plan II*** (Action Plan II), which establishes the measures of progress for a number of key focus areas that will be tracked to determine milestones in achieving the long-term goals for the Great Lakes. NRCS GLRI work falls primarily in the nonpoint source pollution impacts on nearshore health, invasive species, and habitat (habitat and species) focus areas.

In order to meet the criteria established in Action Plan II and to improve the delivery of GLRI in general, several changes will be initiated for GLRI under the FY 2015 – FY 2016 IA. These changes incorporate feedback gathered from NRCS personnel through dedicated GLRI “in-reach” and other meetings.

The purpose of GLRI is to improve water quality and enhance wildlife habitat within selected watersheds of the Great Lakes Basin. The initiative provides assistance through EQIP and CTA as described in this guidance.

### **Participating States**

Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin

### **Program Contact Information**

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### **ProTracts Requirements**

#### **1. Subaccount Guidance**

Separate account types have been established in ProTracts for each GLRI focus area as follows:

- GLRI – Nearshore Health (15-16)
- GLRI – Phosphorus (15-16)
- GLRI- Invasive Species (15-16)
- GLRI- Wildlife Habitat (15-16)

GLRI allocations will be made by focus area and State Conservationist will select one or more account types in ProTracts for administration of funds related to the initiative.

#### **2. Application, Evaluation, and Ranking Tool (AERT) Guidance – Choice Lists and Matrix Data**

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- Approved Land Use Types

Crop
Range
Pasture
Farmstead
Associated Agriculture Lands

- Approved Natural Resource Concerns

**Nearshore Health and Phosphorus Focus Area**

<b>Soil Erosion</b>
Sheet and Rill Erosion
Ephemeral Gully Erosion
Classic Gully Erosion
Stream bank, Shoreline, Water Conveyance Channels
Wind
<b>Soil Quality Degradation</b>
Compaction
Organic Matter Depletion
Concentration of Salts or Other Chemicals
<b>Water Quality Degradation</b>
Elevated Water Temperatures
Excess Pathogens and Chemicals from Manure, Bio-solids or Compost Application in Surface Water
Nutrients in Surface Water
Excessive Sediments in Surface Water
Pesticides in Surface Water

**Habitat Focus Area**

<b>Fish and Wildlife – Inadequate Habitat</b>
Inadequate Habitat – Habitat Continuity (Space)
Inadequate Habitat – Food
Inadequate Habitat – Cover/Shelter
Inadequate Habitat – Water
<b>Degraded Plant Condition</b>
Excessive Plant Pressure
Inadequate Structure and Composition
Undesirable Plant Productivity and Health
Wildfire Hazard, Excessive Biomass Accumulation

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#### Invasive Species Focus Area

Degraded Plant Condition
Excessive Plant Pressure
Inadequate Structure and Composition
Undesirable Plant Productivity and Health
Wildfire Hazard, Excessive Biomass Accumulation

- Approved Conservation Practices

Contracts developed under GLRI must include at least one of the core practices or must be completing a conservation system that supports core practices that are documented as already applied on the land under contract.

Nearshore and Phosphorus Core Practices	
Practice Code	Practice Name
102	Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan (No.) CAP
104	Nutrient Management Plan (No.) CAP
130	Drainage Water Management Plan (No.) CAP
313	Waste Storage Facility (No.)
327	Conservation Cover (Ac.)
328	Conservation Crop Rotation (Ac.)
102	Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan (No.) CAP
104	Nutrient Management Plan (No.) CAP
130	Drainage Water Management Plan (No.) CAP
329	Residue and Tillage Management, No Till (Ac.)
313	Waste Storage Facility (No.)
327	Conservation Cover (Ac.)
328	Conservation Crop Rotation (Ac.)
329	Residue and Tillage Management, No Till (Ac.)
330	Contour Farming (Ac.)
332	Contour Buffer Strips (Ac.)
340	Cover Crop (Ac.)
342	Critical Area Planting (Ac.)
345	Residue and Tillage Management, Reduced Till (Ac.)
362	Diversion
380	Windbreak/Shelterbelt Establishment (Ft.)
386	Field Border (Ac.)
390	Riparian Herbaceous Cover (Ac.)
391	Riparian Forest Buffer (Ac.)
393	Filter Strip (Ac.)
412	Grassed Waterway (Ac.)
422	Hedgerow Planting (Ft.)
528	Prescribed Grazing (Ac.)
554	Drainage Water Management (Ac.)
561	Heavy Use Area Protections (Ac.)
582	Open Channel (Ft.)
590	Nutrient Management (Ac.)
601	Vegetative Barrier
612	Tree and Shrub Establishment (Ac.)
620	Underground Outlet (Ft.)

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<b>Nearshore and Phosphorus Core Practices</b>	
<b>Practice Code</b>	<b>Practice Name</b>
633	Waste Recycling (Ac.)
605	Denitrifying Bioreactor (Ac.)
782	Phosphorus Removal System (No.)
333	Amending Soil Properties with Gypsum Products

<b>GLRI Wildlife Habitat Core Practices</b>	
<b>Practice Code</b>	<b>Practice Name</b>
314	Brush Management
391	Riparian Forest Buffer
490	Tree/Shrub Site Preparation
612	Tree and Shrub Establishment
643	Restoration and Management of Rare and Declining Habitats
644	Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management
645	Upland Wildlife Habitat Management
647	Early Successional Habitat Development/Management
657	Wetland Restoration
658	Wetland Creation
659	Wetland Enhancement
666	Forest Stand Improvement

<b>GLRI Invasive Species Core Practices</b>	
<b>Practice Code</b>	<b>Practice Name</b>
314	Brush Management
315	Herbaceous Weed Control
338	Prescribed Burning
528	Prescribed Grazing
595	Integrated Pest Management
643	Restoration and Management of Rare and Declining Habitats
657	Wetland Restoration
659	Wetland Enhancement
666	Forest Stand Improvement

- Supporting Practices to GLRI Core Practices and Priority Resource Concerns

States will select supporting practices to meet the intent of GLRI and address GLRI priority resource concerns shown above. The supporting practices must have a positive impact on priority resource concerns in the [National Conservation Practices Physical Effects \(CPPE\)](#) database. A list of supporting practices and resource concerns must be emailed to [the GLRI coordinator](#) by **December 31, each year**, prior to the release of GLRI subaccounts and AERT ranking tool.

- AERT Practice-Resource Concern Matrix

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States will populate the approved conservation practices in the ProTracts AERT and associate all core and supporting practices with resource concerns where CPPE values are positive.

States should ensure that CPPE values reflect the typical use of supporting practices in conjunction with a core practice and reflect a positive environmental benefit.

### **3. AERT Guidance – Ranking Criteria Questions**

The total ranking points associated with GLRI are to be distributed in AERT and approved ranking questions as follows:

AERT Level	Maximum Points	Point Percentage
National Ranking Questions	250	25%
State Ranking Questions	400	40%
Local Ranking Questions	250	25%
Efficiency Score	100	10%
Total points for this initiative:	1,000	100%

#### **National Ranking Criteria Requirements**

National ranking questions are established in ProTracts by National Headquarters.

#### **State Ranking Criteria Requirements**

State ranking questions are established by the board of directors and entered into ProTracts by States.

States must enter all the following State questions and points in ProTracts for each GLRI subaccount.

<b>EQIP GLRI State Questions</b>	<b>Points</b>
<b>1. If the application is for the 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-level questions.</b>	
1a. Is the program application for development of a CAP for Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan (102), Nutrient Management Plan (104), or Drainage Water Management Plan (130)? If 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
<b>2. Phosphorus Priority:</b>	
2a. Is the program application located in a phosphorus priority watershed? Yes = 100 Points    No = 0 Points	100
<b>3. Watershed Impacts:</b>	
3a. Does the program application include core conservation practices planned for phosphorus reduction within an existing State agency or other non-USDA water quality project area (Example: State or county watershed plan, NGO focus watershed) that addresses the same or similar watershed impairments (excess nutrients or sediment)? Yes = 100 points.    No = 0 points	100
<b>4. Collaborative Efforts - Edge of Field Monitoring:</b>	

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4a. Does the program application include core conservation practices planned for phosphorus reduction within a phosphorus priority watershed that has a joint NRCS/USGS edge of field and stream monitoring project in place (or scheduled to be in place) and located upstream of the stream gauge? Yes = 75 Points    No = 0 points	75
5. Soil Health – Will the program application result in improved soil health by (select all that apply):	
5a. implementing Residue Management (329 and/or 345 for all crops), and basic, enhanced, or advanced nutrient management on acres not previously using these practices or if being implemented to reach a higher level of nutrient reduction than previously achieved within GLRI-identified priority watersheds? Yes to both criteria = 50 Points. No to any one = 0 Points.	50
5b. implementing Cover Crop (340) on acres not previously using this practice within GLRI-identified priority watersheds? Yes = 50 Points. No = 0 Points.	50
6. Drainage Water Management:	
6a. Will the program application include practices that result in lowered phosphorus loading through Drainage Water Management – 554? Yes = 25 Points. No = 0 Points.	25
<b>Total Points:</b>	<b>400</b>

#### **Local Ranking Criteria Requirements**

Local ranking questions are developed by the State to prioritize applications that address specific watershed impairments and further the goals of GLRI. Local ranking questions will be entered into ProTracts by the State.

#### **Screening Criteria Requirements**

For nearshore health and phosphorus priority accounts, States will utilize the national screening criteria to support GLRI and manage workload associated with the application evaluations and ranking. All eligible applications must have an assigned priority of “High”, “Medium,” or “Low” recorded in ProTracts.

### **GLRI Required Phosphorus and Nearshore Health Priority Watershed Screening Criteria Worksheet:**

#### **NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)**

***A screening worksheet must be completed for each eligible EQIP application.***

#### Instructions:

This screening worksheet must be completed for each eligible producer applying for EQIP Great Lakes Restoration Initiative assistance. Applications will be accepted on a continuous basis; however, application periods are established for purposes of evaluation, ranking, and funding decisions. The goal of this screening tool is to ensure that conservation technical assistance and the EQIP program benefits are managed efficiently to address priority conservation needs related to this national initiative.

Completion of this worksheet and documentation does not constitute agreement to provide EQIP program benefits nor approval of a program contract. The original screening worksheet should be filed with the applicant case file or EQIP program file and unless the application is determined to be ineligible, the screening priority (high, medium, and low) must be recorded in ProTracts application priority. Upon request, a copy of any completed screening worksheet may be provided to the applicant.

### **Detailed Screening Criteria Worksheet – Complete for Each Eligible EQIP Applicant**

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Applicant Name:		County:	
Application No.:		Field Office:	
Evaluator Name:		Date:	

**Priority Determination for ProTracts – Select One:**

<p><b>High Priority Category:</b>  All of the conservation practices requested in the application will be implemented on land physically located inside the GLRI 8-digit Nearshore or 12-digit Phosphorus watersheds, -AND- The application includes at least two of the following core conservation practices: Cover Crop (340), Nutrient Management (590), Residue and Tillage Management, No-Till (329), Grassed Waterway (412) – OR – A Waste Storage facility (313) with at least one of the following core conservation practices: Cover Crop (340), Nutrient Management (590) and Residue and Tillage Management, No-Till (329), Grassed Waterway (412) – OR – Drainage Water Management (554) with at least one of the following “core” conservation practices: Cover Crop (340), Nutrient Management (590), Residue and Tillage Management, No-Till (329), – OR – The application is for a conservation activity plan (CAP).</p>	<p>High Priority Status in ProTracts</p>
<p><b>Medium Priority Category:</b>  All of the conservation practices requested in the application will be applied on land physically located inside the GLRI 8-digit or 12-digit watershed, AND The application contains at least one core conservation practice.</p>	<p>Medium Priority Status in ProTracts</p>
<p><b>Medium Priority Category 2:</b>  One or more of the conservation practices requested in the application will be applied on land physically located outside the GLRI watershed 8-digit or 12-digit watershed, AND The application contains at least one core conservation practice located inside the GLRI 8-digit or 12-digit watershed.</p>	<p>Medium Priority Status in ProTracts</p>
<p><b>Low Priority Category:</b>  <u>All</u> of the application acres are located on land that is <u>not</u> within the boundaries of the approved watersheds (8-digit HUC or 12-digit HUC) for the GLRI (enter application in ProTracts, but do not rank; offer alternative program assistance). All other applications – Low-priority applications <u>will not</u> be ranked for FY 2015 GLRI</p>	<p>Low Priority Status in ProTracts</p>

The priority determination of high, medium, or low must be recorded in ProTracts for this applicant.

Note: “Low” priority applications will only be ranked once all “High” and “Medium” applications have been completed and if funds are still remaining.

4. Allocation Guidance

Following the receipt of State allocation letters, GLRI States will receive a breakdown of the GLRI allocation by approved focus area and watershed availability. GLRI funds may not be used as general program funding and general program funds may not be added to GLRI funds. In the event a State cannot use their GLRI financial assistance allocation, funds are to be returned to National Headquarters with the appropriate technical assistance funds.