

307.21 Driftless Area Landscape Conservation Initiative

Initiative Name and Acronym: Driftless Area Landscape Conservation Initiative (DALCI)

Initiative Description/Summary

The purpose of DALCI is to address soil erosion, water quality, and wildlife concerns in the Driftless Area, a unique landscape in the Upper Midwest. The initiative provides assistance through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) as described in this guidance.

DALCI is governed by a board of directors, chaired by the Regional Conservationists (RCs) and composed of the State Conservationists (STCs) of included States. Adoption and modification of this guidance must be reviewed and approved through the board of directors, assisted by the initiative coordinator.

Approved or Participating States

- Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin
National EQIP funding will rotate between participating States on an annual basis according to the direction of the board of directors.

Program Contact Information

EQIP Team Leader – Jeffrey White, (202) 690-2621, Jeffrey.White@wdc.usda.gov
Conservation Initiatives Team Leader – Martin Lowenfish, (202) 690-4979, Martin.Lowenfish@wdc.usda.gov

ProTracts Requirements

1. Subaccount Guidance

State Conservationists will select the “Driftless Area” account type in ProTracts for administration of funds related to the initiative. The funding pool subaccounts must be assigned the name of **DALCI-(project or local name if applicable)** to facilitate monitoring of data in ProTracts.

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

a. Approved Land Types to be Populated in ProTracts AERT

States must assign the following land uses as eligible for this initiative (other land uses are not authorized for DALCI):

Required Land Use
Crop
Forest
Pasture
Associated Agricultural Lands

b. Approved Natural Resource Concerns to be Populated in ProTracts AERT

States must assign the following natural resource concerns for this initiative (other resource concerns are not authorized for DALCI):

Soil Erosion – Sheet and Rill Erosion
Soil Erosion – Ephemeral Gully Erosion
Soil Erosion – Classic Gully Erosion
Soil Erosion – Streambank, Shoreline, Water Conveyance Channels
Water Quality Degradation – Excessive Sediment in Surface Water
Water Quality Degradation – Nutrients in Surface Water
Water Quality Degradation – Nutrients in Ground Water

307.21 Driftless Area Landscape Conservation Initiative

Degraded Plant Condition – Undesirable Plant Productivity and Health
Degraded Plant Condition – Inadequate Structure and Composition
Degraded Plant Condition – Excessive Plant Pest Pressure
Fish and Wildlife – Inadequate Habitat – Cover/Shelter
Fish and Wildlife – Inadequate Habitat – Food
Fish and Wildlife – Inadequate Habitat – Habitat Continuity (Space)
Fish and Wildlife – Inadequate Habitat – Water

Note: No additional resource concerns may be added or used in ProTracts AERT to support this initiative.

- **Approved Conservation Practices to be Populated in ProTracts AERT**

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

c. Core Practices Required to be Offered for This Initiative

Core Practices	
Practice Name	Practice Code
Access Control	472
Aquatic Organism Passage	396
Brush Management	314
Conservation Cover	327
Conservation Crop Rotation	328
Contour Buffer Strip	332
Contour Farming	330
Cover Crop	340
Critical Area Planting	342
Diversion	362
Field Border	386
Filter Strip	393
Forage and Biomass Planting	512
Forest Stand Improvement	666
Grade Stabilization Structure	410
Grassed Waterway	412
Heavy Use Area Protection	561
Herbaceous Weed Control	315
Karst Sinkhole Treatment*	527
Lined Waterway or Outlet	468
Prescribed Burning	338
Prescribed Grazing	528
Residue and Tillage Management, No Till	329
Riparian Forest Buffer	391
Sediment Basin	350
Stream Crossing	578
Streambank and Shoreline Protection	580
Stream Habitat Improvement and Management	395
Stripcropping	585
Terrace	600
Tree/Shrub Establishment	612
Upland Wildlife Habitat Management	645

307.21 Driftless Area Landscape Conservation Initiative

Water and Sediment Control Basin	638
Wetland Creation	658
Wetland Restoration	657
Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management	644

d. Supporting Practices That States May Offer to Support This Initiative

Supporting Practices	
Practice Name	Practice Code
Access Road	560
Animal Trails and Walkways	575
Fence	382
Firebreak	394
Forage Harvest Management	511
Forest Trails and Landings	655
Livestock Pipeline	516
Mulching	484
Obstruction Removal	500
Pumping Plant	533
Spring Development	574
Subsurface Drain	606
Underground Outlet	620
Tree/Shrub Pruning	660
Tree/Shrub Site Preparation	490
Water Well	642
Watering Facility	614
Woody Residue Treatment	384

e. Conservation Activity Plans That States May Offer to Support This Initiative

Conservation Activity Plans	
Practice Name	Practice Code
Fish and Wildlife Habitat Management Plan	142
Forest Management Plan	106
Grazing Management Plan	110
Prescribed Burning Plan	112
Pollinator Habitat Plan	146

Conservation activity plans (CAPs) are conservation systems or plans designed to address specific resource concerns on an agricultural operation. CAPs must be developed by a certified technical service provider. CAPs are for use in EQIP contracts only. The use of a CAP is the only instance where a core practice is not required to be used.

- AERT Practice-Resource Concern Matrix**

States will populate the approved conservation practices in ProTracts AERT and associate all core and supporting practices with resource concerns where National Conservation Practices Physical Effects values are positive.

307.21 Driftless Area Landscape Conservation Initiative

3. AERT Guidance – Ranking Criteria Questions

The total ranking points associated with the initiative are distributed in AERT and approved ranking questions as follows:

AERT Level	Maximum Points	Point Percentage
National Ranking Questions	250	25%
State Ranking Questions	250	25%
Local Ranking Questions	400	40%
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.

By national policy, national ranking questions must account for 250 points or 25 percent of total points.

State Ranking Criteria Requirements

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

To support this initiative, States must enter all the following State questions and points in ProTracts AERT for each approved subaccount.

State Issues Addressed		
Question Number	Issue Questions	Points
1	Is the program application to support the development of a conservation activity plan (CAP)? If answer is "Yes," do not answer any other State-level questions. If answer is "No," proceed with evaluation to address the remaining questions in this section.	250
2	Application includes two of the following practices: Conservation Cover (327), Contour Buffer Strips (332), Cover Crop (340), Field Border (386), Filter Strip (393), Forage and Biomass Planting (512), Grade Stabilization Structure(410), Residue Management, No-Till (329), Terrace(600),Tree/Shrub Establishment (612), Water and Sediment Control Basin (638).	100
3	3. Application includes one of the following practices: Riparian Forest Buffer (391), Stripcropping (585).	35
4	Application is located in the upstream catchment area that drains to a designated trout stream. (Utilize GIS layer for determination of location for scoring.)	75
5	Application is for Streambank and Shoreline Protection (580), Stream Habitat Management (395), or Channel Bank Shaping under (342) and will be part of an adjoining project area addressing one of these practices as well.	40
Total Points		250

Local-Level Ranking Criteria Requirements

Local ranking questions are approved and entered into ProTracts at the State level. States should ensure that local questions follow EQIP policy and support the priorities and objectives of DALCI. Development of a CAP must receive the maximum points in the local ranking questions.

307.21 Driftless Area Landscape Conservation Initiative

Priority Areas

Priority areas in DALCI will be those areas identified in the current year State screening map, as developed by the State and approved by the Conservation Initiatives Team leader.

Screening Criteria Requirements

Applications within DALCI will be screened and assigned high, medium, or low priority status in ProTracts based on the State-specific criteria below as captured on "DALCI EQIP Screening Criteria Worksheet." High-priority applications must be ranked and approved for funding before any medium priority applications are funded. Low-priority applications will not be ranked or funded.

307.21 Driftless Area Landscape Conservation Initiative

DALCI EQIP 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 the DALCI EQIP funding pool. 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 initiative.

Completion of this worksheet and documentation does not constitute agreement to provide EQIP program benefits or 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, or 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	
Applicant Name:	
Application No:	
Evaluator Name:	
Priority Determination for ProTracts – Select One:	
<p><u>High Priority Category:</u> The high priority locations within the Driftless Area target all 1:100k local catchments draining into the State NRCS designated streams and tributaries (yellow shaded area on screening map, which includes the designated streams and tributaries, highlighted in red and blue). Use the State EQIP 2017 GIS layer to determine application scoring.</p>	High
<p><u>Medium Priority Category:</u> The medium priority locations within the Driftless Area target all HUC12 subwatersheds that include the State NRCS designated streams and any upper tributaries (green shaded area on screening map). Use the State EQIP 2017 GIS layer to determine application scoring.</p>	Medium
<p><u>Low Priority Category:</u> The low priority areas are indicated by the grey shaded area on the screening map. Use the State EQIP 2017 GIS layer to determine application scoring. Low priority applications will not be ranked or funded.</p>	Low

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

D.C. Approval:		Date Approved:	
----------------	--	----------------	--

307.21 Driftless Area Landscape Conservation Initiative

Map A – DALCI Boundary

