

EXHIBIT Y- To National Instruction 440-310

EQIP- National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI) Ranking Guidance

- 1) States must create a ranking pool in CART using the EQIP NWQI National Ranking Template and guidance in 440-CPM, part 530, subpart D, section 530.34 and Part 530 subpart R, section 530.401A.
- 2) CART ranking pools and Protracts subaccounts must have the same name. This ranking pool/spending plan will be tied to the “National Water Quality” account type in Protracts.
- 3) The national NWQI EQIP ranking template provides a broad list of practices. However, NI 440 Part 307.28 provides the list of core and supporting practices for NWQI, and the guidance for states to include additional supporting practices. States should refer to this guidance to select the appropriate practices to include on the ranking template for NWQI EQIP.
- 4) Applicability:
 - a) States must use the following question to determine Applicability for NWQI:
 - i) Land Unit Qualification = ALL
 - ii) Does the PLU intersect the NWQI national layer of watersheds by 50% or greater?
 - iii) States will use the national layer for NWQI for the current FY implementation projects (including source water projects) (*Initiative_NWQI_Implementation*). There are only two exceptions where states may use a state-developed NWQI layer for the applicability question:
 - (a) States have a watershed or source water protection area that has transitioned from planning to implementation after the start of the FY, or
 - (b) States want to use separate funding pools for each NWQI project and need a layer based on project boundaries.In both cases, the State-developed layer must reflect the approved HUC12s and/or source water protection areas as shown on the NWQI approval memo provided to STCs for the current FY.
- 5) Ranking Questions:
 - a) States must include the following ranking question under the Resource questions for the NWQI ranking pool:
 - i) Land Unit Qualification = ANY
 - ii) Does the PLU intersect the critical source area layer(s) for NWQI watersheds (if state GIS spatial data layer is available):
 - (1) No intersection = 0 points
 - (2) Intersects = 80 pts (or 40% of total resource points if less than 200 total points)
 - (3) Critical source areas may also include linear features (e.g. streambank reaches)
 - (4) If there is no GIS spatial data layer available for critical source area(s), states should use the critical source area map(s) in the watershed assessment to determine if the PLU is within/intersects the critical source areas. In this case, use text instead of geospatial questions to determine if there is an intersection based on available map(s). Approximate if necessary.

- b) Additional Resource questions for NWQI watersheds or source water protection areas should be based on the assessments, and include considerations relevant to the overall NWQI objectives to use a systems approach in focused areas to:
 - i) Improve water quality in water bodies that are impaired or that contribute to the impairment of another water body, or that have approved TMDLs, for sediment, nutrients, and/or pathogens.
 - ii) Address water quality threats identified in source water protection areas.
 - iii) Implement conservation systems on critical source areas that utilize avoiding, controlling and trapping strategies.
 - iv) Quantify the benefits of conservation implementation and promote adaptive management.
 - v) Promoting high-level conservation using innovative technologies.
- c) States must not exceed 200 points per category—Program questions and Resource questions.
- d) States may use the Program questions, Resource questions, or both to incorporate questions that target local and State priorities based on input from the State Technical Committee and local work groups.
- 6) Tie Breaker—States must use the efficiency score calculated in the CART ranking when a tie breaker is needed between one or more EQIP applications. When using the tie breaker, NRCS will select the application with the highest efficiency score first.