

EXHIBIT AW – To National Instruction 440-310

Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) Covered Program Ranking Guidance

RCPP projects selected and funded under the 2014 Farm Bill RCPP (RCPP 1.0) authority will continue to rely upon covered programs authorities, instruments and processes for applications and awards. Thus, the purpose of this Exhibit is principally to provide states authority to utilize published covered program ranking guidance and national ranking templates as the basis for project specific RCPP covered program application management.

(A) RCPP-Environmental Quality Incentive Program (RCPP-EQIP)

States shall create ranking pools and manage applications based on the national EQIP ranking guidance and RCPP-EQIP national ranking template.

(B) RCPP-Conservation Stewardship Program (RCPP-CSP)

States shall create ranking pools and manage applications based on the national CSP ranking guidance and RCPP-CSP national ranking templates.

(C) RCPP-Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (RCPP-ACEP)

(1) RCPP-ACEP Agricultural Land Easements (ALE)

States shall create ranking pools and manage applications based on the national ACEP-ALE ranking guidance and RCPP-ALE national ranking templates.

(2) RCPP-ACEP – Wetland Reserve Easements (WRE)

States shall create ranking pools and manage applications based on the national ACEP-WRE ranking guidance and RCPP-WRE national ranking templates.

(D) RCPP-Healthy Forest Reserve Program (RCPP-HFRP)

States shall create ranking pools and manage applications based on the national HFRP ranking guidance and RCPP-HFRP national ranking templates.

For RCPP Covered Program Awards

- (1) Required ranking criteria and questions shall follow policy detailed in each program's section of this instruction, though references to "state criteria" shall be understood to apply to "state and or RCPP project(s)" so as to allow needed flexibility to address RCPP project specific concerns.
 - a. National and programmatic priorities, questions and points are not affected by this exhibit, and remain those of the covered program;
 - b. State priorities shall be used to incorporate state, RCPP programmatic and RCPP project specific concerns.
 - c. States are responsible for ensuring that original RCPP project resource concerns are defensibility translated into CART resource concern categories and addressed in assessment and ranking; resources available for this translation include the RCPP project

agreement, and CART resource concerns, categories and components available in the Assessment section of the CART help page

(<https://usdagcc.sharepoint.com/sites/nrcs/intranet/SitePages/CART.aspx>).

- (2) As is the case with RCPP 1.0 covered program awards generally, deviations from covered program policy shall continue to require applicable covered program waivers and or a duly processed RCPP “adjustment of terms” (AoT); to minimize implementation delays, States are strongly encouraged to proceed within the existing covered program national ranking templates and policy.

Note: new RCPP projects selected and funded under the 2018 (RCPP 2.0) Farm Bill will NOT utilize covered program awards; guidance on assessment and ranking of RCPP Producer Contracts and Supplemental Agreements associated with the 2018 Farm Bill RCPP projects is provided separate exhibits to this instruction.