

EXHIBIT AA – To National Instruction 440-310

EQIP WaterSMART Initiative (WSI) National Ranking Guidance

- 1) States must create a ranking pool in CART using the EQIP WaterSMART Initiative (WSI) National Ranking Template and guidance in 440-CPM, part 530, subpart D, section 530.34 Ranking and Part 530 subpart R, section 530.401 EQIP Funds Management.
- 2) CART ranking pools and Protracts subaccounts must have the same name. This ranking pool and subaccount will be tied to the WaterSmart account type in Protracts.
- 3) The national WSI ranking template identifies which land use(s), modifier(s), resource concern(s), and conservation practices that determine eligibility for and ranking allowable within this fund pool.
 - a) Since some categories and concerns in the template may not apply to every priority area, some weights have a default value of zero. States must select categories, concerns, and weighting values that reflect priorities in the funding proposal.
 - b) Reminder that planned practices receiving points in CART are based on the applicable component of the resource concern and are relative to existing condition questions and thresholds set for representing the amount of conservation effort needed to achieve the planning criteria for the resource concern.
- 4) Applicability:
 - a) States must use the following questions to determine applicability for the WSI:
 - i) Land Unit Qualification = ALL
 - ii) Does the PLU intersect the State-developed geodata boundary layer for an approved WSI priority area by 50% or greater?
- 5) Ranking Questions:
 - a) States must include the following ranking question under the Resource questions for the WSI ranking pool:
 - i) Will the planning criteria for one of the four primary water resource concerns identified in exhibit NI-440-307.35 WaterSMART Initiative (WSI) be met on one or more PLUs in the application? (Yes/No) (100 points)
 - b) Additional Resource questions for WSI priority areas may prioritize funding for applications that also meet the planning criteria for secondary resource concerns:
 - i) Will the planning criteria for secondary resource concerns (any resource concern related to water quantity (such as a water quality, plant community, or wildlife habitat resource concern) be met on one or more PLUs in the application? (Yes/No) (100 points)
 - 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.