

EXHIBIT AQ – To National Instruction 440-310  
EQIP Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) Ranking Guidance

**(1) GLRI – Nearshore Health**

- 1) States must create a ranking pool in CART using the EQIP GLRI 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 GLRI account types (Nearshore Health) in ProTracts.
- 3) The national GLRI EQIP ranking template provides a broad list of practices. However, NI 440-307-C-307.23 provides the list of core practices for GLRI, and the guidance for States to include additional supporting practices. States should refer to this guidance to select the appropriate practices to include from the ranking template for GLRI EQIP Nearshore Health.
- 4) Applicability Question:
  - a) States must use the following question to determine Applicability for GLRI:
    - o Does at least one PLU in the project area intersect the GLRI priority watersheds layer by 50% or greater?
  - b) States will use the national approved GLRI priority watersheds layer, Initiative\_GLRI\_HUC8\_Priority and choose “ANY” for the Land Unit Qualification.
- 5) Category question will not be prescribed and are to be determined by States, as needed.
- 6) Resource Ranking Questions (200 points):
  - a) Required Resource questions for GLRI Nearshore Health watersheds are based upon implementation of a conservation planning activity, design and implementation activity, and conservation evaluation and monitoring activity, as well as phosphorus priority, watershed impacts, collaborative efforts, soil health, and phosphorus removal systems. States must include the following Resource ranking questions for Nearshore Health:
    - i) Is the program application for development of a standalone Conservation Planning Activity (CPA), Design and Implementation Activity (DIA), Conservation Evaluation and Monitoring Activity (CEMA), or a combination of these? If the answer is “Yes,” then answer “No” to all remaining Resource questions. If the answer is “No,” proceed with evaluation to address the remaining questions in this section. (Yes/No) (200 points)
      - o An alternative to the above guidance instructing planners to answer “No” to all further Resource ranking criteria if the application is for the development of a standalone CPA, DIA, CEMA, or a combination to set all further ranking criteria to be “Conditional” to Resource Ranking Criteria (RC) 1 being “No.” Thus, if the application is for a CPA, DIA, CEMA, or a combination of these, and the planner answers “yes” to RC 1, the rest of the ranking criteria will not appear for consideration.
    - ii) Is the application located entirely within a GLRI phosphorus priority watershed (Initiative\_GLRI\_HUC12\_Phosphorus\_Priority)? (Yes/No) (70 points)
    - iii) Watershed Impacts: Does the program application include core conservation practices planned for phosphorus reduction within an existing State agency or other non-USDA

**NOTE: A DIA or CEMA in an application with conservation practices will not receive the maximum points and the above question should be answered “No”.**

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/No) (25 points)

- iv) Collaborative Efforts - Edge of Field Monitoring: 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/No) (25 points)
  - v) Soil Health: Will the program application result in improved soil health by (select all that apply):
    - o Implementing Residue Management (329 and/or 345 for all crops) and Nutrient Management (590) with subsurface nutrient placement on acres not previously using these practices or if being implemented to reach a higher level of nutrient reduction than previously achieved? (Yes to both criteria = 20 points; No to any one = 0 points)
    - o Implementing Cover Crop (340) on acres not previously using this practice? (Yes/No) (20 points)
    - o Implementing Prescribed Grazing (528) by converting row-cropped acres, or acres with row crops in rotation, to a permanent grazing system? (Yes/No) (20 points)
  - vi) Phosphorus Removal: Does the program application include Phosphorus Removal System (782)? (Yes/No) (20 points)
- 7) Program Ranking Questions (200 points)
- a) States may use the Program questions to incorporate and target local and State priorities based upon input from the State Technical Committee and Local Work Groups. States must include the following Program ranking question for Nearshore Health.
    - i) Is the program application for development of a standalone Conservation Planning Activity (CPA), Design and Implementation Activity (DIA), Conservation Evaluation and Monitoring Activity (CEMA), or a combination of these? If the answer is “Yes,” then answer “No” to all remaining Program questions. If the answer is “No,” proceed with evaluation to address the remaining questions in this section. (Yes/No) (200 points)
      - o An alternative to the above guidance instructing planners to answer “No” to all further Program ranking criteria if the application is for the development of a standalone CPA, DIA, CEMA, or a combination to set all further ranking criteria to be “Conditional” to Program Ranking Criteria (RC) 1 being “No.” Thus, if the application is for a CPA, DIA, CEMA, or a combination of these, and the planner answers “Yes” to RC 1, the rest of the ranking criteria will not appear for consideration.
- NOTE: A DIA or CEMA in an application with conservation practices will not receive the maximum points and the above question should be answered “No”.**
- 8) States must not exceed 200 maximum points in Resource or Program questions.
- 9) 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.

## **(2) GLRI – Wildlife Habitat**

- 1) States must create a ranking pool in CART using the EQIP GLRI 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 GLRI account types (Wildlife Habitat) in ProTracts.
- 3) The national GLRI EQIP ranking template provides a broad list of practices. However, NI 440-307-C-307.23 provides the list of core practices for GLRI, and the guidance for States to include additional supporting practices. States should refer to this guidance to select the appropriate practices to include from the ranking template for GLRI EQIP Wildlife Habitat.
- 4) Applicability Question:
  - a) States must use the following question to determine Applicability for GLRI:
    - o Does at least one PLU in the project area intersect the Great Lakes watershed layer by 50% or greater?
  - b) States will use the nationally approved Great Lakes watershed layer, Initiative\_GLRI\_ProjBndy and choose “ANY” for the Land Unit Qualification.

**NOTE:** If the State’s Wildlife Habitat proposal was written for a targeted area, the State will develop an Applicability question using its own geographic boundary from the proposal.
- 5) Category questions will not be prescribed and are to be determined by States, as needed.
- 6) Resource Ranking Questions (200 points)
  - a) The following required Resource question for GLRI Wildlife Habitat projects is based on Project Impact.
    - i) Project Impact: Does the program application include core conservation practices planned for Wildlife Habitat? (Yes/No) (100 points)
    - ii) States will develop additional Resource questions to incorporate and target local and State priorities based upon input from the State Technical Committee and Local Work Groups.
- 7) Program Ranking Questions (200 points)
  - a) States will develop Program questions to incorporate and target local and State priorities based upon input from the State Technical Committee and Local Work Groups.
- 8) States must not exceed 200 maximum points in Resource or Program questions.
- 9) 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.

## **(3) GLRI – Invasive Species**

- 1) States must create a ranking pool in CART using the EQIP GLRI 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 GLRI account types (Invasive Species) in ProTracts.
- 3) The national GLRI EQIP ranking template provides a broad list of practices. However, NI 440-307-C-307.23 provides the list of core practices for GLRI and the guidance for States to include additional supporting practices. States should refer to this guidance to select the appropriate practices to include from the ranking template for GLRI EQIP Invasive Species.
- 4) Applicability Question:
  - a) States must use the following question to determine Applicability for GLRI:
    - o Does at least one PLU in the project area intersect the Great Lakes watershed layer by 50% or greater?
  - b) States will use the nationally approved Great Lakes watershed layer, Initiative\_GLRI\_ProjBndy and choose “ANY” for the Land Unit Qualification.

**NOTE:** If the State’s Invasive Species proposal was written for a targeted area, the State will develop an Applicability question using its own geographic boundary from the proposal.
- 5) Category questions will not be prescribed and are to be determined by States, as needed.
- 6) Resource Ranking Questions (200 points):
  - a) Required Resource questions for GLRI Invasive Species projects are based on Watershed Impacts and Project Sustainability.
    - i) Project Impact: Does the program application include core conservation practices planned for Invasive Species? (Yes/No) (100 points)
    - ii) States will develop additional Resource questions to incorporate and target local and State priorities based upon input from the State Technical Committee and Local Work Groups.
- 7) Program Ranking Questions (200 points)
  - a) States will develop Program questions to incorporate and target local and State priorities based upon input from the State Technical Committee and Local Work Groups.
- 8) States must not exceed 200 maximum points in Resource or Program questions.
- 9) 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.