

## EXHIBIT BU – To National Instruction 440-310

### EQIP Working Lands for Wildlife (WLFW) Sage-Grouse Initiative (SGI) Greater Sage-Grouse (GRSG) Ranking Guidance

- 1) States must create ranking pools using the EQIP WLFW SGI GRSG National Ranking Template and guidance in 440-CPM-530-D-530.34 and -530-R-530.401A.
- 2) CART ranking pools and ProTracts subaccounts must have the same name. This ranking pool must be associated with the “Sage-Grouse Initiative” account type in ProTracts. Subaccounts must begin with the format “WLFW SGI Greater Sage-Grouse.”
- 3) The national EQIP WLFW SGI GRSG ranking template provides a broad list of practices. NI-440-307.32 provides the list of required core and optional supporting practices that can be used for WLFW SGI GRSG.
- 4) Applicability:
  - a) The following question **must be used** in the “Applicability” section of the ranking pool display group for WLFW SGI GRSG:
    - i) Land unit qualification = ANY
    - ii) Does the PLU intersect the national WLFW SGI GRSG boundary layer?  
(WLFW\_Greater\_Sage-Grouse\_ProjectBndy\_FY23)
    - iii) States must use the national layer for the WLFW SGI GRSG boundary.  
(WLFW\_Greater\_Sage-Grouse\_ProjectBndy\_FY23)
- 5) Ranking Questions:
  - a) The following questions must be included in the “Resources” section of the ranking pool display group for WLFW SGI GRSG:
    - i) Habitat Priority - Does the PLU intersect a priority area for conservation layer for WLFW SGI GRSG? Note: State WLFW SGI GRSG priority areas for conservation spatial data layers are used to determine priority areas 1-3. If there is no State-specific GIS spatial layer available at the State, use the national WLFW SGI GRSG priority areas for conservation data layer to delineate priority (WLFW\_Greater\_Sage-Grouse\_PriorityArea\_FY23). The national priority layer equals priority area 1 and that priority areas 2 and 3 must not be used. Only choose one answer (100 points max).
      - (1) Any PLU intersects priority area 1 = 100 points
      - (2) Any PLU intersects priority area 2 = 50 points
      - (3) Any PLU intersects priority area 3 = 25 points
      - (4) No intersection of priority areas 1-3 = 15 points
    - ii) Enrolled Acreage - What is the percentage of the range and pastureland associated with the operation that is contained in the conservation plan? Only choose one answer (max 50 points). Acreage must be greater than 0.
      - (1) All eligible range and pastureland enrolled = 50 points
      - (2) 50% or more of eligible range and pastureland enrolled = 25 points
      - (3) Less than 50% of eligible range and pastureland enrolled = 15 points

- iii) Threats Addressed - Do the planned practices address threats that were identified for GRSG? Use the State-specific WLFW SGI GRSG Threats Checklist or WLFW SGI GRSG Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Guide for determination. Only choose one answer (50 points max). At least one identified threat must be addressed.
    - (1) All identified threats addressed = 50 points
    - (2) 75% or more of identified threats addressed = 40 points
    - (3) 50% or more of identified threats addressed = 25 points
    - (4) Less than 50% of identified threats addressed = 15 points
  - b) States must not exceed 200 points per category - Resource and Program Questions.
- 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 must select the application with the highest efficiency score first.