

307.23 Great Lakes Restoration Initiative

Initiative Name and Acronym: Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI)

Initiative Description

The GLRI is a multiagency effort to restore and protect the Great Lakes. The initiative provides assistance to landowners and agricultural producers through the authorities of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program – Wetland Reserve Easement (ACEP-WRE), Emergency Watershed Protection Program – Floodplain Easement (EWPP-FPE), and the Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA) Program, as described in this guidance. The [GLRI Action Plan](#) establishes the long-term goals for the Great Lakes, the priorities designated as Focus Areas, and the measures used to track progress in the action plan. NRCS activities within GLRI primarily focus on improving water quality, addressing invasive species, and enhancing wildlife habitat within selected watersheds of the Great Lakes Basin.

GLRI activities are guided by the Great Lakes Regional Working Group and funded by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). These activities are implemented through existing NRCS program authorities, regulations, and policy. NRCS receives GLRI funding through an annual interagency agreement between EPA and NRCS. Each year's interagency agreement includes specific objectives and requirements for obligation and expenditure of funds that must be followed in addition to statutes, regulations, and NRCS policy. Measures of progress established by the GLRI Action Plan are annually tracked and reported by NRCS to EPA.

Program Contact Information

For questions specific to GLRI, please contact the GLRI coordinator or the branch chief of the Areawide Planning Branch. For general programmatic questions, please contact the respective program coordinator.

Participating States

Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin.

Focus Area

Nearshore Health (NH) Focus Area: The NH Focus Area addresses water quality concerns in the Great Lakes Basin, particularly phosphorus contamination. To support this effort, NRCS uses NH funding to target watersheds with the greatest impacts on water quality. These watersheds are recognized as GLRI priority watersheds, designated at an 8-digit hydrologic unit code (HUC) scale. The GLRI priority watersheds are further divided into phosphorus priority watersheds and designated with a 12-digit HUC scale.

NH funds are prioritized, but not limited to, program applications that target phosphorus priority watersheds and practices that maximize phosphorus reductions. NRCS reports NH funding accomplishments in pounds of phosphorus reduced and number of acres in priority watersheds receiving technical or financial assistance for nutrient management.

Business Tool Requirements

1. ProTracts Guidance:

For EQIP, a GLRI Nearshore Health subaccount must be established each fiscal year in ProTracts and must be associated with the appropriate GLRI account type. The new account type will be provided to the states annually. The account type name will list the GLRI Focus Area and fiscal years in which the applicable interagency agreement's funds are available for obligation (e.g., GLRI – Nearshore Health 23/24).

2. Conservation Assessment and Ranking Tool (CART) Guidance:

To develop GLRI ranking pools in CART, states must use the applicable program's GLRI national ranking templates and guidance. The national ranking templates provide the approved land uses and primary resource concerns. The default weightings for each Resource Concern Category and Resource Concern on the ranking template reflect the relative priority of the concerns. States may adjust the weightings within the ranges identified on the GLRI national ranking template, as needed, to prioritize the state-specific primary natural resource concerns.

The GLRI national ranking template and ranking guidance are available in [440 NI 310](#), in the following exhibits.

- Exhibit AQ, "EQIP Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) Ranking Guidance"
- Exhibit AS, "EQIP GLRI Nearshore National Ranking Template"
- Exhibit CQ, "ACEP-WRE GLRI Nearshore Ranking Guidance"
- Exhibit CR, "ACEP-WRE GLRI Nearshore National Ranking Template"
- Exhibit CS, "EWPP-FPE GLRI Nearshore Ranking Guidance"
- Exhibit CT, "EWPP-FPE GLRI Nearshore National Ranking Template"

3. Funding and Allocation Guidance:

State GLRI Nearshore Health allocations will be made by program. GLRI funds must not be used as general program funding and general program funds must not be added to GLRI funds. GLRI funds must not be moved between interagency agreements or between Focus Areas within an agreement. If a state cannot use its GLRI financial assistance allocation, funds are to be returned to national headquarters with the appropriate technical assistance funds.

Since GLRI is funded through an interagency agreement, NRCS must establish separate, state-specific work breakdown structure (WBS) codes in FMMI for each GLRI program. WBS codes will be provided to states annually.

Contract Administration

- a. Application Periods**—Ranking periods for GLRI will coincide with national program ranking periods.
- b. Announcement**—States should coordinate the announcement of GLRI application periods, especially when a watershed crosses state lines.

- c. **Obligation of Funds**—The EPA interagency agreement requires initial obligation of funds by the end of the Federal fiscal year following the year it was approved. For example, because the 2023 interagency agreement was approved by both parties in June 2023, all contracts and agreements obligating funds under that agreement must be executed by September 30, 2024.

NOTE: GLRI EQIP contracts are standalone and must not include any Farm Bill EQIP funding. Likewise, Farm Bill EQIP contracts must not include any GLRI EQIP funding.

- d. **Contract Length**—Contracts obligated under interagency agreements may not be written or modified with an expiration date later than the expiration date for that agreement. These dates are provided by the GLRI coordinator. Please note that these expiration dates vary for each agreement. A summary of the expiration dates for all active agreements is provided to states every year.
- e. **Waivers and Variances**—As stated in the allocation letter, requests for waivers or variances to these provisions should be requested to the deputy chief of Programs with copies to the branch chief of the Areawide Planning Branch and to the GLRI coordinator.

Core and Supporting Practices

EQIP contracts developed under GLRI must include at least one of the core practices or must be completing a conservation system that supports core practices that are documented as already applied on the land under contract and are still adequate as part of the new system being implemented. If a state determines that a core practice is not needed, the state conservationist must notify the branch chief of the Areawide Planning Branch with copies to the GLRI coordinator prior to program advertisement.

EQIP Nearshore Health Core Practices and Activities

Practice Code	Conservation Practice Name
313	Waste Storage Facility
327	Conservation Cover
328	Conservation Crop Rotation
329	Residue and Tillage Management, No-Till
330	Contour Farming
332	Contour Buffer Strips
333	Amending Soil Properties with Gypsum Products
340	Cover Crop
342	Critical Area Planting
345	Residue and Tillage Management, Reduced Till
350	Sediment Basin
362	Diversion
380	Windbreak/Shelterbelt Establishment and Renovation
381	Silvopasture (optional)
386	Field Border

Practice Code	Conservation Practice Name
390	Riparian Herbaceous Cover
391	Riparian Forest Buffer
393	Filter Strip
412	Grassed Waterway
422	Hedgerow Planting
528	Prescribed Grazing
554	Drainage Water Management
561	Heavy Use Area Protections
582	Open Channel
585	Stripcropping
590	Nutrient Management
601	Vegetative Barrier
605	Denitrifying Bioreactor
612	Tree/Shrub Establishment
620	Underground Outlet
633	Waste Recycling
656	Constructed Wetland
657	Wetland Restoration
782	Phosphorus Removal System

Practice Code	Conservation Planning Activities (CPA)
102	Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan (CNMP)
110	Grazing Management Plan (optional)
116	Soil Health Management Plan
199	Conservation Plan

Practice Code	Design and Implementation Activities (DIA)
101	CNMP Design and Implementation Activity
157	Nutrient Management Design and Implementation Activity
159	Grazing Management Design
161	Pest Management Conservation System Design
162	Soil Health Management System Design
163	Irrigation Water Management Design
164	Improved Management of Drainage Water Design

Practice Code	Conservation Evaluation and Monitoring Activities (CEMA)
216	Soil Health Testing
226	Waste Facility Site Suitability and Feasibility Assessment (optional)

227	Evaluation of Existing Waste Storage Facility Components (optional)
257	Nutrient Management Implementation Support (optional)

Supporting Practices to GLRI Core Practices and Priority Resource Concerns

States must select supporting EQIP practices to meet the intent of GLRI under each Focus Area. Supporting practices must facilitate a core conservation practice that treats a priority NH resource concern.

Maps

Current maps of GLRI priority and phosphorous priority watersheds can be found on the [NRCS GLRI webpage](#).