

Action Required By: November 9, 2012, and July 1, 2013

Purpose. To provide State Conservationists (STCs) and the Directors, Caribbean and Pacific Islands Areas, with guidance for administering FY 2013 national programmatic and landscape conservation initiatives funded through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA) program, and Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP).

Expiration Date. September 30, 2013

Background. To support efficient delivery of these focused opportunities to eligible producers, this bulletin consolidates guidance for certain national programmatic and landscape initiatives to be offered through EQIP, AMA, and WHIP during FY 2013. Although legislative authorities may be unresolved and funding allocations may not be finalized, State Conservationists are to use the attached guidance to prepare to offer these opportunities in a timely manner when clarity is achieved.

Explanation. This guidance establishes action items to be completed by State Conservationists to support initiatives. Delivery and management of these initiatives are subject to all agency program rules and policies including requirements in Title 440, Conservation Programs Manual (CPM), Part 512, "Conservation Program Contracting."

<u>National Initiative</u>	AMA	EQIP	WHIP
National Air Quality Initiative (NAQI)		X	
National On-Farm Energy Initiative (NOFEI)		X	
National Seasonal High Tunnel Initiative (NSHTI)	X	X	
National Organic Initiative (NOI)		X	
<u>Landscape Conservation Initiatives:</u>			
Working Lands for Wildlife (WLFW)			X
-Black-Footed Ferret (BF Ferret WLFW)			X
-Bog Turtle (Bog Turtle WLFW)			X
-Lesser Prairie Chicken (LP Chicken WLFW)		X	X
-New England Cottontail (NE Cottontail WLFW)			X
-Southwestern Willow Flycatcher (SWN Flycatcher WLFW)			X
-Greater Sage Grouse (Greater Sage Grouse WLFW)		X	X
-Gopher Tortoise (G Tortoise WLFW)			X
-Golden-Winged Warbler (G Winged Warbler WLFW)			X
Bay Delta Initiative (BDI)		X	
Gulf of Mexico Initiative (GoMI)		X	
Illinois River Subbasin and Eucha - Spavinaw Lake Watershed Initiative (IRWI)		X	
Mississippi River Healthy Watersheds Initiative (MRBI)		X	X
Northern Plains Migratory Bird Habitat Initiative (NP-MBHI)		X	
Ogallala Aquifer Initiative (OAI)		X	
Long Leaf Pine Initiative (LLPI)		X	
New England-New York Forestry Initiative (NE/NYFI)		X	
Everglades Initiative (EI)		X	
West Maui Coral Reef Initiative (WMCRI)		X	
Driftless Area Initiative (DAI)		X	

In order to support approved national programmatic and landscape conservation initiatives during FY 2013, STCs, are to complete the following:

1) ProTracts Subaccounts and Application, Evaluation, and Ranking Tool (AERT).—States are to establish subaccounts and populate the ranking evaluation criteria in the ProTracts AERT and other actions as follows **no later than COB Friday, November 9, 2012.**

a. ProTracts Subaccounts.—Unless already populated in ProTracts by the national office, States are to establish an iteratively named and separate subaccount in ProTracts for each initiative offered and assign the appropriate "account type" as noted in the attached guidance documents. States may not establish "locally led" or "State" type subaccounts to support national initiatives.

b. Subaccount Resource Concerns.—States must assign the natural resource concerns in AERT for each subaccount established in ProTracts, as noted in the attached guidance documents. For planning purposes, States should emphasize the primary resource concerns targeted by the initiative.

c. National Approved Land Uses.—States must designate the approved land uses as eligible for each initiative as indicated in the attached guidance documents.

d. Approved Conservation Practices - Core and Supporting Practices.—The attached guidance will provide practices that are approved to support each national or landscape initiative. For purposes of this guidance, if core and supporting practices are used for an approved initiatives, the following definitions apply:

- **Core Practice.**—A conservation practice listed in the Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG) that is essential to address the natural resource concerns identified by an initiative.
- **Supporting Practice.**—A conservation practice listed in the FOTG that may be needed to facilitate the implementation of a core practice or, along with other approved practice, needed to address the natural resource concerns identified by the initiative.

National Programmatic Initiatives.—Carefully review the guidance provided for each initiative to determine which practices may be required to be offered. If a State does not need to offer one or more of the core practices (e.g., the practice is not needed to address a resource concern), the STC must notify the appropriate Financial Assistance Program Division (FAPD) team leader of which core practices are not needed. States are encouraged, but not required, to offer all supporting practices listed in the attached guidance documents. States may approve the use of additional supporting practices not listed in the attached guidance documents if the State Conservationist certifies that **all** the following conditions are met:

1. The proposed supporting conservation practice is needed to directly support a required or core practice.
2. The purpose of the proposed supporting conservation practice standard addresses one or more of the initiative's natural resource concerns.
3. The national Conservation Practice Physical Effects (CPPE) database indicates the proposed practice is assigned a "positive" value for the associated resource concern.

Landscape Conservation Initiatives.—Carefully review the guidance provided for each initiative to determine which practices are required to be offered. If a State does not need to offer one or more of the core practices (e.g., the practice is not needed to address a resource concern), the STC must notify the initiative coordinator, who will seek approval from the Initiative Lead Regional Conservationist. Changes to landscape initiative supporting practices, consistent with the criteria below, must be submitted to the initiative coordinator and approved by the appropriate Initiative Lead Regional Conservationist.

1. The proposed supporting conservation practice is needed to directly support a required or core practice.
2. The purpose of the proposed supporting conservation practice standard addresses one or more of the initiative's natural resource concern.
3. The national Conservation Practice Physical Effects (CPPE) database indicates the proposed practice is assigned a "positive" value for the associated resource concern.

States are responsible for associating core and supporting practices with the approved resource concerns in ProTracts AERT, as indicated in the attached guidance documents.

e. Conservation Activity Plans (CAP).—The ProTracts application type of "planning" must be associated with each EQIP CAP application and ranking of these applications is mandatory during FY 2013. Additional guidance for administration of CAPs will be provided in a separate notice.

f. Screening Criteria.—If included in the attached initiative guidance, States must utilize national screening criteria as provided to manage workload associated with the initiative. All eligible applications must have an assigned priority of "High," "Medium," or "Low" recorded in ProTracts.

g. State Ranking Criteria.—State ranking criteria to support the national programmatic and certain landscape conservation initiatives during FY 2013 have been established as shown in the attached guidance documents. States are responsible for populating the ProTracts AERT with the established State ranking criteria for each initiative offered in their State. States may not modify any FY 2013 initiative State-level ranking criteria provided in this guidance.

h. Local Ranking Criteria.—States must populate local ranking criteria in ProTracts AERT. Refer to attached guidance documents for examples of local ranking criteria to support the initiative. If example local ranking criteria are not provided in this guidance, States must develop criteria that support the goals of the initiative.

i. Payment Schedules.—States must ensure that required core practices and any necessary supporting practices are included in the current program payment schedules uploaded to ProTracts. Each payment schedule uploaded into ProTracts should include both historically underserved (HU) and traditional participant payment rates. Historically underserved items should be prefaced with “HU” to allow for ease of identification during contracting and quality assurance.

(2) Application Periods.—National Headquarters (NHQ) has established ranking periods and application deadlines to allow evaluation of all program applications from the beginning of the fiscal year through May 31, 2013. Unless specified in the attached guidance documents, State Conservationists must select and offer application periods consistent with the nationally established application and ranking periods. Additional guidance to States will be issued under a separate national bulletin.

Public Affairs - Outreach.—No State or local announcements in the media about any initiative may be made until after the national-level announcement, which will be issued either from the Department or the Chief. Announcements must be coordinated and issued through the national Public Affairs Division (PAD).

States must post initiative information to the State’s Web site. Information provided must be consistent with policy at 440-CPM, Part 515, Subpart D, Section 515.32B. If core and supporting practices are required for the initiative, this information must also be presented on the State Web site.

Fund Management.—Once States have established their ProTracts subaccount and AERT, States **must** allocate the appropriate financial assistance funds to these subaccounts. At the end of the last ranking period, any unused funds must be returned by allowance change to NHQ. STCs may add additional general program financial assistance to support the national programmatic or landscape conservation initiatives provided an allowance change request has been entered into the Allowance Change Tool (ACT).

For any initiatives that may provide EQIP financial assistance for livestock related projects, State Conservationists must ensure that applications are properly associated with an appropriate “Livestock Type.”

Obligation Deadline.—All program contracts must be obligated by COB Monday, **July 1, 2013**. Program funds not obligated by this date must be returned to NHQ by submitting an allowance change request through ACT **no later than COB July 5, 2013**, so that they can be used to address other initiative opportunities. Return of funds or request for additional funds should be done in accordance with 440-CPM, Part 512, Subpart I, Section 512.84, “Fund Allocation Changes.” States will return the appropriate technical assistance (TA) funds with the return of any financial assistance. The TA return rate for each program will be provided in the State allocation letter.

Contact. If you have any questions regarding this guidance, contact the program manager or initiative coordinator listed in the appropriate attachment to this bulletin. If you have general questions about FAPD program rules or guidance, contact the appropriate FAPD team leader: Mark Rose, EQIP Team Leader, at (202) 690-2621 or mark.rose@wdc.usda.gov, and Maggie Rhodes, AMA and WHIP, at (202) 720-6700 or maggie.rhodes@wdc.usda.gov. If you have any questions regarding the technical aspects of these initiatives, contact the appropriate Science and Technology division director: Noller Herbert, Director, Conservation Engineering Division, at (202) 720-2520 or noller.herbert@wdc.usda.gov, and Terrell Erickson, Director, Ecological Sciences Division, at (202) 720-5992 or terrell.erickson@wdc.usda.gov.

/s/

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[Attachment A](#)
[Attachment B](#)
[Attachment C](#)
[Attachment D](#)
[Attachment E](#)
[Attachment F](#)
[Attachment G](#)
[Attachment H](#)
[Attachment I](#)
[Attachment J](#)
[Attachment K](#)
[Attachment L](#)
[Attachment M](#)
[Attachment N](#)
[Attachment O](#)
[Attachment P](#)
[Attachment Q](#)
[Attachment R](#)

Attachment D

Initiative Name and Acronym: National Organic Initiative (NOI)

Initiative Description/Summary: Through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) NOI, NRCS will assist eligible producers with installation of conservation practices on agricultural operations related to organic production. NRCS has determined that this definition includes certified organic producers and producers who are transitioning to become certified organic. Eligible applicants also include producers who fall under the exemption category in the National Organic Program (NOP) regulation.

- Certified organic producers must provide NRCS with a copy of their Organic System Plan (OSP) and Organic Certification must be maintained for the life of the contract.
- Transitioning to Organic must self-certify that they agree to develop and implement an Organic System Plan (OSP) and provide NRCS the contact information of the applicant's USDA accredited organic certifying agent before an EQIP contract can be approved.
- Organic producers selling less than \$5,000 a year in organic agricultural products are exempt from organic certification. Exempt organic producers are eligible for the EQIP Organic Initiative. Applications should be ranked with certified organic producers provided that they self certify that they agree to develop and implement an OSP.
- Payments for practices for the Organic Initiative are limited to \$20,000 per fiscal year and \$80,000 during the 6 rolling years of a Farm Bill.

Approved or Participating States:

- All States and Territories
- National Organic Initiative funds will be allocated to States and Counties that identify as having certified organic or transitional organic applications. The final FY 2013 allocation to support the NOI will be announced at a later date in the allocation letter or other bulletin.

Program Contact Information:

EQIP Program Specialist for Organics: Natasha Brown at (202) 720-1834;
natasha.brown@wdc.usda.gov

ProTracts Requirements:

1. Subaccount Guidance:

The following sub accounts have been created in ProTracts to support NOI for all States and Territories:

- "FY13 Certified Organic" with an account type of "Certified Organics"
- "FY13 Organic Transition" with an account type of "Organic Transitional"

States shall evaluate and fund applications for organic or organic transition related projects and the required organic transition related CAP using the Organic Transition" sub account. Applications for the CAP must be assigned the application type of "organic planning," no additional organic subaccounts will be used.

2. Application, Evaluation, and Ranking Tool Guidance – Choice Lists and Matrix Data:

- **Approved Land Types to be populated in ProTracts AERT:**

States must assign the following land uses as eligible for this initiative. (Other land uses are not authorized for NOI).

Required Land Use
Crop
Forest
Grazed Forest
Headquarters
Grazed Range

Attachment D

Pasture
Hay

- **Approved Natural Resource Concerns to be populated in ProTracts AERT:**
States must assign the following natural resource concerns for this initiative (Other resource concerns are not authorized for NOI).

Soil Condition
Organic Matter Depletion
Compaction
Containments – Animal Waste and Other Organics - K
Containments – Animal Waste and Other Organics - N
Containments – Animal Waste and Other Organics - P

Soil Erosion
Sheet and Rill
Wind
Classic Gully
Ephemeral Gully

Water Quality
Excessive Nutrients and Organics in Groundwater
Excessive Nutrients and Organics in Surface Water
Excessive Suspended Sediment and Turbidity in Surface Water
Harmful Levels of Pathogens in Groundwater
Harmful Levels of Pathogens in Surface Water
Harmful Temperatures of Surface Water

Water Quantity
Inefficient Water Use on Irrigated Land

Domestic Animals
Inadequate Quantities and Quality of Feed and Forage
Inadequate Stock Water
Inadequate Shelter

Plant Condition
Plants not adapted or suited
Productivity, Health and Vigor
Noxious and Invasive Plants

Fish and Wildlife
Inadequate Cover/Shelter
T&E Plant Species: Declining Species, Species of Concern
Threatened and Endangered Fish and Wildlife Species

- **Approved Conservation Practices to be populated in ProTracts AERT:**

The following conservation practices are required to be offered in all FY 2013 approved OI States to address identified certified organics or organic transitional resource concerns. However, the State Conservationist (STC) may add additional practices necessary to address the OI resource concerns provided that the conditions listed in this attachment are met. STCs will notify the National EQIP OI Specialist if any additional practices are added to the State OI practice list.

Approved OI Practices	Code
Alley Cropping	311
Brush Management	314
Herbaceous Weed Control	315
Animal Mortality Facility	316
Composting Facility	317
Conservation Cover	327
Conservation Crop Rotation	328
Residue and Tillage Management, No Till/Strip Till/Direct Seed	329
Contour Farming	330
Contour Orchard and Other Perennial Crops	331
Contour Buffer Strips	332
Prescribed Burning	338
Cover Crop	340
Critical Area Planting	342
Residue Management, Seasonal	344
Residue and Tillage Management, Mulch Till	345
Residue and Tillage Management, Ridge Till	346
Well Water Testing	355
Diversion	362
Pond	378
Windbreak/Shelterbelt Establishment	380
Silvopasture Establishment	381
Fence	382
Field Border	386
Riparian Herbaceous Cover	390
Riparian Forest Buffer	391
Filter Strip	393
Grade Stabilization Structure	410
Grassed Waterway	412
Hedgerow Planting	422
Irrigation System, Microirrigation	441
Irrigation System, Sprinkler	442
Irrigation System, Surface & Subsurface	443

Attachment D

Approved OI Practices	Code
Irrigation System, Tailwater Recovery	447
Irrigation Water Management	449
Access Control	472
Mulching	484
Forage Harvest Management	511
Forage and Biomass Planting	512
Livestock Pipeline	516
Prescribed Grazing	528
Range Planting	550
Drainage Water Management	554
Row Arrangement	557
Heavy Use Area Protection	561
Spring Development	574
Animal Trails and Walkways	575
Stream Crossing	578
Stripcropping	585
Structure for Water Control	587
Nutrient Management	590
Integrated Pest Management	595
Terrace	600
Vegetative Barriers	601
Herbaceous Wind Barriers	603
Tree/Shrub Establishment	612
Watering Facility	614
Water and Sediment Control Basin	638
Water Well	642
Windbreak/Shelterbelt Renovation	650
Seasonal Tunnel System for Crops	798
Conservation Plan Supporting Organic Transition	CAP 138

- AERT Practice-Resource Concern Matrix

States shall populate the approved conservation practices in the ProTracts AERT and associate all approved resources concerns with the proper conservation practice.

Conservation Practices	Code	Soil Erosion				Soil Condition					Water Quantity	Water Quality					Plant Condition			Animals Domestic			Fish and Wildlife		
		Sheet and Rill	Wind	Ephemeral Gully	Classic Gully	Organic Matter Depletion	Compaction	Contaminants-Animal Waste and Other Organics - N	Contaminants-Animal Waste and Other Organics - P	Contaminants-Animal Waste and Other Organics - K	Inefficient Water Use on Irrigated Land	Excessive Nutrients and Organics in Groundwater	Excessive Nutrients and Organics in Surface Water	Excessive Suspended Sediment and Turbidity in Surface Water	Harmful Levels of Pathogens in Groundwater	Harmful Levels of Pathogens in Surface Water	Harmful Temperatures of Surface Water	Productivity, Health and Vigor	Plants not adapted or suited	Noxious and Invasive Plants	Inadequate Quantities and Quality of Feed and Forage	Inadequate Shelter	Inadequate Stock Water	Inadequate Cover/Shelter	T&E Species: Declining Species, Species of Concern
Alley Cropping	311	X	X	X		X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X				X		
Brush Management	314	X	X	X								X					X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
Herbaceous Weed Control	315	X	X	X								X					X	X	X	X			X		
Animal Mortality Facility	316										X	X			X										
Composting Facility	317						X	X	X		X	X		X	X				X						
Conservation Cover	327	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X				X	X	X
Conservation Crop Rotation	328	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X				X		
Residue and Tillage Management, No Till/Strip Till/Direct Seed	329	X	X	X		X	X				X	X	X		X								X	X	X
Contour Farming	330	X	X	X	X							X	X	X		X									
Contour Orchard and Other Perennial Crops	331	X	X	X	X							X	X	X		X			X						
Contour Buffer Strips	332	X	X	X	X							X	X	X		X			X				X		
Prescribed Burning	338						X	X	X				X				X	X	X	X			X	X	X
Cover Crop	340	X	X	X		X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X			X		
Critical Area Planting	342	X	X	X	X		X						X	X	X			X	X				X	X	X
Residue Management, Seasonal	344	X	X	X		X					X	X	X		X								X		
Residue and Tillage Management, Mulch	345	X	X	X		X	X				X	X	X		X								X	X	X

Attachment D

Conservation Practices	Code	Soil Erosion				Soil Condition				Water Quantity	Water Quality					Plant Condition			Animals Domestic		Fish and Wildlife				
		Sheet and Rill	Wind	Ephemeral Gully	Classic Gully	Organic Matter Depletion	Compaction	Contaminants-Animal Waste and Other Organics - N	Contaminants-Animal Waste and Other Organics - P	Contaminants-Animal Waste and Other Organics - K	Inefficient Water Use on Irrigated Land	Excessive Nutrients and Organics in Groundwater	Excessive Nutrients and Organics in Surface Water	Excessive Suspended Sediment and Turbidity in Surface Water	Harmful Levels of Pathogens in Groundwater	Harmful Levels of Pathogens in Surface Water	Harmful Temperatures of Surface Water	Productivity, Health and Vigor	Plants not adapted or suited	Noxious and Invasive Plants	Inadequate Quantities and Quality of Feed and Forage	Inadequate Shelter	Inadequate Stock Water	Inadequate Cover/Shelter	T&E Species: Declining Species, Species of Concern
Till																									
Residue and Tillage Management, Ridge Till	346	X	X			X	X				X		X		X										
Well Water Testing	355										X						X						X		
Diversion	362				X				X				X		X										
Pond	378								X		X	X	X										X	X	X
Windbreak/Shelterbelt Establishment	380	X	X			x	X	X	X	X			X			X	X	X				X		X	X
Silvopasture Establishment	381	X	X				X	X	X		X	X	X		X	X	X	X				X		X	
Fence	382	X	X	X	X								X			X								X	X
Field Border	386	X	X				X	X	X			X	X		X								X		
Riparian Herbaceous Cover	390						x	X	X		X	X	X	X	X								X	X	X
Riparian Forest Buffer	391						x	X	X		X	X	X	X	X								X	X	X
Filter Strip	393		X				X	X	X			X	X	X	X								X	X	X
Grade Stabilization Structure	410				X								X											X	
Grassed Waterway	412				X								X		X								X		
Hedgerow Planting	422		X												X	X	X	X	X				X	X	X
Hillside Ditch	423	X		X	X								X												
Irrigation System, Microirrigation	441	X							X		X	X		X	X			X							

Attachment D

Conservation Practices	Code	Soil Erosion				Soil Condition					Water Quantity	Water Quality					Plant Condition			Animals Domestic			Fish and Wildlife				
		Sheet and Rill	Wind	Ephemeral Gully	Classic Gully	Organic Matter Depletion	Compaction	Contaminants-Animal Waste and Other Organics - N	Contaminants-Animal Waste and Other Organics - P	Contaminants-Animal Waste and Other Organics - K	Inefficient Water Use on Irrigated Land	Excessive Nutrients and Organics in Groundwater	Excessive Nutrients and Organics in Surface Water	Excessive Suspended Sediment and Turbidity in Surface Water	Harmful Levels of Pathogens in Groundwater	Harmful Levels of Pathogens in Surface Water	Harmful Temperatures of Surface Water	Productivity, Health and Vigor	Plants not adapted or suited	Noxious and Invasive Plants	Inadequate Quantities and Quality of Feed and Forage	Inadequate Shelter	Inadequate Stock Water	Inadequate Cover/Shelter	T & E Species of Concern	Threatened and Endangered Fish and Wildlife Species	
Irrigation System, Sprinkler	442		X							X	X	X		X	X				X								
Irrigation System, Surface & Subsurface	443									X	X	X		X	X				X								
Irrigation System, Tailwater Recovery	447									X	X	X		X													
Irrigation Water Management	449	X								X	X	X	X	X	X		X		X								
Access Control	472	X	X	X	X		x	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				X	X	X	X
Mulching	484	X	X	X	X	X						X	X				X		X					X			
Forage Harvest Management	511						X	X	X	X			X	X	X		X	X	X	X				X			
Forage and Biomass Planting	512	X	X	X		X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X				X			
Livestock Pipeline	516									X													X	X	X	X	
Prescribed Grazing	528	X	X	X		X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X				X	X	X	X
Range Planting	550	X	X				X	X	X				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				X	X	X	X
Drainage Water Management	554		X			X		X			X	X		X	X		X										
Row Arrangement	557	X		X				X	X	X			X		X		X										
Heavy Use Area Protection	561	X	X	X	X			X	X	X			X		X				X								
Spring Development	574							X	X	X			X		X								X				
Animal Trails and Walkways	575	X	X	X	X						X	X								X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Stream Crossing	578											X	X										X	X	X	X	

Attachment D

Conservation Practices	Code	Soil Erosion				Soil Condition				Water Quantity	Water Quality					Plant Condition			Animals Domestic		Fish and Wildlife					
		Sheet and Rill	Wind	Ephemeral Gully	Classic Gully	Organic Matter Depletion	Compaction	Contaminants-Animal Waste and Other Organics - N	Contaminants-Animal Waste and Other Organics - P	Contaminants-Animal Waste and Other Organics - K	Inefficient Water Use on Irrigated Land	Excessive Nutrients and Organics in Groundwater	Excessive Nutrients and Organics in Surface Water	Excessive Suspended Sediment and Turbidity in Surface Water	Harmful Levels of Pathogens in Groundwater	Harmful Levels of Pathogens in Surface Water	Harmful Temperatures of Surface Water	Productivity, Health and Vigor	Plants not adapted or suited	Noxious and Invasive Plants	Inadequate Quantities and Quality of Feed and Forage	Inadequate Shelter	Inadequate Stock Water	Inadequate Cover/Shelter	T&E Species: Declining Species, Species of Concern	Threatened and Endangered Fish and Wildlife Species
Stripcropping	585	X	X	X								X		X			X						X			
Structure for Water Control	587				X					X	X	X			X		X					X		X	X	
Cross Wind Ridges	588		X								X	X					X									
Nutrient Management	590					X		X	X		X	X		X	X		X	X					X	X	X	
Integrated Pest Management	595						X						X				X						X	X	X	
Terrace	600	X		X									X		X								X			
Vegetative Barriers	601			x	x								X		X			X					X			
Herbaceous Wind Barriers	603	X	X										X				X	X	X				X			
Tree/Shrub Establishment	612	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X		X	X	X	X
Watering Facility	614												X		X							X		X	X	
Water and Sediment Control Basin	638				X								X													
Water Well	642							X	X	X							X					X		X	X	
Windbreak/Shelterbelt Renovation	650		X				X	X	X				X				X	X	X		X		X			
Seasonal Tunnel System for Crops	798						X						X				X	X								
Cross Wind Trap Strips	589C		X														X	X	X				X			

3. Application, Evaluation, and Ranking Tool Guidance – Ranking Criteria Questions (OI):

The total ranking points associated with initiative are to be distributed in AERT and approved ranking questions as follows:

AERT Level	Maximum Points	Point Percentage
National Level Ranking Questions	250	25%
State Level Ranking Questions	400	40%
Local Level Ranking Questions	250	25%
Efficiency Score	100	10%
Total Points for this initiative:	1,000	100%

In order to meet the requirements of 440 CPM Part 512, Subpart C, States shall adjust AERT “multipliers” in ProTracts to assure that the above target percentages will properly distribute available ranking points for each category. The following are detailed instructions for populating ranking questions and points in ProTracts AERT.

National Level Ranking Criteria Requirements:

National ranking questions are established in ProTracts by the national office.

National priorities must account for 250 points or 25% of total points.

Only the following national level ranking questions apply to this initiative. All other national ranking criteria not listed are not applicable and should be answered “No” by Designated Conservationists:

1. If the application is for development of a Conservation Activity Plan (CAP), the agency will assign significant ranking priority and conservation benefit by answering “Yes” to the following question. Answering “Yes” to question 1a will result in the application being awarded the maximum amount of points that can be earned for the national priority category.
1a. Is the program application for development of a Conservation Activity Plan (CAP)? If answer is “Yes”; do not answer any other national level questions. If answer is “No”, proceed with evaluation to address the remaining questions in this section.
2. Clean and Abundant Water: Water Quality – Will the proposed project assist the producer to:
2a. Meet regulatory requirements relating to animal feeding operations, or proactively avoid the need for regulatory measures?
2b. Reduce sediment, nutrients or pesticides from agricultural operations located within a field that adjoins a designated “impaired water body” (TMDL, 303d, etc.)?
2c. Reduce sediment, nutrients or pesticides from agricultural operations located within a field that adjoins a “non-impaired water body”?
3. Clean and Abundant Water: Water Conservation – Will the proposed project assist the producer implement conservation practices which:
3a. Decrease aquifer overdraft.
3b. Conserve water from irrigation system improvements and saved water will be available for other beneficial uses?
3c. Conserve water in an area where the applicant participates in a geographically established or watershed-wide project?
5. Soil Health: – Will the proposed project assist the producer to implement practice(s) which:
5a. Reduce erosion to tolerable limits (Soil “T”)?
5b. Improve soil tilth, organic matter, structure, health, etc.?
6. Healthy Plant and Animal Communities Wildlife Habitat Conservation – Will the proposed project assist the producer to implement practice(s) which:
6a. Benefit on-farm habitat associated with threatened and endangered, at-risk, candidate, or species of concern as identified in a State wildlife plan?

Attachment D

6b. Help retain wildlife and plant habitat on land exiting the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)?
7. High Quality, Productive Soils, Healthy Plant and Animal Communities: Will the proposed project assist the producer implement practices which:
7a. Help manage or control noxious or invasive species on non-cropland?
7b. Increase, or improve habitat to benefit pollinator or other targeted wildlife species?
7c. Properly dispose of livestock carcasses?
7d. Are identified in an Integrated Pest Management plan?
7e. Are identified in a Nutrient Management plan?
7f. Apply principles of adaptive nutrient management?
9. Business Lines – Conservation Implementation Additional Ranking Considerations - Will the proposed project result in:
9a. Implementation of all conservation practices scheduled in the contract on the CPA-1155 within three years of date of obligation?
9b. Improvement of existing conservation practices or conservation systems already in place at the time the application is accepted?
9c. Implementation of practice(s) which will complete an existing conservation system or suite of practices?

State Level Ranking Criteria Requirements:

State ranking questions are established by the national office, entered into ProTracts by the national office. State level ranking questions must account for a total of 400 points. Set AERT to a maximum of 400 points for this category.

2013 EQIP OI State Level Ranking Questions	FY 2013 Points
1. If the application is for development of a Conservation Activity Plan (CAP), the agency will assign significant ranking priority and conservation benefit by answering "Yes" to the following question. Answering "Yes" to question 1a will result in the application being awarded the maximum amount of points that can be earned for the state priority category.	
1a. Is the program application for development of a Conservation Activity Plan (CAP) for a TSP prepared Conservation Plan Supporting Organic Transitioning Plan (138)? <u>If answer is "Yes", do not answer any other state level questions.</u> If answer is "No", proceed with evaluation to address the remaining questions in this section.	400
2. Soil Quality: Answer all questions that apply for a maximum of 45 points.	
2a. EQIP Schedule of Operations includes implementation of two or more soil quality or enhancing practices that address soil tilth, crusting, water infiltration, organic matter compaction, etc.?	45
2b. EQIP Schedule of Operations includes implementation of one soil quality or enhancing practice that addresses soil tilth, crusting, water infiltration, organic matter, compaction, etc.?	25
3. Soil Erosion: Maximum of 45 points	

Attachment D

3a. Does the EQIP Schedule of Operations include practices that will result in reduction of erosion?	45
4. Water Quality: Answer all that apply for a maximum of 110 points	
4a. EQIP Schedule of Operations includes 595 Integrated Pest Management?	45
4b. EQIP Schedule of operations includes implementation of practices for the management of noxious and invasive species ONLY on "non-cropland" acreage?	20
4c. EQIP Schedule of Operations includes implementation of practice 590 Nutrient management for management of soil fertility, plant nutrients, and soil amendments?	45
5. Plant Condition: Answer all that apply for a maximum of 90 points	
5a. EQIP Schedule of Operations includes practices that will result in creation of buffer zones that will mitigate offsite contaminants from entering farm?	30
5b. EQIP Schedule of Operations includes practices with the intent of increasing habitat for pollinators and/or beneficial insects?	30
5c. EQIP Schedule of Operations includes practice(s) that support Integrated Pest Management?	30
6. Water Conservation: Answer all that apply for a maximum of 50 points	
6a. Practices scheduled in the EQIP Schedule of Operations will improve the efficiency of an existing irrigation system?	25
6b. EQIP Schedule of Operations will include practices that will improve irrigation water management and/or conserve soil moisture?	25
7. Domestic Animals: Answer all that apply for a maximum of 60 points	
7a. EQIP Schedule of Operations includes implementation of practice 528 Prescribed Grazing AND/OR 512 Pasture & Hayland Planting for management of plant species, livestock, residues, feed, and other identified resource needs?	30
7b. EQIP Schedule of Operations includes implementation of practices that limit and manage domestic livestock access to streams, creeks, and other natural water bodies?	20
7c. EQIP Schedule of Operations includes implementation of practices to assure adequate domestic livestock drinking water sources (not to include streams) are available in the treatment unit?	10
Total Points:	400

Attachment D

Local Level Ranking Criteria Requirements:

Most local ranking questions are approved and entered into ProTracts at the State level.

Local level ranking questions must account for a total of 250 points or at least 25% of total points available according to the requirements in 440 CPM, Part 512, Subpart C. Establish a maximum point total of 250 in ProTracts AERT. Each State MUST enter the following question #1 in the ProTracts Local Level category in ProTracts:

2013 EQIP OI State Level Ranking Questions	FY 2013 Points
1. If the application is for development of a Conservation Activity Plan (CAP), the agency will assign significant ranking priority and conservation benefit by answering "Yes" to the following question. Answering "Yes" to question 1a will result in the application being awarded the maximum amount of points that can be earned for the state priority category.	
1a. Is the program application for development of a Conservation Activity Plan (CAP) for a TSP prepared Conservation Plan Supporting Organic Transitioning Plan (138)? If answer is "Yes", do not answer any other state level questions. If answer is "No", proceed with evaluation to address the remaining questions in this section.	250

Cost Effectiveness Calculation:

By agency policy, the amount of points associated with the AERT cost efficiency calculation must be 100 points or 10% of total points available.

State Web Site: The national office will establish a national organic Initiative website which States may "link-to" which will post this year's program information.

State OI Contacts: States will identify a programmatic AND technical contact person and send their contact information to Natasha Brown at natasha.brown@wdc.usda.gov no later than November 9, 2012.

4. Additional Initiative Guidance:

- The self-certification worksheet can be used by States where needed

EQIP Organic Initiative Self-Certification Worksheet for Fiscal Year 2013

This self-certification form shall be used by each producer applying for EQIP Organic Initiative assistance. The goal of the Organic Initiative is to ensure that conservation technical assistance and EQIP program benefits are allocated to address resource concerns related to organic production. In order to qualify for the Organic Initiative, a producer must self certify they meet one of the following three categories.

1. Certified Organic

I, _____, hereby acknowledge that I am a certified organic producer and I will provide NRCS with a copy of my current approved organic system plan (OSP) and I have agreed to implement conservation practices consistent with EQIP statute and the OSP (Sec. 1240 (B)). I understand that I am required to maintain organic certification throughout the life of the EQIP OI contract. If certification is not maintained, the contract may be subject to termination.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

2. Transitioning to Organic

I, _____, hereby acknowledge that in order to receive technical and financial assistance through EQIP Organic Initiative as a Transitioning to Organic producer, I agree to develop and implement an organic system plan to standards established in the National Organic Programs (NOP) Act (7 U.S.C. Sections 6501-6522), and I have contacted the following certifying agent to begin the process of transitioning to organic according to requirements of the National Organic Programs (NOP).

Certifying Agent: _____

Address: _____

Phone No: _____

I understand that if I do not meet this requirement during the period while transitioning to organic production, my EQIP program contract may be subject to termination.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

3. Exempt from Certification (Organic Producers selling less than \$5000 organic products annually)

I, _____, hereby acknowledge that in order to receive technical and financial assistance through EQIP Organic Initiative as an Exempt producer, I *Agree to Develop and implement an OSP* that meets standards established in the National Organic Programs (NOP) Act (7 U.S.C. Sections 6501-6522), and my application will be ranked with certified organic producers provided I meet eligibility requirements. I certify that I sell less than \$5,000 in organic products annually and I have provided the required documentation as specified in CPM-440. I agree to implement practices that are consistent with an OSP. If practices are not consistent with an OSP, the contract may be subject to termination.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

D.C. Approval: _____ Date Approved: _____

Non-Discrimination Statement

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or a part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD). To file a complaint of discrimination write to USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410 or call (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-6382 (TDD).