

State Technical Committee Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) Subcommittee Meeting
May 31, 2016
Kentucky NRCS State Office
Lexington, Kentucky

The purpose of this subcommittee meeting is to receive input for the fiscal year 2017 CSP. The meeting convened at 10:00 a.m. with Matt Hutchison, NRCS Resource Conservationist, making a presentation on the upcoming changes to fiscal year 2017 Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). His presentation and handouts are found at the end of these notes. After his presentation, the group held open discussion and provided input on the development of application ranking questions that will be used to rank FY 2017 CSP applications. They also had some program related questions for Matt. Below is an account of the questions and input received from attendees.

Kentucky Division of Forestry (KDF) stated that a lot of the Forestland Enhancements offered under CSP don't apply to Kentucky's hardwood forests and that the jobsheets NRCS uses for some of the enhancements are not applicable to Kentucky forests. Matt explained that he and the Casey Shrader, NRCS State Biologist, try to weed through all of the national enhancements offered and only pick those that apply to Kentucky. They try to create Kentucky enhancement supplement sheets that relate the information in the National enhancement jobsheets to Kentucky's landscape.

Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources (KDFWR) asked if CSP applicants will be competing statewide or nationally. Matt responded that competition between applicants is statewide. However, Kentucky does compete nationally for the amount of acres we are given each FY. The number of applications received annually affects the amount of acres we will be allocated to distribute to eligible applicants.

Kentucky Division of Forestry (KDF) asked if local CSP questions are developed by the Local Work Groups. Matt responded that the NRCS national office develops the national and state questions and the state office has the authority to develop the local questions with input from the State Technical Committee. Local Work Group input would be welcomed.

KDFWR suggested adding a local question that targets whether crop/pasture acres in the application are being converted to wildlife habitat.

KDF suggested CSP target species of concern in the local questions, such as the Cerulean Warbler.

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) would like to see local questions that address water quality; specifically nutrient and sediment reduction.

KDF suggested NRCS add local questions to target forest health since the Ash Boer is a big problem in Kentucky's forests.

KDFWR asked if the Beginning Farmer and Socially Disadvantaged accounts allow smaller and limited resource producers a better opportunity to get funded by not having to compete against all other

producers. Matt responded that having separate accounts for those two categories of producers allows them to compete with other applications from the same category. The ranking threshold for each account can be different, and is set by the State Conservationist. That way, applications in those categories can still be funded with a lower threshold if their applications do not score as high as applicants in the general Ag Land or Forestland accounts.

TNC would like to add a location-based question that asks if the application is located within a certain targeted watershed or within a certain radius of a major river.

The Farm Service Agency asked if there any ranking criteria, other than what is identified on the sheet Matt provided, that National office would want us to stay away from. Is there any concern for regional geographic trends? What about a payment schedule? Matt said that the sorts of ranking criteria we are to avoid are listed on the last page of the packet that was provided. Specific areas based on natural resource concerns can be targeted. CSP will use a payment schedule to determine payment rates. It is a national payment schedule, at least for 2017.

KDFWR said that we need to consider that we only have 150 ranking points to work with. We don't want to make the questions so restrictive that we limit our pool of applicants that can score high. We need time to think about questions.

Matt asked the group to send ranking questions they would like considered to him or Deena Wheby by the end of the week. There being no more questions or discussion, the meeting adjourned at 11:45 a.m.

Attendees

Danny Hughes – Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources

Dan Figert – Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources

Pam Snyder – Kentucky Division of Forestry

Rachel Martin – The Nature Conservancy

Jacob Bowman – Farm Service Agency

Matt Hutchison – NRCS

Kate Little – NRCS

Kentucky USDA State Technical Committee

May 31, 2016

Matt Hutchison
Resource Conservationist

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

Subcommittee Meeting

CSP

- Participants receive an annual land use payment for operation-level environmental benefits they produce.
- Participants are paid for conservation performance: the higher the operational performance, the higher their payment.
- Contracts are 5 years with a potential 5 year renewal.



CSP

- CSP encourages producers to address resource concerns in a comprehensive manner by:
 - Undertaking additional conservation activities
 - Improving, maintaining, and managing existing conservation activities
- Eligible lands include:
 - Agricultural Lands (pasture and cropland)
 - Nonindustrial private forestland



Conservation Stewardship Program FY2015

2015 General Signup

- 256 total applications
- 84 contracts obligated
 - 34 Contracts in 2014 CSP
- 24,923 acres obligated
 - 11,112 Acres in 2014 CSP
- \$575,103 annual obligation
 - \$204,924 2014 annual obligation
 - Five year contracts

2016 Renewal Signup

- First year for CSP Renewals
- 96 eligible contracts
- 45 contracts renewed
- 22,491 acres obligated
- \$335,535 annual obligation
 - Five year contract renewal

Conservation Stewardship Program FY2016

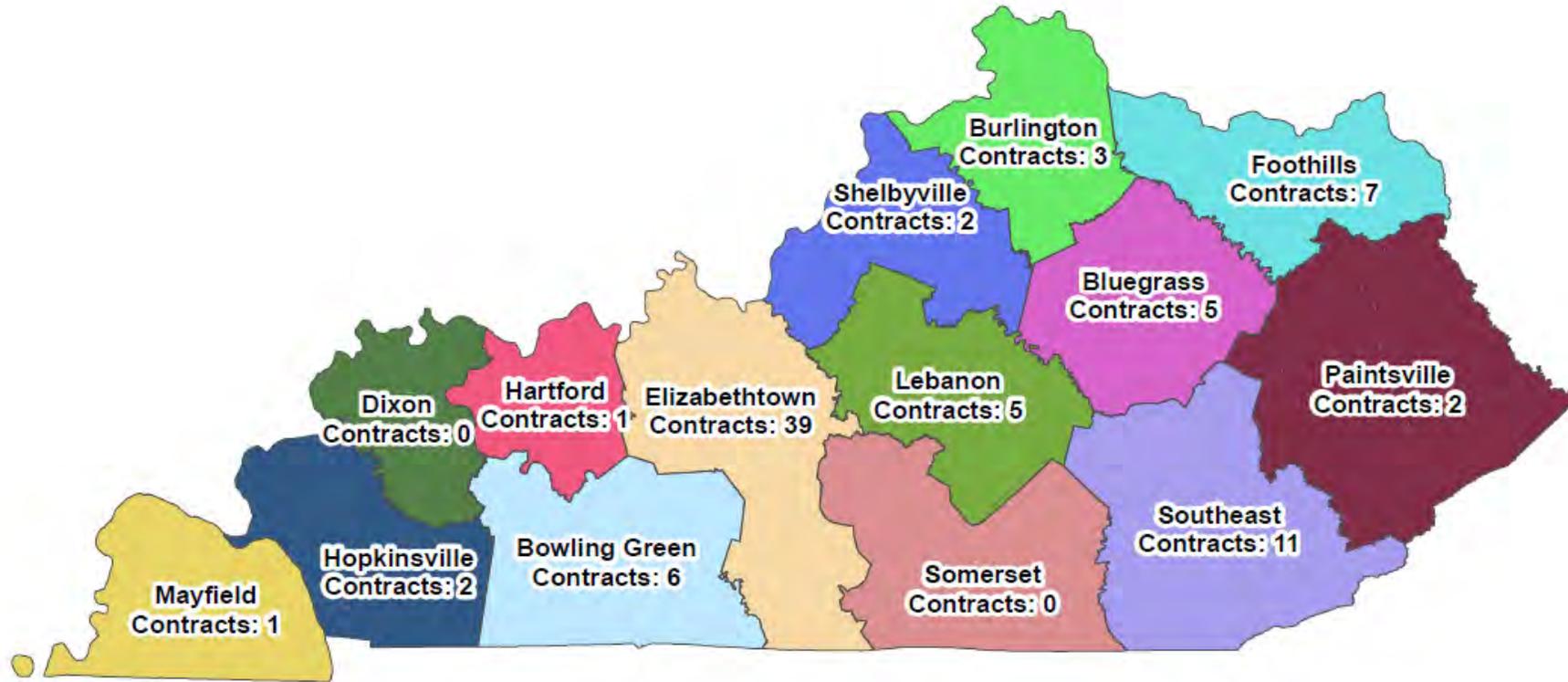
2016 General Signup

- 181 total applications
- 60 counties represented
- Application period ended March 31st
- Preapproved ½ of all eligible applications
- Awaiting additional acres to preapprove more applications

2017 Renewal Signup

- 55 eligible contracts
- 45 applications
- Application period ended March 31st
- Non-competitive selection process

2015 CSP Contracts by Work Unit



2016 CSP Applications by Work Unit



2016-1 CSP Subaccounts – General Signup

Account	Account Type	Applicable Priority Resource Concerns
Area 1 BF-1	Agricultural Lands - Beginning Farmer	Animal, Plants, Soil Erosion, Soil Quality, Water Quality
Area 1 Forestland BF	NIPF - Beginning Farmer	Air Quality, Energy, Plants, Soil Erosion, Water Quality
Area 1 Forestland General	NIPF - General	Air Quality, Energy, Plants, Soil Erosion, Water Quality
Area 1 Forestland SD	NIPF - Socially Disadvantaged	Air Quality, Energy, Plants, Soil Erosion, Water Quality
Area 1 SD-1	Agricultural Lands - Socially Disadvantaged	Animal, Plants, Soil Erosion, Soil Quality, Water Quality
Area 1-1	Agricultural Lands - General	Animal, Plants, Soil Erosion, Soil Quality, Water Quality
Area 2 BF-1	Agricultural Lands - Beginning Farmer	Air Quality, Animal, Plants, Soil Erosion, Water Quality
Area 2 Forestland BF	NIPF - Beginning Farmer	Air Quality, Energy, Plants, Soil Erosion, Water Quality
Area 2 Forestland General	NIPF - General	Air Quality, Energy, Plants, Soil Erosion, Water Quality
Area 2 Forestland SD	NIPF - Socially Disadvantaged	Air Quality, Energy, Plants, Soil Erosion, Water Quality
Area 2 SD-1	Agricultural Lands - Socially Disadvantaged	Air Quality, Animal, Plants, Soil Erosion, Water Quality
Area 2-1	Agricultural Lands - General	Air Quality, Animal, Plants, Soil Erosion, Water Quality
Area 3 BF-1	Agricultural Lands - Beginning Farmer	Air Quality, Animal, Plants, Soil Erosion, Water Quality
Area 3 Forestland BF	NIPF - Beginning Farmer	Air Quality, Energy, Plants, Soil Erosion, Water Quality
Area 3 Forestland General	NIPF - General	Air Quality, Energy, Plants, Soil Erosion, Water Quality
Area 3 Forestland SD	NIPF - Socially Disadvantaged	Air Quality, Energy, Plants, Soil Erosion, Water Quality
Area 3 SD-1	Agricultural Lands - Socially Disadvantaged	Air Quality, Animal, Plants, Soil Erosion, Water Quality
Area 3-1	Agricultural Lands - General	Air Quality, Animal, Plants, Soil Erosion, Water Quality

2016-1 was the first year with Area Forest Subaccounts - Previously only Statewide Forest Accounts → more fair for applicants

2017-1 Renewal CSP Signup

Account	Account Type	Applicable Priority Resource Concerns
CSP Renewal Ag General	Agricultural Lands - General	Air Quality, Animal, Plants, Soil Quality, Water Quality
CSP Renewal Ag BF	Agricultural Lands - Beginning Farmer	Air Quality, Animal, Plants, Soil Quality, Water Quality
CSP Renewal Ag SD	Agricultural Lands - Socially Disadvantaged	Air Quality, Animal, Plants, Soil Quality, Water Quality
CSP Renewal NIPF General	NIPF - General	Air Quality, Animal, Plants, Soil Quality, Water Quality
CSP Renewal NIPF BF	NIPF - Beginning Farmer	Air Quality, Animal, Plants, Soil Quality, Water Quality
CSP Renewal NIPF SD	NIPF - Socially Disadvantaged	Air Quality, Animal, Plants, Soil Quality, Water Quality

CSP Reinvention for FY 2017 General Signup

- Reaffirm centrality of conservation planning to program implementation
 - Uses the same 10 resource concerns and the 44 resource concern/causes as EQIP
 - Directly links enhancements to conservation practices
 - build on the existing implementation of conservation practices
- Build upon existing business processes from other FA programs
 - Maximizes communication between ProTracts, Toolkit, DMS, PSA, etc.
- Improve transparency and simplicity for customers and staff
 - Removes the use of Conservation Measurement Tool (CMT) and performance points for evaluation and payment

Stewardship Threshold

- **The minimum value for each resource concern for each land use that is used to assess an applicant's existing conservation performance level.**
- The 2008 Farm Bill required an applicant to meet or exceed the stewardship threshold for both of the following (CMT points based):
 - at least one resource concern at the time of the application
 - at least one additional priority resource concern by the end of the contract.
- 2014 Farm Bill requires an applicant to meet or exceed the stewardship threshold for both of the following (Objective observation based):
 - at least two priority resource concerns (aka resource concerns) at the time of application
 - at least one additional priority (aka targeted) resource concern by the end of the contract

FY 2016 CSP vs FY 2017 CSP Resource Concerns

Priority Resource Concerns

- Air Quality
- Animals
- Energy
- Plants
- Soil Erosion
- Soil Quality
- Water Quality
- Water Quantity

Resource Concerns

- AIR QUALITY IMPACTS
- LIVESTOCK PRODUCTION LIMITATION
- FISH and WILDLIFE - INADEQUATE HABITAT
- INEFFICIENT ENERGY USE
- DEGRADED PLANT CONDITION
- SOIL EROSION
- SOIL QUALITY DEGRADATION
- WATER QUALITY DEGRADATION
- EXCESS WATER
- INSUFFICIENT WATER

CSP Ranking Periods and Acres

- Nationally set
- Normally one per year
- Potential for additional signups if all acres aren't used in the first
- 10 Million Acre Requirement
- Acres reduced by Sequester
- Further reductions due to RCPP
- Renewal acres do not count against annual allocation
 - Newly added acres included in Renewal do count against allocation.

CSP 2017 General Signup Ranking

- The AERT process will be used (similar to EQIP)
- Proposed total points and points per section:
 - National = 500
 - State = 300
 - Local = 150
 - Efficiency = 50
 - Grand total = 1000
- Information from screening worksheets will be used to answer the National and State questions

Example CSP Screening Report

Resource Concerns Met - At time of application		
Resource Concerns (RC)	Targeted RC	Crop
SOIL EROSION	X	NO
SOIL QUALITY DEGRADATION		NO
EXCESS WATER		NA
INSUFFICIENT WATER		NO
WATER QUALITY DEGRADATION	X	NO
AIR QUALITY IMPACTS	X	NO
DEGRADED PLANT CONDITION	X	NO
FISH and WILDLIFE - INADEQUATE HABITAT		NO
LIVESTOCK PRODUCTION LIMITATION	X	NO
INEFFICIENT ENERGY USE		NO
Totals - Target RC	5	0
Totals - Non-Target RC	5	0
Grand Totals	10	0
Meets 2 resource concern at time of application?		NO

Resource Concerns Exceeded - By the end the contract		
Resource Concerns (RC)	Targeted RC	Crop
SOIL EROSION	X	NO
SOIL QUALITY DEGRADATION		NO
EXCESS WATER		NA
INSUFFICIENT WATER		NO
WATER QUALITY DEGRADATION	X	NO
AIR QUALITY IMPACTS	X	NO
DEGRADED PLANT CONDITION	X	NO
FISH and WILDLIFE - INADEQUATE HABITAT		NO
LIVESTOCK PRODUCTION LIMITATION	X	NO
INEFFICIENT ENERGY USE		NO
Totals - Target RC	5	0
Totals - Non-Target RC	5	0
Grand Totals	10	0
Meets 1 additional resource concern by the end of the contract?		NO
Minimum Stewardship Threshold Criteria Requirements Met for the Landuse Land cover?		NO
Enhancements planned per resource concern		
Resource Concerns (RC)	Targeted RC	Crop
SOIL EROSION	X	0
SOIL QUALITY DEGRADATION		0
EXCESS WATER		0
INSUFFICIENT WATER		0
WATER QUALITY DEGRADATION	X	0
AIR QUALITY IMPACTS	X	0
DEGRADED PLANT CONDITION	X	0
FISH and WILDLIFE - INADEQUATE HABITAT		0
LIVESTOCK PRODUCTION LIMITATION	X	0
INEFFICIENT ENERGY USE		0
Total RCs with ≥ 1 Enhancement Planned		0

Disclaimer: The numbers shown in this presentation have been rounded and are for informational purposes. They are not meant to be used for “official” agency numbers for use outside of this presentation. Should official numbers be needed, please contact Deena Wheby.

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National Issue Questions	Responses
<i>Programmatically, there are ten resource concerns that can be addressed through the implementation of enhancements. The resource concerns are soil erosion, soil quality degradation, excess water, insufficient water, water quality degradation, air quality impacts, degraded plant condition, inadequate habitat for fish and wildlife, livestock production limitation, and inefficient energy use. Use this information to answer question 1.</i>	
1. Using the Summary of Screening Tool Report completed for this application, identify the one land use (Crop, Pasture, Range, or Forest) with the smallest number of resource concerns planned to be exceeded by the implementation of a new enhancement. From the below options, choose the response that is the best match. Note: Associated Ag Land and Farmstead land uses are excluded from consideration.	
a. All ten resource concerns have a new enhancement planned.	100 points
b. Seven to nine resource concerns have a new enhancement planned.	80 points
c. Four to six resource concerns have a new enhancement planned.	60 points
d. One to three resource concerns have a new enhancement planned.	40 points
2. Using producer decision side notes or the Conservation Plan, does application have CRP lands transitioning to CSP? Choose the response that is the best match.	
a. All transitioning CRP acres will maintain a permanent cover for the term of the CSP contract.	20 points
b. 50-99% of the transitioning CRP acres maintaining a permanent cover for the term of the CSP contract.	10 points
c. 25-49% of the transitioning acres maintaining a permanent cover for the term of the contract.	5 points
3. Using producer decision side notes or the Conservation Plan, on all land uses, identify all years in the contract offer with no enhancements planned. Choose the response that is the best match. Note: Visually, think of a matrix with enhancements listed on the vertical axis and fiscal year listed on the horizontal axis, how many intersections are zero or blank.	
a. No instances occur.	100 points
b. One instance occurs.	80 points
c. Two instances occur.	60 points
d. Three instances occur.	40 points
e. Four instances occur.	20 points
4. Using producer decision side notes or the Conservation Plan, when are enhancements planned in the contract offer on all land uses? Choose the answer that is the best match.	
a. All planned enhancements are scheduled to begin within the first 12 months.	100 points
b. All planned enhancements are scheduled to begin within the first 24 months.	50 points
5. Using producer decision side notes or the Conservation Plan, identify the one land use (Crop, Pasture, Range, or Forest) with the smallest number of enhancements planned. From the below options, choose the response that is the best match. Note: Associated Ag Land and Farmstead land uses are excluded from consideration.	
a. Planned enhancements cover 75% or greater of the land use acres.	100 points
b. Planned enhancements cover 50-74% of the land use acres.	50 points
c. Planned enhancements cover 25-49% of the land use acres.	25 points
6. Using producer decision side notes or the Conservation Plan, are enhancement bundles planned? Choose the response that is the best match.	
a. At least one bundle is planned on every land use in the contract offer.	40 points
b. One or more bundles are planned on a single land use in the contract offer.	20 points
7. Using producer decision side notes or the Conservation Plan, identify the one land use (Crop, Pasture, Range, or Forest) with the smallest number of enhancements planned. How many acres are planned to improve habitat for T&E species or species of concern? Choose the response that is the best match. Note: Associated Ag Land and Farmstead land uses are excluded from consideration.	
a. 50% or more of the land use acres have planned habitat improvement.	20 points
b. 25-49% of the land use acres have planned habitat improvement.	13 points
c. 10-24% of the land use acres have planned habitat improvement.	6 points
8. Using producer decision side notes or the Conservation Plan, identify the one land use (Crop, Pasture, Range, or Forest) with the smallest number of enhancements planned. How many acres are planned to improve soil health? Choose the response that is the best match. Note: Associated Ag Land and Farmstead land uses are excluded from consideration.	
a. Greater than 75% of the land use acres are planned to improve soil health.	20 points
b. 50-74% of the land use acres are planned to improve soil health.	13 points
c. 25-49% of the land use acres are planned to improve soil health.	6 points

Attachment B – CSP Local Question Examples

States may use the following questions or create their own using these examples.

1. Will the resource concern “Water Quality – Excessive Nutrients in Surface Water” be treated through the use of conservation activities included in this application?
2. A cover crop conservation activity will be performed on—
 - a. 75-100% of the cropland acres
 - b. 50-74% of the cropland acres
 - c. 25-49% of the cropland acres
3. Will the planned conservation activity improve, restore, develop, or protect habitat for a listed threatened or endangered species?
4. Is at least 50% of the operation located in a priority watershed, as identified by the local working group?
5. Does the application include conservation activities that will address one or more of the identified targeted resource concerns listed in the State resource assessment?
6. Does this application include an enhancement to convert cropland to pasture?
7. Does this application include an enhancement to convert cropland to forest land?
8. Will the planned conservation activities on forest land help to improve native forest conditions by improving the condition of fire-adapted plants and wildlife habitat?
9. Will the conservation activities planned on forest land improve structure and composition with the intent to restore stand structure currently threatened by invasive species?

Examples of questions that should **not** be included:

1. Does the applicant have a conservation plan developed prior to the application cutoff date? –
DEPENDS ON NRCS ACTIONS
2. Does the applicant have engineering designs completed prior to the application cutoff date? –
NOT RELEVANT TO CSP
3. Will the applicant adopt XX conservation activities on at least 100 acres? – THIS IS NOT SIZE
NEUTRAL
4. Was this application deferred in a past signup? - DOES NOT EVALUATE THE APPLICATION BASED
ON CONSERVATION PERFORMANCE

State Issue Questions	Responses
<i>Use the following information to answer ONLY questions 1 and 2. The State's <u>targeted resource concerns</u> listed for this ranking pool in which this application is competing are <ProTracts autopopulates the five targeted resource concerns from the linked subaccount>. Use this information to answer questions 1 and 2.</i>	
1. Using the Summary of Screening Tool Report completed for this application, identify the one land use (Crop, Pasture, Range, or Forest) with the smallest number of targeted resource concerns addressed at the time of application. Choose the response that is the best match. Note: Associated Ag Land and Farmstead land uses are excluded from consideration.	
a. All five targeted resource concerns are addressed.	30 points
b. Four targeted resource concerns are addressed.	24 points
c. Three targeted resource concerns are addressed.	18 points
d. Two targeted resource concerns are addressed.	12 points
e. One targeted resource concerns are addressed.	6 points
f. No targeted resource concern is addressed.	0 points
2. Using the Summary of Screening Tool Report completed for this application, identify the one land use (Crop, Pasture, Range, or Forest) with the smallest number of targeted resource concerns addressed by the end of the contract period. Choose the response that is the best match. Note: Associated Ag Land and Farmstead land uses are excluded from consideration.	
a. All five targeted resource concerns will be addressed.	100 points
b. Four targeted resource concerns will be addressed.	80 points
c. Three targeted resource concerns will be addressed.	60 points
d. Two targeted resource concerns will be addressed.	40 points
e. One targeted resource concerns will be addressed.	20 points
f. No targeted resource concerns will be addressed.	0 points
<i>Use the following information to answer ONLY question 3. The other <u>resource concerns not targeted by the State</u> are <ProTracts autopopulates the five resource concerns not targeted from the linked subaccount>.</i>	
3. Using the Summary of Screening Tool Report, identify the one land use (Crop, Pasture, Range, or Forest) with the smallest number of non-targeted resource concerns addressed by the end of the contract period. Choose the response that is the best match.	
a. All five non-targeted resource concerns will be addressed.	80 points
b. Four non-targeted resource concerns will be addressed.	64 points
c. Three non-targeted resource concerns will be addressed.	48 points
d. Two non-targeted resource concerns will be addressed.	32 points
e. One non-targeted resource concerns will be addressed.	16 points
f. No non-targeted resource concerns will be addressed.	0 points
<i>If the majority of the land (51% or greater) in the contract offer is within a State designated priority sub-geographic area of the designated fund pool (see delineated areas supplied by the State), answer question 4. Otherwise skip to the next question.</i>	
4. How many out of all ten resource concerns are being addressed by the end of the contract for this need (choose from the most relevant land use)?	
a. All resource concerns are addressed.	30 points
b. 8-9 resource concerns will be addressed.	24 points
c. 6-7 resource concerns will be addressed.	18 points
d. 4-5 resource concerns will be addressed.	12 points
e. 2-3 resource concerns will be addressed.	6 points
f. 0-1 resource concerns will be addressed.	0 points
g. The majority of the land is NOT in a state designated priority sub-geographic area.	0 points
<i>If the majority of the land (51% or greater) in the contract offer is within an airshed targeted for air quality improvement efforts (see delineated areas supplied by the State), answer question 5. Otherwise skip to the next question.</i>	
5. How many of the 9 remaining resource concerns are being addressed by the end of the contract in addition to air quality (choose from the most relevant land use)?	
a. All 9 resource concerns are addressed.	30 points
b. 7-8 resource concerns are addressed.	24 points
c. 5-6 resource concerns are addressed.	18 points
d. 3-4 resource concerns are addressed.	12 points
e. 1-2 resource concerns are addressed.	6 points
f. The majority of the land is NOT in a state designated priority airshed for air quality improvement.	0 points
<i>If the majority of the land (51% or greater) in the contract offer is within a watershed targeted for water quality improvement efforts (see delineated areas supplied by the State), answer question 6. Otherwise skip to the next question.</i>	

Attachment A

6. How many of the 9 remaining resource concerns are being addressed by the end of the contract in addition to water quality (choose from the most relevant land use)?	
a. All 9 resource concerns are addressed.	30 points
b. 7-8 resource concerns are addressed.	24 points
c. 5-6 resource concerns are addressed.	18 points
d. 3-4 resource concerns are addressed.	12 points
e. 1-2 resource concerns are addressed.	6 points
f. The majority of the land is NOT in a state designated priority airshed for water quality improvement.	0 points