Minutes - State Technical Committee
December 1, 2009

Wade Biddix, Assistant State Conservationist for Programs opened the meeting and welcomed those present. The following were in attendance: Barry Harris, Gary Moore, Dean Cumbia, Katie Frazier, Wade Biddix, Dan Solomon, Jack Bricker, Chad Wentz, Ron Wood, Libby Norris, Galon Hall, Todd Groh, Candy Dearborn (recorder). Due to the sub-committee meetings held last week, attendance was very light.

Gary Moore-DCR: Working on report for program-to-date summaries this year. He is reporting all exclusion and buffers implemented under CREP for the Chesapeake Bay (CB). CREP enrollment will run through Dec. 31, 2012. If money is still available, they will continue to pursue enrollment.

Wade: Sub-committees met last Tuesday. The feedback and comments were extremely helpful to NRCS staff. All edits and reviews are still being done due to the holidays.

Program Overview: Wade presented a power point to review FY10 Farm Bill Programs (Encl. 1). A proposal will be going to NHQ this week for approval to change the priority watersheds for the Chesapeake Bay (Encl. 2). This will increase CB from 17% last year to 47% for FY10. Other areas will still be eligible for CBWI.

Concern was raised from Dean Cumbia and Todd Groh (DOF) to move the first evaluation period up for Forestry to give landowners time to plant in March. Decision was made to move the deadline to February 12th and to pre-approve and rank quickly.

WHIP: Galon Hall reviewed WHIP screening worksheet for FY10 (Encl. 3). Due to the decreased funding, program will begin as state-level, not Area. Resource concerns/fund codes went from 7 to 3. The wetland restoration concern has been removed from WHIP. Client could go to WRP for this concern.

Galon asked for feedback on quantity vs. quality. Should there be a way to allow poor quality to get higher rankings? It was suggested that another criteria be added to the ranking to have location in landscape and connectivity count towards the score.

Easements: Barry Harris handed out Easement Programs Report (Encl. 4). He also passed out FRPP application material (Encl. 5). NRCS is working on an easement data layer to record all easements and geo-reference their locations.

Barry handed out two maps for geographical rate caps for 2009 and 2010. (Encl 6). These rates dropped a little this year. A market analysis was done for WRP and GRP by an independent contractor. The first analysis was done during FY09 as a way to ensure landowners are being paid a fair amount. STC concurrence is needed before submitting to NHQ. There were no objections from STC.

CSP, EQIP and CBWI: Dan Solomon stated the first evaluation period for CSP is over. Contracts must be written by end of January. Payment rates have not been provided yet. Second evaluations are due by January 14. Dan thinks this date will be moved back. Allocations are by acres – not all were used.

Screening worksheets were passed out for EQIP and CBWI (Encl 7). This year applications will be in high, medium and low practices. This model was used for CBWI and is being mirrored for EQIP. Due to program funding levels, high and medium priority groups will probably get funded.

Areas will determine top two resource concerns for their area and include these as part of ranking process. This is first year that local questions have been included.

Organics: Ron Wood is going to take the lead with the Organics program under EQIP. Ron will be helping to capture the potential growth for this program and try to spend more of the funds that are allocated to Organics. Last year there were only 12 applications. National guidance has not yet been received.

Chesapeake Bay Foundation: Libby Norris worked with DOF, Districts and NRCS to help put in CREP Project last week of planting trees. There were over 90 volunteers. They will be interviewing for 3 positions in the Valley this month and will start in January.

Department of Forestry: Todd Groh – reforestation of timberland funds will probably be down so more landowners may be applying for EQIP.

Through RC&D Program a brochure was developed for "Cost Share Programs for Forest Landowners" by DOF. This brochure provides information for the application processes for EQIP, WHIP and WRP. Dan volunteered to go out to the Regional DOF Meetings to provide program information.

Department of Forestry: Dean Cumbia is working on state assessment w/DGIF. Meeting on Jan. 6th – hopes NRCS people will be able to attend.

Dean has been working with Chad and Ron to set up training for TSPs.

Dean also announced a change in grading tree seedlings to include height and diameter. This seems to be working well and the quality of seedlings are improving.

DCR: Gary Moore issued report regarding the module on tracking program. Data was brought back from 1985 to provide historical data to the tracking program. Districts will have direct access to it. 83 employees have been certified in Landscape Nutrient Management. This will help with nutrient management planning on other lands.

Next meeting will be held on January 26, 2010 at 10:00 a.m.

State Technical Committee
Agenda

December 1, 2009 - 10:00 a.m.
Richmond NRCS State Office
1606 Santa Rosa Road, Ste. 209

Welcome and Introductions	NRCS
Conservation Reserve Program (CRP&CREP)	FSA/DCR
FY2010 Farm Bill	
Program Overview	NRCS - Biddix
WHIP	NRCS – Hall
Easements	NRCS – Harris
EQIP, CBWI and CSP	NRCS – Solomon
Organics and Specialty Crops	NRCS - Wood
Agency Updates	All

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Next Meeting – January 26, 2010

SCREENING WORKSHEET
Environmental Quality Incentives Program - EQIP

Applicant Name: _____ County: _____

Application Number: _____ Field Office: _____

Evaluator Name: _____ Date: _____

Eligibility

1. NRCS-CPA-1200 Complete Yes_____ No_____

2. Do planned practices meet one or more National Priorities Yes_____ No_____

3. Applicant has provided proof of control of the land Yes_____ No_____

4. Applicant is currently actively farming and there is a resource concern on the offered acres: Brief Description: _____ Yes_____ No_____

_____

_____

5. Applicant has an FSA farm and tract number and meets AGI requirements and has a AD-1026 on file with no violations Yes _____ No _____

Priority Determination (High, Medium, Low)

High Priority

The application will result in the implementation of two or more listed priority practices.

(or)

The application will result in the completion of a suite of three or more priority practices when additional priority practices are established.

Medium Priority

The application will result in the implementation of at least one priority practice.

Low Priority

The application will not result in the implementation of any priority practices.

SCREENING WORKSHEET
Chesapeake Bay Watershed Initiative - CBWI

Applicant Name: _____ County: _____

Application Number: _____ Field Office: _____

Evaluator Name: _____ Date: _____

Eligibility

1. NRCS-CPA-1200 Complete Yes_____ No_____

2. Do planned practices meet one or more National Priorities Yes_____ No_____

3. Applicant has provided proof of control of the land Yes_____ No_____

4. Applicant is currently actively farming and there is a resource concern on the offered acres. Brief Description: _____ Yes_____ No_____

_____

_____

5. Applicant has an FSA farm and tract number and meets AGI requirements and has a AD-1026 on file with no violations Yes _____ No _____

Priority Determination (High, Medium, Low)

High Priority

The application will result in the implementation of one or more priority practices and the application is in a CBWI priority watershed.

Medium Priority

The application is located in a priority watershed with no priority practices.

(or)

The application will result in the implementation of a priority practice and is not in a CBWI priority watershed.

Low Priority

The application will not result in the implementation of any priority practice and is not within a priority watershed.

Chesapeake Bay Priority Practices For Virginia
December 1, 2009

313 Waste Storage Facility

316 Animal Mortality

317 Composting Facility

327 Conservation Cover (Land Conversion)

328 Conservation Crop Rotation

329 Residue Management (No-Till)

340 Cover Crop

342 Critical Area Planting

345 Residue Management (Mulch-Till)

390 Riparian Herbaceous Cover

391 Riparian Forest Buffers

393 Filter Strip

410 Grade Stabilization Structure

412 Grassed Waterway

468 Lined Waterway or Outlet

472 Access Control

512 Pasture and Hay Planting (Land Conversion)

528 Prescribed Grazing

561 Heavy Use Area Protection

590 Nutrient Management

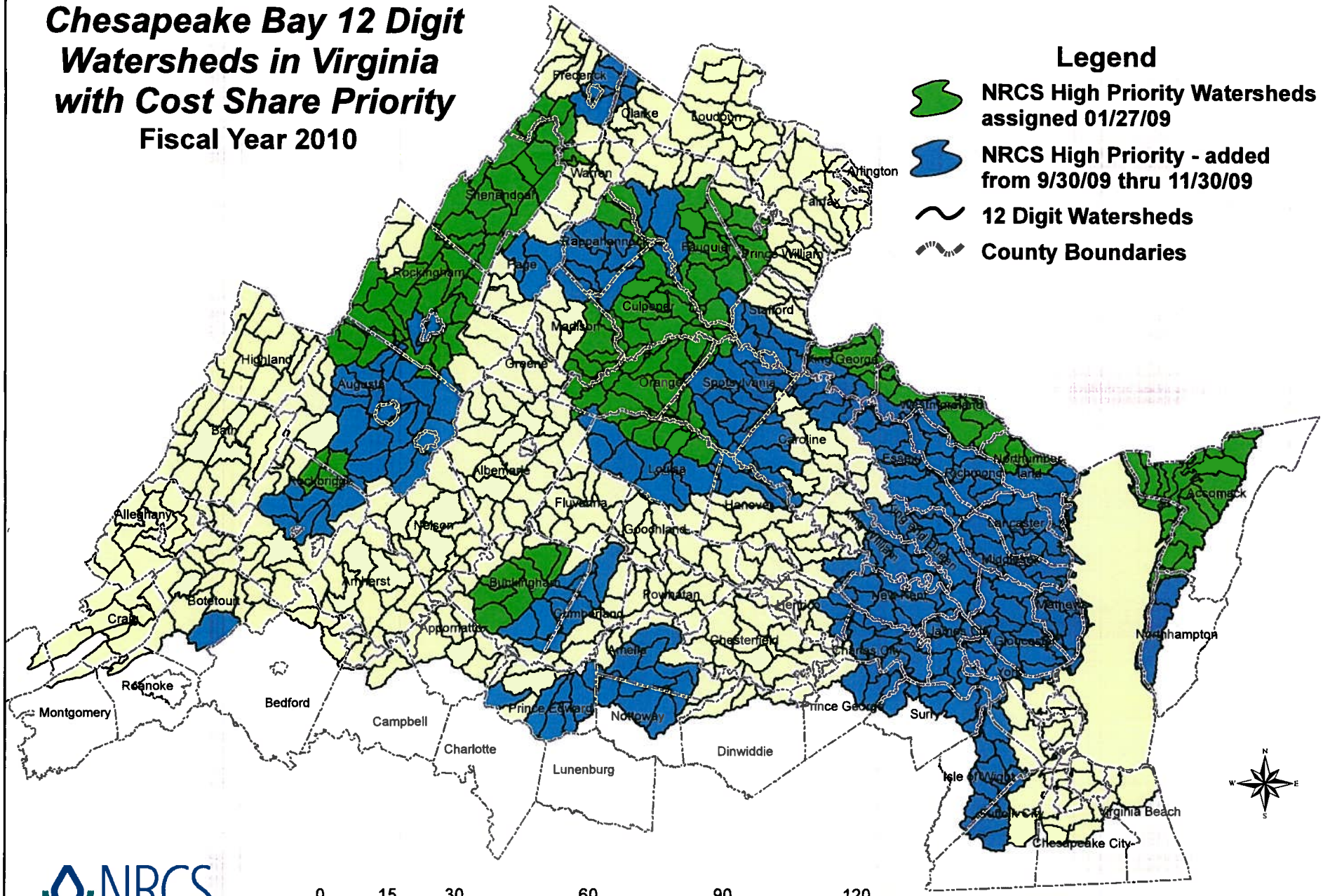
591 Amendment for Treatment of Animal Waste

612 Tree/Shrub Establishment (Land Conversion)

706 Shellfish Aquaculture Management

Chesapeake Bay 12 Digit Watersheds in Virginia with Cost Share Priority

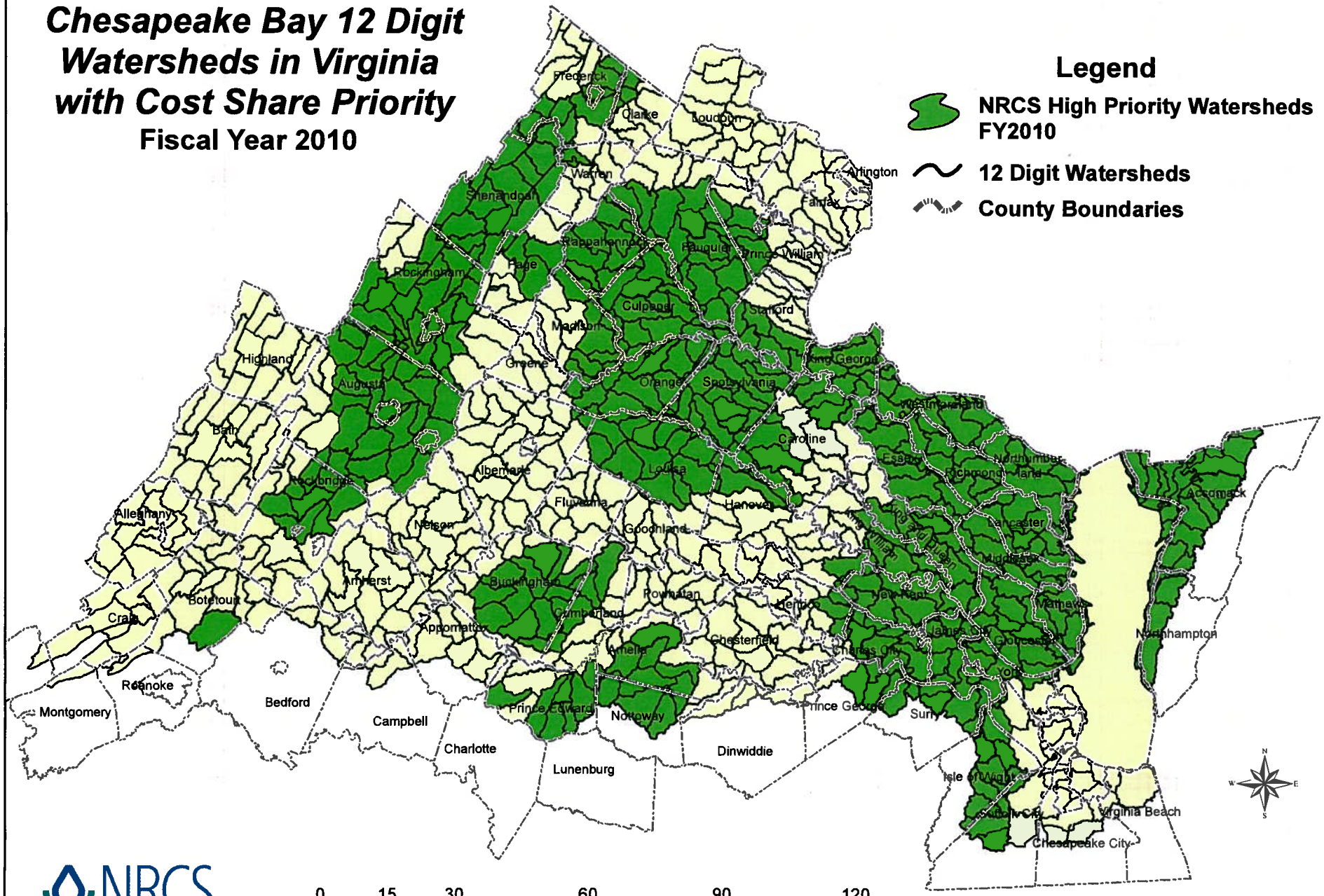
Fiscal Year 2010



Map Date: 11/30/09

Chesapeake Bay 12 Digit Watersheds in Virginia with Cost Share Priority

Fiscal Year 2010



Map Date: 11/30/09

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY INCENTIVES PROGRAM (EQIP)
APPLICATION EVALUATION RANKING TOOL (AERT) NATIONAL QUESTIONS
NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

EQIP Ranking Questions	Points
1. Clean and Abundant Water: Water Quali ty – Will the proposed project assist the producer to:	
1a. Meet regulatory requirements relating to anim al feeding operations, or proactively avoid the need for r egulatory m easures?	15
1b. Reduce s ediment, nutrients or pesticides from agricultural operations located w ithin a field that adjoins a designated im paired water body?	10
1c. Reduce sediment, nutrients or pesticides from agricultural operations located w ithin a field that adjoins a water body?	5
2. Clean and Abundant W ater: Water Conservation – Will the proposed project assist the producer to:	
2a. Increase groundwater recharge in identified groundwater depletion ar eas (http://water.usgs.gov/ogw/rasa/html/TOC.html)?	15
2b. Conserve water from irrigation system improvements and result in estim ated water savings of at least 5% and saved water will be available for other beneficial uses?	10
2c. Conserve water in an area where the applicant participates in a geogr aphically established or watershed-wide project?	10
3. Clean Air: Treatment of Air Quality from Agricultural Sources – Will the proposed project assist the producer to:	
3a. Meet regulatory requirem ents relating to air quality or proactively avoi d the need for regulatory m easures?	15
3b. Reduce green house g ases such as methane, nitrous oxide, and vol atile organic compounds (VOC)?	15
3c. Increase carbon sequestration?	10
4. High Quality, Productive Soils Erosion Reduction – Will the proposed project assist the producer to:	
4a. Reduce erosion to tolerable lim its (Soil "T")?	15
5. Healthy Plant and Animal Communities Wildlife Habitat C onservation – Will the proposed project assist the producer to:	
5a. Benefit threatened and endangered, at-risk, candidate, or species of concern as identified in a State wildlife plan?	15
5b. Retain wildlife and plant benefits on land exiting the Conservation R eserve Program (CRP)?	15

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY INCENTIVES PROGRAM (EQIP)
APPLICATION EVALUATION RANKING TOOL (AERT) NATIONAL QUESTIONS
NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

6. High Quality, Productive Soils, Healthy Plant and Animal Communities: Special Environmental Efforts/Initiatives – Will the proposed project assist the producer to:	
6a. Eradicate or control noxious or invasive species?	10
6b. Increase, improve or establish pollinator habitat?	10
6c. Properly dispose of animal carcasses?	10
6d. Implement an Integrated Pest Management plan?	10
6e. Implement precision agricultural methods?	10
7. Strategic Initiative – Energy Conservation and Sustainable Production Energy Conservation – Will the proposed project assist the producer to:	
7a. Reduce energy consumption on the agricultural operation?	10
8. Business Lines – Conservation Implementation Additional Ranking Considerations - Will the proposed project result in:	
8a. Implementation of all planned conservation practices within three years of contract obligation?	10
8b. Improvement of existing conservation practices or conservation systems already in place at the time the application is accepted, or will complete an existing conservation system?	10
9. Does the applicant meet the following conditions:	
9a. If the applicant has an existing EQIP contract, has it been, and is it now, on schedule and in full compliance?	10
9b. Did the applicant successfully complete any past contract(s) in full compliance?	5
9c. Is this the applicant's first EQIP application?	5
Total Points	**250**

Review of 2010 Farm Bill Programs

December 1, 2009

Initial FY-10 FA Budget

- EQIP = $9,907,236 -$464,921
- CBWI = $9,530,802 +$3,854,330
- WHIP = $210,425 -$671,557
- FRPP = $1,587,170 -$740,611
- GRP = $634,720 +$42,082
- WRP = $4,622,569 -$756,713
- Air = $0 -$236,000

Deadline

- Obligate all funds by April 1, 2010

Principles For Program Delivery

- Obligate every dollar
- Meet all our deadlines
- Keep simple and ease admin. burden on field
- Minimize impacts to other agency programs
- Coordinate/mesh with other NRCS programs
- Base offerings on sound science and technical standards

EQIP Resource Concerns

- Animal Waste
- Cropland
- Pasture
- Forestry
- Groundwater Conservation
- Organic
- Orchard (Pest Management)
- Air Quality

Program Guidance (EQIP)

- Mandatory Concerns
  - Organic Producers ($774,587)
  - Air Quality ($0)
  - Coop. Conservation Partnership Initiative (CCPI)
    - EQIP = $905,016
    - WHIP = $58,737
- 60% must go towards livestock farming

Special Groups

- New/Beginning Farmers
  - Have not farmed 10 consecutive years
- Socially Disadvantaged Farmers
  - Defined Groups
    - Hispanics
    - African Americans
    - Native Americans
    - Asian/Pacific Islanders
  - Limited Resource Farmers

Note: Combined = 10% of funding

Chesapeake Bay Resource Concerns

- Animal Waste
- Cropland
- Pastureland
- Aquaculture (pilot)

WHIP Resource Concerns

- Upland Wildlife Habitat Creation
- Aquatic Wildlife Habitat Creation
- Habitat Maintenance/Protection

Key Changes From FY-09

- Propose to drop "Poultry Litter Transfer" as a resource concern from EQIP due to high number of cancellations in FY-09 contracts.
- Drop "Wildlife Habitat Improvement" as a stand-alone resource concern. Add wildlife bonus practices under EQIP concerns.
- Utilize local issues in ranking of applications.

Funding Pools

Requires funding pools be established in like land use or resource issues (We have been doing this.)

- Statewide = Forestry, Organic, and Orchard
- Regional = Groundwater Conservation, Aquaculture, and Air Quality
- Area/Local = Animal, Cropland, Pasture, and WHIP

Screening and Categorizing Applicants (EQIP and CBWI)

- Determine initial eligibility
- Place applications into a priority group
  - High, Medium or Low
- Score each applicant based on how well and how many resource concerns are addressed
- Funding will occur within each priority group; moving to low priority group if necessary.

Ranking Criteria

- National questions (25%)
- Practice efficiency (10%)
- State questions (40%)
- Local questions (25%)

CBWI

- Applicants will receive additional consideration for being located in a priority watershed (46.7% of Bay drainage)

CBWI and EQIP

- Priority Practices (23 for CBWI and 25 for EQIP - with some companion practices)

List of Priority Practices

- Cropland Practices
  - 328 Conservation Crop Rotation
  - 329 Residue Management (No-Till)
  - 340 Cover Crop
  - 345 Residue Management (Mulch-Till)
  - 590 Nutrient Management
  - 327 Conservation Cover (Land Conversion)
  - 512 Pasture and Hay Planting (Land Conversion)
  - 612 Tree/Shrub Establishment (Land Conversion)
  - 393 Filter Strip
  - 342 Critical Area Planting
  - 410 Grade Stabilization Structure
  - 412 Grassed Waterway
  - 468 Lined Waterway or Outlet

List of Priority Practices (cont.)

- Pasture Practices
  - 472 Access Control
  - 327 Conservation
  - 590 Nutrient Management
  - 512 Pasture and Hay Planting
  - 528 Prescribed Grazing
  - 391 Riparian Forest Buffers
  - 390 Riparian Herbaceous Cover
  - 612 Tree Shrub Establishment (Land Conversion)

List of Priority Practices (cont.)

- Animal Waste Practices
  - 313 Waste Storage Facility
  - 316 Animal Mortality
  - 317 Composting Facility
  - 591 Amendment for Treatment of Animal Waste
  - 590 Nutrient Management
  - 561 Heavy Use Area Protection
  - 365 Anaerobic Digester (EQIP only)
  - 359 Waste Treatment Lagoon (EQIP only)

List of Priority Practices (cont.)

- Aquaculture Practices
  - 706 Shellfish Aquaculture Management

Timeline

- Program sign-up is continuous
- Program guidance will be finalized by 12/31/09
- Program roll-out and training by 1/21/10
- First evaluation period ends about 3/1/10
- Contracts developed and funds obligated by 4/1/10

- Conservation Stewardship Program
  - 2nd evaluation period ends 1/14/10
  - Contracts and fund obligation for 1st sign-up by 1/27/10

Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative

- National RFP coming out soon (December)
- 60 day window for proposals

Questions

WHIP 2010 Screening Worksheet

Applicant Name:_____ County:_____

Application Number:_____ Field Office:_____

Evaluator Name:_____ Date:_____

Eligibility (Applicant must meet *ALL* of the following criteria):

____ NRCS-CPA-1200 Complete

____ Applicant has provided proof of control of the land

____ The proposed project is a minimum of 2 acres. (Exceptions will be made for 457, 395, 396, 580 after consultation with the state biologist)

____ At least one priority practice is included in the planned project. (If there are 2 practices that are priorities in different fund codes, pick one as the priority that has the associated companion practice.)

____ The appropriate "Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Worksheet (WHEW)" (Exhibit 511-2) must be completed based on the land use or project (Practice 457 "Mine Shaft and Adit Closing" does not require a WHEW). The project must score ≥50 points for the "Planned" condition and the "Planned" condition must be ≥10 points higher than the "Benchmark". (An exception is for Restoration and Management of Declining Habitats (643), which must meet a planned condition score of **≥75** and be ≥10 points higher than the "Benchmark")

Determine which "habitat type" will be PRIMARILY impacted (upland, aquatic, or maintenance activities) to determine the appropriate application "fund code". Applications will be ranked within each NRCS Area using the following ranking tools (point value for each question in parentheses) for each "Fund Code" to determine approval by the appropriate deadline. In the case of tied ranking scores, the difference between the WHEW "benchmark" and "planned" habitat will be the deciding factor.

Fund Code: Upland Wildlife Habitat Creation (60%)

Description: This tool applies **ONLY** to the following project types

- Establish native hardwood forests (primarily oaks) to create widely spaced hardwoods with early successional understory (savannas; use 612 and coordinate with the State Biologist); **645 Upland Wildlife Habitat Management required as part of the application**
- Restore rare or declining habitat: Eastern Shore Atlantic Flyway Habitat (643), Longleaf Pine Historic Range (Brunswick, Greensville, Sussex, Prince George, Southampton, Isle of Wight, Surry, Suffolk, Chesapeake, Virginia Beach, James City and York Counties; 643), Mine Shaft and Adit Closing (457), Grassland >25 acres for Grassland Birds (327d); **645 Upland Wildlife Habitat Management required as part of the application**
- Creation of new early successional habitat (for pollinator habitat use Wildflower Meadows for Wildlife, 327a); **645 Upland Wildlife Habitat Management required as part of the application**

Priority Practices:

327 Conservation Cover
382 Fence – livestock exclusion
386 Field Border
422 Hedgerow Planting
457 Mine Shaft and Adit Closing
612 Tree/shrub Establishment
643 Restoration and Management of Rare and Declining Habitats
647 Early Successional Habitat – fescue conversion

Companion Practices:

314 Brush Management
338 Prescribed Burning
342 Critical Area Planting
394 Firebreak
595 Pest Management
647 Early Successsional Habitat Management
666 Forest Stand Improvement

National Priorities Addressed

1. Healthy Plant & Animal Communities – Wildlife Habitat Conservation – Will the proposed project assist the applicant to:
    a. Retain wildlife and plant benefits on land exiting the Conservation Reserve Program? (40)
    b. Address and support on of the following priorities: (40)
        i. Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watersheds Initiative (MRBI)
        ii. North American Waterfowl Management Plan
        iii. National Fish Habitat Action Plan
        iv. Greater Sage Grouse Conservation Strategy
        v. State Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategies (also referred to as the State Wildlife Action Plans)
        vi. Northern Bobwhite Conservation Initiative
        vii. Restoration of Longleaf Pine Forests
    c. Benefit federally listed threatened and endangered, at-risk, candidate, fish or wildlife species of concern? (25)
    d. Benefit prioritized native habitat critical to a fish or wildlife species? (25)
    e. Increase, improve or establish pollinator habitat? (25)
    f. Eradicate or control prioritized noxious or invasive species? (20)
    g. Benefit declining or important aquatic wildlife species prioritized in the State WHIP Plan? (20)

h. Implement conservation practices which benefit prioritized fish or wildlife species in forested areas? (15)
i. Establish habitat on pivot corners and irregular areas on agricultural land? (10)
j. Provide self-sustaining habitat for prioritized fish and wildlife while reducing net carbon emissions or boosting carbon storage (e.g., warm season perennial grasses, trees or shrubs)? (10)

2. Business Lines – Conservation Implementation – Additional Ranking Considerations – Will the applicant in the proposed project:
    a. Complete habitat development within the first two years of the agreement? (20)

State Issues Addressed

For questions 1-3, only ONE yes answer may be given (use the appropriate habitat evaluation worksheet, if applicable).

1. The planned habitat is >50 points and at least 60 points higher than the benchmark. (100)
2. The planned habitat is ≥50 points and at least 40 points higher than the benchmark. (50)
3. The planned habitat is ≥50 points and at least 20 points higher than the benchmark. (25)

For questions 4-6, only ONE yes answer may be given.

4. The size of the planned 645 area is greater than 25 acres. (50)
5. The size of the planned 645 area is 11-25 acres. (30)
6. The size of the planned 645 area is 2-10 acres. (10)

For questions 7-8, only ONE yes answer may be given.

7. The planned area will serve as a >50 ft wide corridor for wildlife travel, regardless of total acreage. (50)
8. The planned area will serve as a 35-49 ft wide corridor for wildlife travel, regardless of total acreage. (30)

Will the proposed practices protect, promote or create any of the following rare or declining habitats (Select any from 8-13 that are applicable):

9. Oak Savanna Restoration (612) (100)
    a. Prescribed burning will be used to manage oak savannas (25)
10. Longleaf Pine (643) (100)
    a. Prescribed burning will be used to manage longleaf pine (25)
11. Eastern Shore Bird Habitat (643) (100)
    a. The location of the planned 643 area is within 6 miles of the southernmost tip of Northampton County (from outlet of Plantation Creek and south). (25)
    b. The location of the planned 643 area is within one mile from either coastline (bayside or oceanside). (25)
12. Mine Shaft & Adit Closing (457) (300)
13. Creation of grassland bird habitat that contains a single >25 acre block of mixed native warm season grasses and no planted woody species (327) (100)
    a. Prescribed burning will be used to manage the grassland (25)

14. The proposed project establishes new early successional habitat. (25)
15. Creation of pollinator habitat (327a) containing a minimum of 2 native warm season grass species and 9 native wildflower species is planned. (50)
16. Livestock will be excluded from wildlife habitat. (25)

Local Issues Addressed

1. Will the project benefit Early Successional species in the Quail Action Plan focus Districts (Big Walker, Headwaters, Culpeper, Three Rivers, Chowan Basin)? (100)
2. Will the project occur within 2 miles of and benefit a species that is in the Toolkit layer T&E species (either DGIF or Natural Heritage)? (75)
3. Will the project occur within 2 miles of a listed water (Toolkit layer "T&E Water) and improve stream quality? (75)

Fund Code: Aquatic Wildlife Habitat Creation (20%)

Description: This tool applies only to the following project types (coordination with the State Biologist is required for all activities except riparian buffers)

- Creation of Shallow Water Areas on cropland or grazing land and/or creation of vernal pools (soils must be less than 50% hydric and where little to no wetlands are present; use other programs {WRP, etc.} if these conditions are not present); **644 Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management required as part of the application**
- fish passages; **395 Stream Habitat Improvement and Management required as part of the application**
- living shorelines; **644 Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management OR 395 Stream Habitat Improvement and Management required as part of the application depending on project location**
- Restore rare or declining habitat: Submerged Aquatic Vegetation (643), Atlantic White Cedar (643), Oyster reefs on subaqueous soils (643); **644 Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management OR 395 Stream Habitat Improvement and Management required as part of the application depending on project location**
- Riparian herbaceous or forest buffers; **644 Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management OR 395 Stream Habitat Improvement and Management required as part of the application depending on project location**

Priority Practices:

327 Conservation Cover
382 Fence – livestock exclusion
390 Riparian Herbaceous Buffer
391 Riparian Forest Buffer
396 Fish Passage
580 Streambank and Shoreline Protection
587 Water Control Structure
612 Tree/Shrub Establishment
643 Restoration and Management of Rare and Declining Habitats
646 Shallow Water Development and Management
658 Wetland Creation
659 Wetland Enhancement

Companion Practices:

314 Brush Management
338 Prescribed Burning
342 Critical Area Planting
356 Dike (use only with 646, 657, 658)
386 Field Border
394 Firebreak
422 Hedgerow Planting
595 Pest Management
647 Early Successional Habitat Management
666 Forest Stand Improvement

National Priorities Addressed

1. Healthy Plant & Animal Communities – Wildlife Habitat Conservation – Will the proposed project assist the applicant to:
    a. Retain wildlife and plant benefits on land exiting the Conservation Reserve Program? (40)
    b. Address and support on of the following priorities: (40)
        i. Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watersheds Initiative (MRBI)
        ii. North American Waterfowl Management Plan
        iii. National Fish Habitat Action Plan
        iv. Greater Sage Grouse Conservation Strategy

v. State Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategies (also referred to as the State Wildlife Action Plans)
vi. Northern Bobwhite Conservation Initiative
vii. Restoration of Longleaf Pine Forests

c. Benefit federally listed threatened and endangered, at-risk, candidate, fish or wildlife species of concern? (25)
d. Benefit prioritized native habitat critical to a fish or wildlife species? (25)
e. Increase, improve or establish pollinator habitat? (25)
f. Eradicate or control prioritized noxious or invasive species? (20)
g. Benefit declining or important aquatic wildlife species prioritized in the State WHIP Plan? (20)
h. Implement conservation practices which benefit prioritized fish or wildlife species in forested areas? (15)
i. Establish habitat on pivot corners and irregular areas on agricultural land? (10)
j. Provide self-sustaining habitat for prioritized fish and wildlife while reducing net carbon emissions or boosting carbon storage (e.g., warm season perennial grasses, trees or shrubs)? (10)

2. Business Lines – Conservation Implementation – Additional Ranking Considerations – Will the applicant in the proposed project:
   a. Complete habitat development within the first two years of the agreement? (20)

State Issues Addressed

For questions 1-3, only ONE yes answer may be given (use the appropriate habitat evaluation worksheet).

1. The planned habitat is >50 points and at least 60 points higher than the benchmark. (100)
2. The planned habitat is ≥50 points and at least 40 points higher than the benchmark. (50)
3. The planned habitat is ≥50 points and at least 20 points higher than the benchmark. (25)

4. Creation of one or more vernal pool complexes is included in the project. (50)
5. The project will restore historic anadramous or catadromous species migration (through stream blockage removal). (125)
6. The historic upstream usable area available to aquatic species due to stream blockage removal is greater than 25 stream miles. (25)
7. Stream length offered for restoration is greater than 0.5 miles. (25)
8. The project will restore native brook trout habitat (spring creek restoration). (175)
9. Livestock will be excluded from wildlife habitat. (50)

Local Issues Addressed

1. Will the project occur in a state listed impaired watershed shown on the Toolkit GIS layer "Impaired Waters of Virginia" and provide improved water quality? (25)
2. The project includes a Living Shoreline or a restoration of submerged aquatic vegetation practice in a Chesapeake Bay tributary. (25)
3. Does the project include the creation of riparian buffers? (50)
4. Will the project occur within 2 miles of and benefit a species that is in the Toolkit layer T&E species (either DGIF or Natural Heritage)? (75)
5. Will the project occur within 2 miles of a listed water (Toolkit layer "T&E Water) and improve stream quality? (75)

Fund Code: Habitat Maintenance/Protection (20%)

Description: This tool applies to the following project types (not exclusive)

- Manage existing native hardwood forests (primarily oaks) to create widely spaced hardwoods with early successional understory (savannas; 666 with 338); **645 Upland Wildlife Habitat Management required as part of the application**
- Invasive species control (use 595 for herbaceous and 314 for woody); **644 Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management OR 645 Upland Wildlife Habitat Management required as part of the application depending on project location**
- Management of existing early successional habitat ; **645 Upland Wildlife Habitat Management required as part of the application**
- Management of existing wetlands and/or riparian buffers (forested or herbaceous); **644 Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management required as part of the application**
- Exclude cattle (382) from existing riparian or wildlife areas; **644 Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management OR 645 Upland Wildlife Habitat Management required as part of the application depending on project location**

Priority Practices:

314 Brush Management
338 Prescribed Burning
382 Fence – livestock exclusion
394 Firebreak
595 Pest Management
647 Early Successsional Habitat Development
659 Wetland Enhancement
666 Forest Stand Improvement
(Hardwood management only)

Companion Practices:

342 Critical Area Planting

National Priorities Addressed

1. Healthy Plant & Animal Communities – Wildlife Habitat Conservation – Will the proposed project assist the applicant to:
    a. Retain wildlife and plant benefits on land exiting the Conservation Reserve Program? (40)
    b. Address and support on of the following priorities: (40)
        i. Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watersheds Initiative (MRBI)
        ii. North American Waterfowl Management Plan
        iii. National Fish Habitat Action Plan
        iv. Greater Sage Grouse Conservation Strategy
        v. State Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategies (also referred to as the State Wildlife Action Plans)
        vi. Northern Bobwhite Conservation Initiative
        vii. Restoration of Longleaf Pine Forests
    c. Benefit federally listed threatened and endangered, at-risk, candidate, fish or wildlife species of concern? (25)
    d. Benefit prioritized native habitat critical to a fish or wildlife species? (25)
    e. Increase, improve or establish pollinator habitat? (25)
    f. Eradicate or control prioritized noxious or invasive species? (20)

g. Benefit declining or important aquatic wildlife species prioritized in the State WHIP Plan? (20)
h. Implement conservation practices which benefit prioritized fish or wildlife species in forested areas? (15)
i. Establish habitat on pivot corners and irregular areas on agricultural land? (10)
j. Provide self-sustaining habitat for prioritized fish and wildlife while reducing net carbon emissions or boosting carbon storage (e.g., warm season perennial grasses, trees or shrubs)? (10)

2. Business Lines – Conservation Implementation – Additional Ranking Considerations – Will the applicant in the proposed project:
   a. Complete habitat development within the first two years of the agreement? (20)

State Issues Addressed

For questions 1-3, only ONE yes answer may be given.

1. The planned habitat is >50 points and at least 60 points higher than the benchmark. (150)
2. The planned habitat is ≥50 points and at least 40 points higher than the benchmark. (100)
3. The planned habitat is ≥50 points and at least 20 points higher than the benchmark. (25)

For questions 4-6, only ONE yes answer may be given.

4. The size of the planned area is greater than 25 acres. (50)
5. The size of the planned area is 11-25 acres. (30)
6. The size of the planned area is 2-10 acres. (10)

For questions 7-8, only ONE yes answer may be given.

7. The planned area will serve as a >50 ft wide corridor for wildlife travel, regardless of total acreage. (75)
8. The planned area will serve as a 35-49 ft wide corridor for wildlife travel, regardless of total acreage. (50)

9. Have any maintenance activities (other than mowing) occurred on the habitat prior to the planned practice? (25)
10. The area controlled is either adjacent to or within 0.25 miles of a permanently managed/protected wildlife area. (50)
11. Livestock will be excluded from wildlife habitat. (50)

Local Issues Addressed

1. Will the project benefit Early Successional species in the Quail Action Plan focus Districts (Big Walker, Headwaters, Culpeper, Three Rivers, Chowan Basin)? (75)
2. Does the project include activities that improve the quality of an existing riparian buffer? (75)
3. Will the project occur within 2 miles of and benefit a species that is in the Toolkit layer T&E species (either DGIF or Natural Heritage)? (50)
4. Will the project occur within 2 miles of a listed water (Toolkit layer "T&E Water) and improve stream quality? (50)

New practices/scenarios in WHIP 2010:

342 Critical Area planting

NWSG without site prep

Critical area planting with farm equipment (David, we may want to revise this a little for the purposes of WHIP)

647 Early Success Hab Development

Herbicide spraying of fescue (followed by light discing and natural regeneration)

666 Forest Stand Improvement (for hardwood management only)

Mechanical Thinning <350 trees/acre

Mid rotation Herbicide application <350 trees/acre

612 Tree/Shrub Establishment

Wet adapted oak species

395 Stream Habitat Improvement and Mgt(See Wisconsin info)

Installation of Wood Debris dams, or structures

Installation of rock structures, wiers, barbs, etc...

Installation of Fish Structures (i.e. Lunkers) Per Set of 3.

643 Restoration and Management of Declining Habitats

Oyster reefs on subaqueous soils

580 Streambank and shoreline protection

Tidal zone oyster reef restoration/stabilization

Root wads and other associated streambank stabilization structures

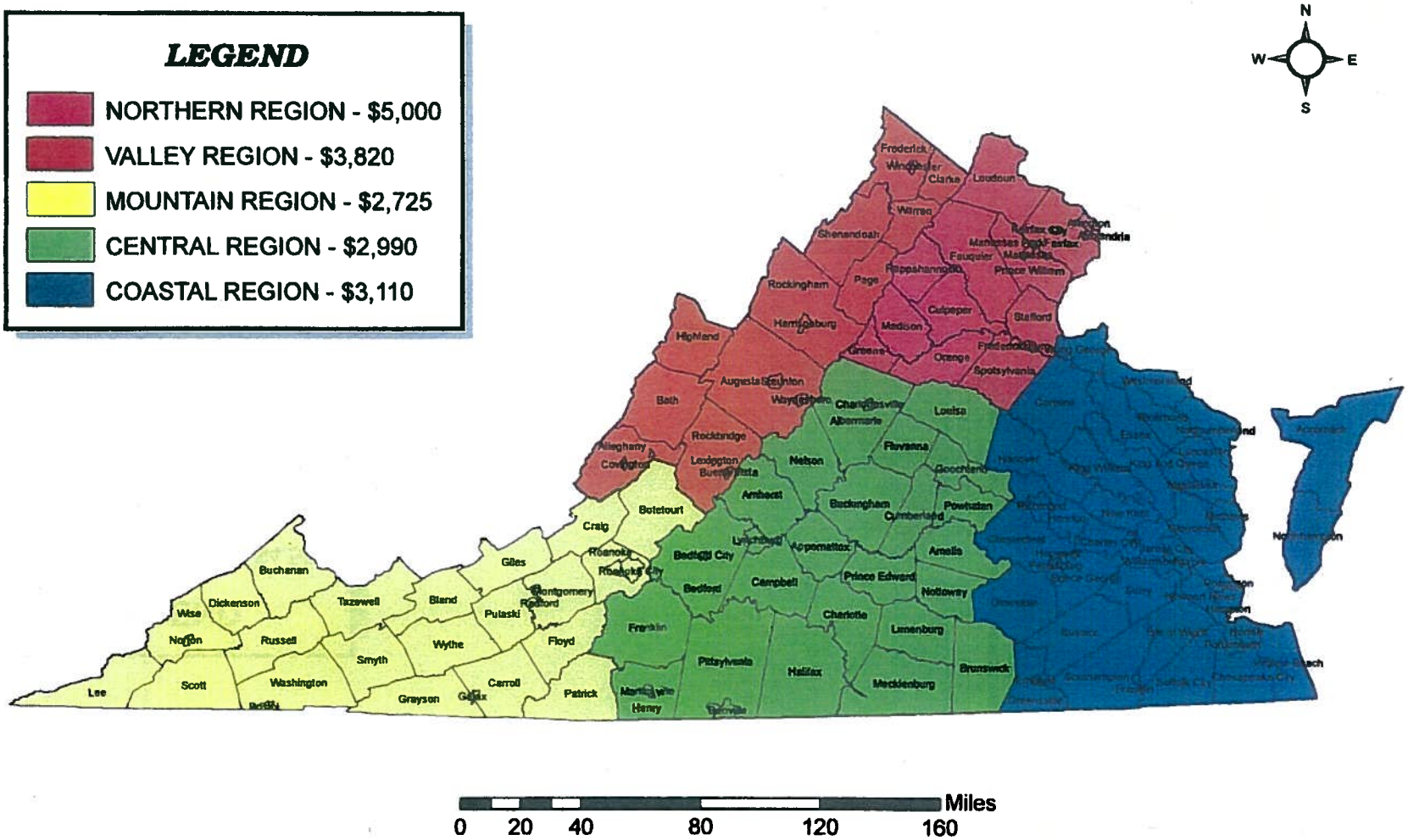
USDA
United States Department of Agriculture

NRCS Natural Resources Conservation Service

GRP
REGIONS OF VIRGINIA

LEGEND

- NORTHERN REGION - $5,000
- VALLEY REGION - $3,820
- MOUNTAIN REGION - $2,725
- CENTRAL REGION - $2,990
- COASTAL REGION - $3,110



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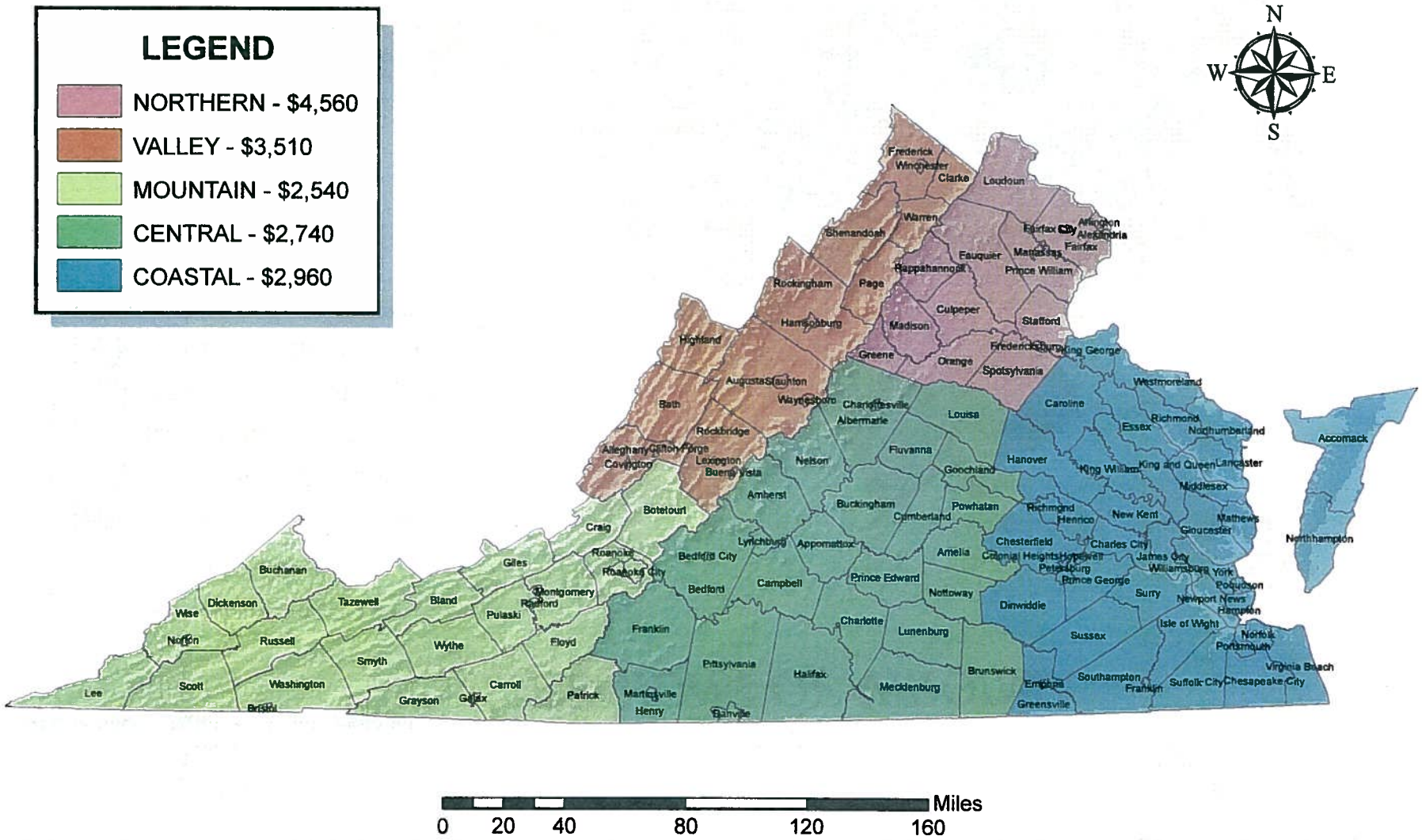
REVISED 05/04/2009 (SEG)

USDA
United States Department of Agriculture

WETLAND RESERVE PROGRAM (WRP) BY VIRGINIA REGION

NRCS Natural Resources Conservation Service



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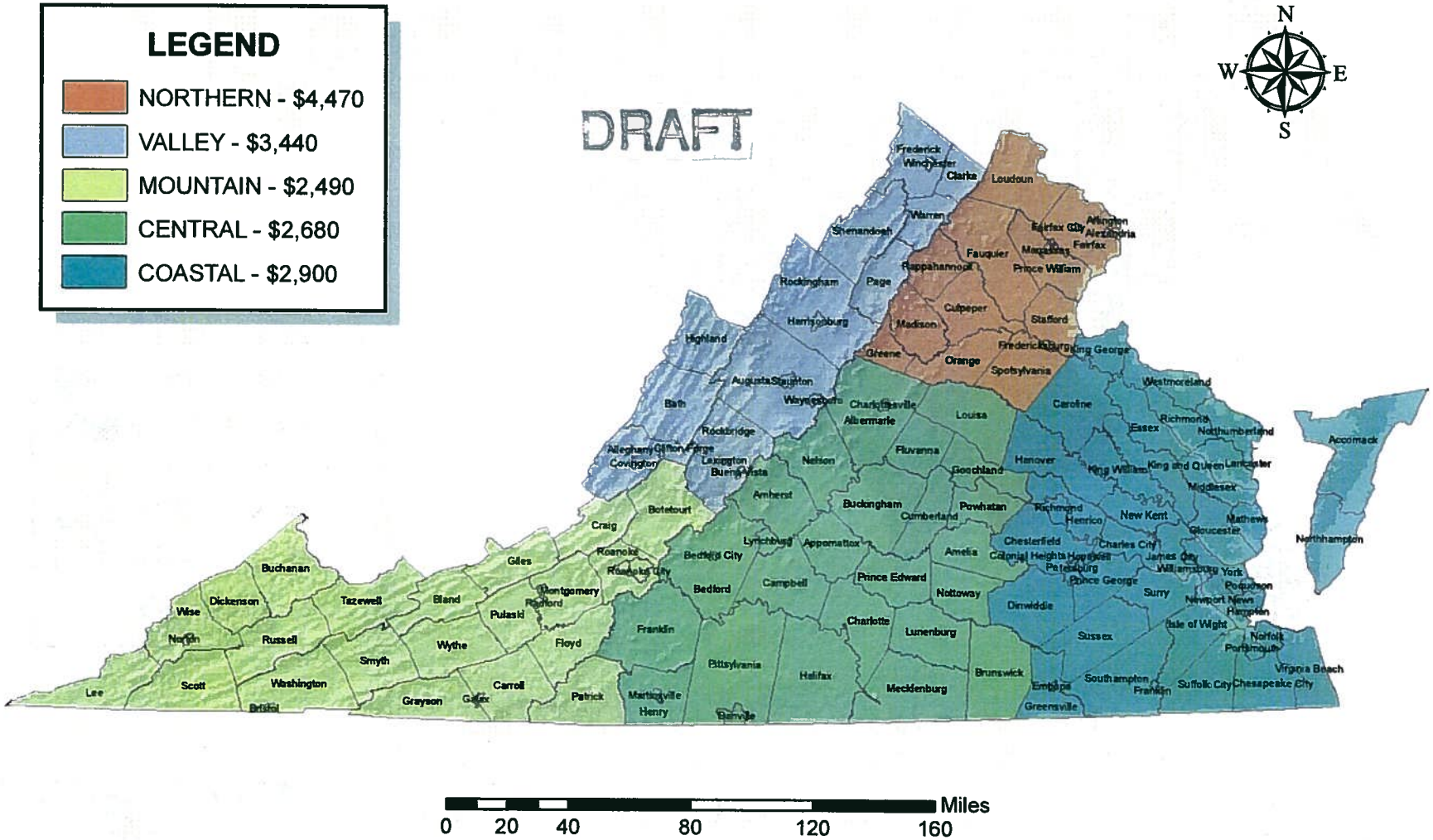
USDA
United States Department of Agriculture

GEOGRAPHIC AREA RATE CAPS FOR WETLAND RESERVE PROGRAM (WRP) BY VIRGINIA REGION FOR FY '10

NRCS Natural Resources Conservation Service



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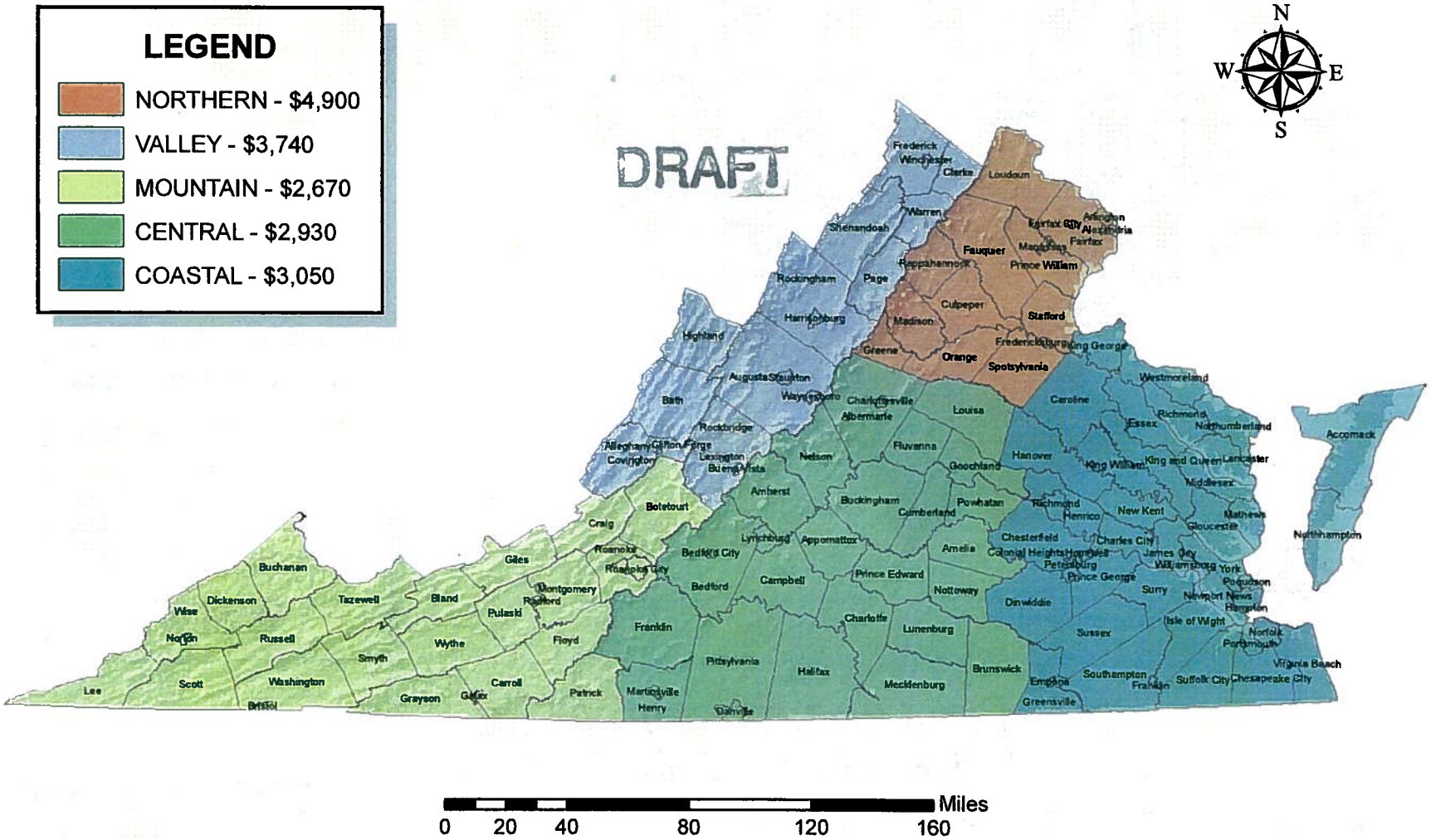
USDA
United States Department of Agriculture

NRCS Natural Resources Conservation Service

GEOGRAPHIC AREA RATE CAPS FOR GRASSLAND RESERVE PROGRAM (GRP) BY VIRGINIA REGION FOR FY '10

LEGEND

- NORTHERN - $4,900
- VALLEY - $3,740
- MOUNTAIN - $2,670
- CENTRAL - $2,930
- COASTAL - $3,050



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MODIFIED 11/23/2009 (SEG) E:\VA_master_covs\Virginia Maps\GRP_2010_GRC.mxd

Virginia State Technical Committee
Easement Programs Report
December 1, 2009

FRPP:

Closed Easement:
Entity: Clarke County
Location: Clarke County
Size: 216 acres
Amount:$585,601

Upcoming Closing:

Entity: Clarke County
Location: Clarke County
Size: 204 acres
Amount:$358,250

} Close by 3/31/2010

FY-10 Allocation $1,587,170
Application due date:
February 19, 2010

GRP:

Upcoming Closings:

Location: Frederick County
Size:57.682 acres
Amount:$220,345
Permanent Easement

Location: King George County
Size: 101 acres
Amount:$284,799
Permanent Easement

Applications on hand:
Easements- 7
Rental Agreements- 1

FY-10 Allocation $634,720
60% for easements $380,832
40% for rental agreements $253,888

*Application due date:
January 8, 2010

WRP:

Upcoming WRP Closings:

Location: Fluvanna County
Size: 12 acres
Amount:$20,475
30 Year Easement

Location: Frederick County
Size: 4.3 acres
Amount:$12,043
Permanent Easement

FY-10 allocation $4,622,569
Application due date:
January 8, 2010

Farm and Ranchland Protection Program -Virginia Application Checklist

Please complete a copy of this worksheet for each parcel in your application.

Entity: _____
Point of Contact: _____
Telephone: _____
E-Mail: _____
Mailing Address: _____

Prior to completing the worksheet, please review the attached support document. Ranking will depend upon the clarity and completeness of supporting documentation. Incomplete or unclear applications will receive lower rankings.

Indicate the page(s) of your proposal where each ranking element is addressed in the table below. If you exclude an element, please attach a brief explanation as to why it is not included.

	Page #
Sponsor Capability	
Background Information about Each Entity	_____
Easements Being Managed and Easement Management Experience	_____
Entity/Team Plan and Project Viability	_____
Funding	_____
Agricultural Viability Factors: Parcel Name _____	
Landowner Meets Farm Bill Eligibility Requirements:	☐ Yes ☐ No
Pending Offer, Funding and Costs	_____
Soil Map	_____
Natural Feature	_____
Industry	_____
Relationship to Protected Land and Approved Plans	_____
Industry/Site Interdependence	_____
Conservation Plan	_____
Included Area	_____
Development Pressure on Site	
Aerial Photo/Map	_____
Nearby Land Uses Map	_____
Land/Easement Value	_____
Other Public Values Impacting the FRPP Funding Decision	
Educational/Research	_____
Proximity to Flood Hazard Zones	_____
Cultural Resources	_____
Wildlife Habitat/Threatened and Endangered	_____
Agricultural Existence Value	_____

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Address questions to:
Barry Harris, FRPP Coordinator
(804) 287-1658
barry.harris@va.usda.gov

Submit proposal, including a signed copy of this checklist, to:
John A. Bricker, State Conservationist
USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service
1606 Santa Rosa Road, Ste. 209
Richmond, VA 23229

Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program
USDA -Natural Resources Conservation Service
Virginia Supporting Documentation Checklist

1. Introduction

Applicants for FRPP assistance in Virginia should respond to the criteria established in the national Request for Proposals (RFP) and the state ranking criteria outlined in this document. Awards will be based upon the state ranking criteria and applicants are strongly encouraged to structure their proposals to facilitate application of the state ranking criteria outlined here.

Please contact the Virginia FRPP Coordinator before preparing your application to discuss your application and proposed parcels. This is especially important if you are a first-time applicant. Communication early in the application process will help you understand current FRPP rules, and efficiently develop a complete and competitive application.

Barry Harris, FRPP Coordinator
USDA, NRCS 1606 Santa Rosa Rd., Ste.209
Richmond, VA 23229
(804) 287-1658
E-mail: barry.harris@va.usda.gov

These guidelines describe information needed to determine eligibility for FRPP funding and to rank programs and parcels for FRPP participation. Prior to application, applicants must be familiar with the materials in this document, as well as other documents available from the Virginia FRPP web site (currently http://www.va.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/frpp.html) and the national FRPP website (currently http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/frpp). If you do not have web access or have other difficulties, please contact the Virginia FRPP Coordinator.

The websites contain important information on eligibility requirements, and participant responsibilities not included in this document. Please consider the ability of your farmland protection organization to meet these responsibilities, and contact the FRPP Coordinator to discuss any concerns or questions.

To ensure your application is competitive for FRPP funding, be as thorough and complete as you can in providing the requested information. Provide supplemental information if you feel this will help provide a more accurate or complete picture.

There is no required application format. However, an outline approach similar to that below, supported as necessary with additional documentation is recommended. Insufficiently documented responses may receive lower points than they might otherwise warrant.

2. Timeline

Application review and ranking will begin immediately after the application deadline (**February 19, 2010**). The NRCS State Office will screen each application for its completeness. Incomplete applications, including those that do not meet eligibility requirements, will be eliminated from this round of competition. NRCS will attempt to contact each applicant by telephone within 3 weeks of the close of the application period with requests for clarification or additional information as needed. New or updated information will be accepted and considered in the evaluation and ranking process for the next round of evaluations. Funds should be used for easement purchase within 18 months of obligation.

3. Virginia Ranking Criteria Checklist, Detailed Explanations

The following explanation is provided to help explain what reviewers will be looking for when evaluating your application. Failure to clearly and concisely address each element will result in lower scores.

3.1 Sponsor Capability

Please describe your entity. Provide sufficient detail on the entity's structure and policy to enable reviewers to completely evaluate the potential success of acquiring and managing the easements in accordance with program rules and regulations. If more than one entity is included on your proposal, clearly outline the roles and responsibilities of each, and summarize the capabilities of each separately.

3.1.1 Background Information about Each Entity

Provide information about your entity:

- Include the entity's history, objectives, accomplishments and plans. Brochures, newsletters, and other informational handouts are helpful. Maps showing the program area, land use, protected areas, and planned acquisitions are also helpful.
- The applicant must be a unit of state government, local government, Indian Tribe, or non-profit organization. The application should clearly state in which category the applicant qualifies. Non-profit organizations must submit documentation that they are recognized as such by the Internal Revenue Service and that farmland protection is part of their mission. See the Federal Register notice, or contact NRCS, for more details.
- Describe your agency, Tribe, or organization's history of acquiring and managing easements on farmland or open space. What criteria are used to set acquisition priorities?

3.1.2 Easements Being Managed and Easement Management Experience

List the easements which were acquired in the last two years that are currently being managed (include a description of purpose for each e.g., primary open space, secondary wildlife habitat protection), and how each was acquired (donation, purchase, leveraged purchase, etc), and when it was acquired. Enumerate the experience that each participating entity has in easement management in Virginia.

3.1.3 Entity/Team Plan and Project Viability

Provide information on the following aspects of your organization and easement acquisition / protection plan:

- Describe your entity's years of experience in each of the following areas: acquiring easements, managing easements, and enforcing easements.
- Describe the number, ability and experience of staff that will be dedicated to monitoring easement stewardship.
- Describe your agency, Tribe, or organization's interest in and ability to work with the landowner/farmer to assure the conservation plan developed by the landowner and NRCS is being implemented. Does the landowner/farmer already have a current NRCS conservation plan?
- Provide organizational detail on your entity, and contact information for board members, responsible decision makers, and day-to-day contacts.
- Describe entity's methodology for completing baseline documentation. Baseline documentation must be prepared within one year of easement closing, including photos and Grantor and Grantee signatures.
- Describe existing monitoring program, and include annual written monitoring reports, with a copy to NRCS. All existing FRPP monitoring reports must be current to be eligible for additional funding.
- Describe proposed enforcement plan, including staffing and funding.
- Describe appraisal standards and means of providing appraisal reviews. An appraisal using "before and after" valuation method, by a state certified or licensed appraiser, conforming to USPAP or USFLA standards is required before FRPP funds are released. Appraisals should be less than one year old on the easement closing date. Administrative reviews will be completed on all appraisals. A second independent appraisal may be required for easements with a high dollar value per acre (exceeding $5,000/acre), unusual terms, or in cases where the easement review raises significant questions.
- Describe entity's ranking system and rank for each included parcel. Describe efforts undertaken to assure that if nominated easements(s) cannot be acquired, meaningful alternatives are available, and could be obtained within the two year funding period.
- *3.1.4 Funding*

Provide detailed information on funding needed from USDA and available funding already secured for each proposed easement purchase. Describe how easement values were estimated. This information is used to determine program and parcel eligibility. At a minimum, provide information for the following categories:

- Funds not yet available for easement purchases, but anticipated.
- Funds available now for the proposed easement purchases, pending only FRPP funding or final approval of the specific easements.

- Funds provided by a grant from another entity are not considered available until they have passed all internal approvals of the granting entity. Common sources of available funds include: Funds in a bank account, an approved bank line of credit, or an approved grant from another entity. For each category provide information on:
- Amount of funds
- Source of funds
- Date available, or expected to be available

Include supporting documentation such as Board approvals, bank statements, or loan history records. Matching funds must be available before FRPP funds can be obligated. However, if adequate matching funds are not available at the time of application, you can still apply.

3.2 Agricultural Viability Factors

The FRPP program requires a "pending offer" on an eligible piece of agricultural land. A "pending offer" is a "written bid, contract, commitment, or option extended to a landowner by a State, Tribe, local governmental entity, or eligible non-governmental organization...." <u>If you do not have a pending offer on a particular parcel, it should not be included in the application.</u>

If you are negotiating with a landowner, and intend to apply for USDA FRPP funds, be certain the owner is aware of the requirements of the FRPP program. NRCS will review the proposed deed/covenant language and require the insertion of a "contingent right" clause and conservation plan requirement into the deed documents. Also, NRCS will need to review and approve the appraisal and land survey for the parcel. In addition, parcels must be owned by individuals or entities meeting other eligibility criteria described on the FRPP website, including income limitations and private ownership. More information on Farm Bill Income and payment limitations is available at: <u>http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/farmbill/2002/rules/incomelimits.html</u>. Contact the FRPP coordinator if you have questions about parcel or land owner eligibility.

For each parcel subject to a pending offer, please provide:

- A copy of the pending offer. Include (at a minimum) the name, address and phone numbers of the landowners and operator (if the latter is different from the landowner), the address and location of the sites offered, and the size of the sites (in acres), and the anticipated easement cost, detailing all proposed cost arrangements. The pending offer should also include FRPP cost, entity contribution and any other contributions (e.g. landowner donations). Indicate the priority of the sites based on your organization's ranking.
- List the Tract and Farm number assigned to the farm by the USDA Service Center. If none exists, have the landowner contact the USDA Service Center to fill out and sign Form AD-1026 to have a Tract and Farm number assigned. This information is needed to develop the conservation plan required of all participants in the FRPP. A list of USDA Service Center offices and phone numbers is listed at the end of this checklist for your use.
- Provide a list of crops recently grown, the approximate acreage of each, and how the products are marketed and the level of on-site investments. Describe the existing infrastructure essential to the agricultural operation, <u>include means of irrigation</u>. (barns, farm stand, irrigation system, conservation practices, implementation of conservation plan, stewardship, etc.).

Additionally, the following information is needed to complete the ranking:

3.2.1 Soil Map

A soil map or USGS 7.5 minute quadrangle map showing outline of the parcel. Outline on the map those areas of the farm actively being farmed. For this purpose, "actively farmed" means regularly tilled or regularly harvested areas. For grazed land, it must be quality forage to be considered actively farmed.

3.2.2 Natural Feature Map

May be the same map as above, but must show the site in relation to natural surface water.

3.2.3 Industry Description

Briefly describe the agricultural industry in the area (e.g. county, or sub-county area), and its ability to support a viable agricultural economy.

3.2.4 Industry/Site Interdependence

Briefly describe the local agricultural economy and the site's importance in sufficient detail for NRCS to be able to generally assess the viability of the agriculture in the area in the presence and absence of agricultural operations at the site. Address the following questions: is sufficient infrastructure available in the vicinity to support the site? How much of the site's agricultural related supplies must be imported from outside the county? Does the site generate a significant percentage of the local demand for agricultural infrastructure?

3.2.5 Relationship to Protected Lands and Approved Plans

Indicate the presence or absence of other of 1) protected agricultural lands in the project vicinity and indicate distance to other protected lands and 2) describe the relationship of the parcel to adopted local land use plans. In referencing plans, be sure to distinguish between zoning and planning. Agricultural zoning alone is insufficient to warrant points under this element, as agricultural zoning alone is often used as a "holding zone" until other uses appear.

3.2.6 Conservation Plan

Indicate whether or not a conservation plan, prepared in cooperation with the local NRCS office and approved by the local conservation district, is in place. Many producers already have these plans in place. Check with the producer and NRCS to see if a current plan is being applied. If FRPP funds are used to assist in acquiring the development rights, then the farm MUST have a conservation plan on all highly erodible lands (most lands in Virginia are) and a statement to this effect must be included in the easement deed to this effect.

3.2.7 Included Area

Describe the extent of the site being proposed for inclusion in the easement. (For example, "100% of site will be subject to the easement.")

3.3 Development Pressure on Site

Include at a minimum the following maps and descriptive materials for each parcel subject to a pending offer:

3.3.1 Aerial Photo/Map

Include recent dated aerial photos topographic map of each parcel and surrounding area, showing the limits of each parcel.

3.3.2 Nearby Land Use Map

Include land use map(s) showing land uses on properties within a 1.0 mile radius surrounding each applicant parcel. This information may be overlaid on the aerial photo map (above) if sufficient detail is shown.

3.3.3 Land/Easement Value

Describe the size of each parcel and the amount of FRPP funds being requested for each parcel. Attach a description of method used to determine easement value. Estimate the easement cost on a per acre basis (i.e. $/acre).

3.4 Other Public Values Impacting the FRPP Funding Decision

3.4.1 Educational/Research Opportunities

Describe whether or not the proposed easement will assure the public and or researchers access to education or research opportunities not available elsewhere in the county/state/nation.

3.4.2 Proximity to Flood Hazard Zones

Describe the site's proximity to flood protection projects. Is the site in a floodplain where development might entail risk to future residents?

3.4.3 Cultural Resources

Are historic and/or archaeological resources present at the site? Is the property listed on the State or National Register of Historic Places? Has the site been formally determined to be eligible for listing on the State or National Register of Historic Places? Have significant archaeological resources been found on the property? If the answer is "yes" to any of these questions, please include documentation and provide a brief description of the site's significance.

3.4.4 Wildlife Habitat/Threatened and Endangered Species

Describe any unique environmental or ecological attributes of the land that would be protected, such as threatened and endangered species or a recognized greenway or wildlife corridor.

3.4.5 Agricultural Existence Value

Describe the relationship of the parcel to local, regional and national community values. Even if the site is not on (or eligible for) one of the historic registers, describe any unique social significance the farm has for the community (Town, County, State, Nation), such as being a landmark in the community, or its special value to underserved people, etc.

The information requested above will allow your application package to be evaluated for basic eligibility and then to be scored.

FARM AND RANCHLAND PROTECTION PROGRAM (FRPP)
USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS)

APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

I. Application Process

A. Application Content and Format

Proposals must contain the information set forth below in order to receive consideration. Applicants should not assume prior knowledge on the part of NRCS as to the relative merits of the project described in the application. Applications must contain a summary of not more than one page that provides the following:

- Project title
- Project duration (beginning and ending dates)
- Name, address, telephone, e-mail, and other contact information for the project director. (Provide a mailing address, not a Post Office Box.)
- Names and affiliations of project collaborators
- Number of parcels and acres to be addressed by the proposal
- Project objectives
- Summary of the work to be performed
- Total project cost
- Total Federal share of the total project
- Total partner contribution in terms of financial and technical assistance.

B. Submission Requirements

Applications must be submitted as hard copy to:

Mr. John A. Bricker, State Conservationist
USDA, NRCS
1606 Santa Rosa Road, Suite 209
Richmond, VA 23229

Applications must include narrative sections described in this Notice. Incomplete applications will not be considered. Attached to this grant application notice is an application checklist and a Supporting Documentation Checklist. If submitting proposals for more than one project, submit a separate, complete application package for each project. Applications are to be typewritten on 8½" x 11" white paper, double spaced, and on one side only. The text of the proposal must be typewritten in a font no smaller than 12-point, with one-inch margins. Applicants must submit one signed original and two complete copies of each project application. Each copy of the proposal must be stapled securely in the upper left hand corner. Hard copies must be accompanied by an electronic copy on a 3½-inch diskette or compact disc. Electronic files must be either Microsoft Word or Acrobat (PDF) files.

C. Proposal Due Date
Proposals must be received at the previously aforementioned address by 5:00 p.m. EDT on **February 19, 2010**. A proposal's postmark date is not a factor in whether an application is received on time. The applicant assumes the risk of any delays in proposal delivery. Proposals that have been selected will be notified by mail within 10 business days of the final selection. Applicants whose proposals have not been selected will be notified within 15 business days of the final selection. Notification of elimination will be e-mailed or mailed to the applicant.

D. Acknowledgement of Submission
Receipt of all applications will be acknowledged by e-mail. Therefore, applicants are strongly encouraged to provide accurate e-mail addresses. If the applicant's e-mail address is not indicated, NRCS will acknowledge receipt of the application by letter. If the applicant does not receive an acknowledgment within 7 days of the submission deadline, please contact Barry Harris, FRPP Manager, Tel. 804-287-1658, barry.harris@va.usda.gov.

II. Review

A. Proposal Review and Selection Process
Prior to proposal review, the NRCS State Office will screen each application for its completeness. Incomplete applications, including those that do not meet eligibility requirements, will be eliminated from competition. Applications meeting the requirements of this Notice will be ranked by NRCS utilizing a comprehensive ranking worksheet.

B. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates
Awards are anticipated to be announced by **March 19, 2010**.

C. Award Notification
Applicants who have been selected will be notified by official notice from the NRCS State Conservationist. NRCS staff will develop cooperative agreements with those cooperating entities whose parcels have been selected. Applicants whose proposals have not been selected will be notified by official letter.

III. Administrative Review

A. Administrative and Technical Reviews
NRCS will perform an administrative review of the appraisals on ninety percent of the parcels that are accepted for purchase of an easement. NRCS will also perform a technical review of the appraisals of 10 percent of the parcels accepted for purchase of an easement. The NRCS National Appraiser will also perform a technical review of all appraisals with a fair market value of more than $1 million and all appraisals performed by appraisers who are performing their first appraisal for NRCS.

B. Review of Conveyance Document and Title
The conveyance document (i.e., conservation easement deed or conservation easement deed template) used by the eligible entity must be reviewed and approved by the USDA NRCS National Headquarters. NRCS reserves the right to require additional specific language or to remove language in the conservation easement deed to protect the interest of the United States. The conveyance document must include a "right of enforcement" clause for the United States. NRCS shall specify the terms for the "right of enforcement" clause to read as set forth in the cooperative agreement. The conveyance document must also contain a clause that all rights conveyed by the landowner under the document will become vested in the United States should the cooperating entity abandon, or attempt to terminate the conservation easement. The conveyance document must also specify the impervious surfaces shall not exceed two percent of the easement area.

The U.S. Department of Justice title standards require that the Office of General Counsel must review the title for legal sufficiency. The title must be approved before an easement can be closed.

C. Conservation Compliance
As a condition of participation, all highly erodible land in the easement must be managed in accordance with a conservation plan. The conservation plan will be developed using the standards and specifications of the NRCS Field Office Technical Guide and 7 CFR Part 12, unless otherwise determined by the State Conservationist, in partnership with the eligible entity. The conservation plan must be implemented on the highly erodible land, as determined by the State Conservationist, prior to the easement being recorded.

D. Cooperative Agreement
The Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC), through NRCS, enters into a cooperative agreement with a selected eligible entity to document participation in FRPP. The cooperative agreement will address, among other subjects:

- The easement type, terms, and conditions;
- The management and enforcement of the rights acquired;
- The role and responsibilities of NRCS and the cooperating entity;
- The responsibilities of the easement manager on lands acquired with FRPP assistance; and
- Other requirements deemed necessary by the CCC, acting through NRCS, to protect the interests of the United States. The cooperative agreement will also include an attachment listing the pending offers accepted in FRPP, landowners' names, addresses, location map(s), and other relevant information. Interested entities should contact Barry Harris, barry.harris@va.usda.gov for a copy of a sample cooperative agreement.