WETLANDS RESERVE PROGRAM
INDIANA
PRELIMINARY PLAN AND RANKING FORM GUIDANCE
(Revised June 2004)

GENERAL INFORMATION

TYPE OF EASEMENT: The landowner can choose from three options: a) a Permanent easement, b) a 30-year easement, or c) a Restoration with cost-share only. The landowner must decide which option they choose to participate in.

TYPE OF OWNERSHIP: Check the appropriate category: a) Private (an individual landowner, or corporation), b) Organization (such as The Nature Conservancy), or c) Government (State or County).

SUMMARY OF RANKING FACTOR SCORES

Transfer all scores from the following pages and total them in this section.

EASEMENT AREA INFORMATION

PORTION OF TRACT ENTERED INTO WRP EASEMENT: Check whether the easement area is the entire Tract or is only a portion of the Tract.

How will the "OTHER ELIGIBLE ACRES" contribute to the functions and values of the wetland to be restored? Examples of how adjacent areas will benefit the restored wetland include: acting as a buffer from surrounding areas; providing filtering from surrounding agricultural runoff; providing nesting habitat, escape cover, or other species-specific habitat requirements such as den trees; and reducing the fragmentation of, or increasing the area of the wetland complex.

Cowardin Classification for "ELIGIBLE ACRES": List the Cowardin Classification for the eligible acres before and after restoration: PC =( ), FW= ( ). Contact the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service representative, NRCS Biologist, or NRCS Wetland Biologist for additional assistance.

RANKING FACTORS

1. LOCATION

The purpose of this factor is to give priority to intentions that will result in expanding existing blocks of wildlife habitat. Habitat in larger blocks generally provides greater species diversity. "Permanently Protected Areas" are those areas that, because of

ownership or easement, are expected to remain in protected status for a minimum of 30 years. These areas should contain a significant amount of wildlife habitat and conform to the general intent of WRP. Examples include: state, county and municipal parks, state-owned fish and wildlife areas, recorded WRP intentions, state and national forests, and natural lakes.

2. WILDLIFE

This ranking factor evaluates an intention's affect on federally and state listed endangered or threatened species and conservation agreement species, or ability to reduce habitat fragmentation and habitat size.

A) The only acceptable criteria for scoring a site with 20 points for benefiting a Federal or State listed Threatened and Endangered species, is to meet the criteria as described in the Subfactor for Threatened and Endangered Species in the latest CRP manual guidance. For fiscal year 1999, this guidance was found in 2-CRP(Rev.3) IN Amend 4, IN-Exhibit-19 (N1b). A Threatened and Endangered Species map is found in each field office. Contact Dave Stratman, State Biologist, for further assistance.

B) Forested sites or sites that will be reforested that are contiguous or very closely associated with other blocks of forest or wetland habitat meet this criteria. Emergent sites that are within 0.5 miles of another wetland also meet this criteria. Generally, sites associated with other blocks of habitat reduce habitat fragmentation and provide greater species diversity.

C) Forested intentions are broken into five categories based on size with higher point values given to larger sites. Likewise, emergent intentions are broken into five categories based on size with higher point values given to larger sites.

3. HYDROLOGY RESTORATION POTENTIAL

A. The Percent of Total Area that is Suited for Hydrology Restoration is calculated by dividing the area (in acres) which will have hydrology restored, by the total easement area. Areas with restored hydrology are those areas that will be flooded, ponded or saturated under normal conditions. Sites with the highest percentage of restorable are scored highest.

B. The Percent of Original Hydrology that is Restorable evaluates the potential for restoration of the site to its natural condition.

Emergent sites will be evaluated on the ability to restore the original depth of the water level. This will be estimated by the extent that ditches can be plugged, tiles removed, etc. For example, if 75% or more of the original water level can be restored, the site will be given 45 points.

Forested sites will be evaluated similarly. Exceptions include sites where the hydrology has not been manipulated and only vegetation restoration is required. These sites will receive the maximum point value. Where levees and other control structures have reduced the natural hydrological regime, estimates will be made to determine how much of the original hydrology can be reasonably expected to be restored. Request engineering assistance as necessary.

4. VEGETATION RESTORATION POTENTIAL

This factor evaluates the potential for vegetation restoration on the site. **For emergent sites**, it is assumed that the potential for vegetation restoration is directly correlated to the degree of hydrology restoration. Sites with the highest degree of hydrology restoration receive the most points. **Forested sites** will be rated on the degree of forest restoration planned based on the planting of trees versus allowing natural regeneration.

5. OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

This factor assumes that sites requiring the least amount of maintenance have the greatest probability of long-term success.

6. GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS REGIONS

Indiana's primary wetland regions are the northeast potholes, the Kankakee watershed, and the southwest bottomland hardwoods. These three regions are being identified as Focus Regions for WRP. Within each of the Focus Regions, four Priority Areas, as described on the following pages, have been identified as the most important wetland areas of each region. The selection for the Priority Areas was based on several considerations including: wetlands present, previous WRP interest by landowners, federal, state, or private programs in place that complement WRP, and wetland restoration opportunity. The weighting factors applied to Regions I and II are designed to offset higher land costs in these Regions.

FOR REGION IV ONLY: Sites that have a combined score of 135 points or greater for Ranking Factors 1 thru 4 receive an additional 10 points. This is intended to increase the score of intentions that do not fall within Focus Regions 1, 2 or 3, but are exceptionally important environmentally.

The Geographic score is calculated by multiplying the weighting factor by the Priority Area points (pts.). Any additional points (add'l pts.) are then added for Region IV sites meeting the criteria described in the previous paragraph.

7. EASEMENT COST FACTOR

Additional points are assigned to intentions with low acquisition and restoration costs. The easement and restoration costs are subtracted from 3000 and the resulting number is divided by 100. Note that the Easement Cost Factor has a weighting factor of 2. The

number from the previous calculations is then multiplied by 2 to get the final score. Please show your calculations.

Example: Landowner does not submit a bid, therefore, maximum cap of $2,000 per acre used in easement portion of calculation. Total restoration cost is $10,000. Total acres in example are 200.

$$\left[\frac{(3000\text{-}\$2000) - (\$\frac{10{,}000}{200})}{100}\right] = \frac{1000\text{-}50}{100} = 9.5$$

Easement cost factor score: 9.5 x 2 = 19 points

8. NUMBER OF YEARS SINCE LAST CROPPING OR FORAGE

Check the appropriate category indicating how long it has been since a crop has been produced on the easement area. "Crops" include hayland or pasture. It may be necessary to request FSA-578 Report of Acreage to determine crop history.

9. WATER QUALITY

The purpose of this factor is to give priority to those intentions that will contribute to improvements in water quality. Three factors are used for the water quality criteria; Watersheds for Community Surface Water Supplies, Vulnerable Groundwater Resources and Karst, and Watersheds of Natural and Scenic Rivers-Outstanding State Waters and "Species at Risk". The factors are additive, that is, the highest value is given if all three factors are met. Maps concerning the water quality criteria are found on the 2003 EQIP compact disc available at each NRCS field office. Shape files are located on the compact disc under the following file names; surf_wat1w.shp (for surface water), g_karst3w.shp (for groundwater/karst) and te_nsrivers4w.shp (for scenic rivers, species at risk). Points are given for those intentions that lie within each water quality delineated area.