



# 2024 Local Work Group Recommendations

Submit one worksheet per Local Work Group

-----PLEASE RESPOND BY 11/10/2023-----

## Local Work Group (LWG) Information

Team: Team 9: Peaks to Craters

Districts: Blaine SWCD and Butte SWCD

LWG Chairperson: Randy Purser – Butte SWCD

Meeting Dates: May 2, 2023 and September 7, 2023

*Minutes from the meeting(s) – please attach a copy of the minutes and an attendance sheet when submitting recommendations.*

## Provide the following recommendations for your local working group:

### Priority Resource Concern Categories (PRCC)

Review the Priority Resource Concern Categories established in last year’s Team Ranking Pool. Your priority resource concern categories will be used in the EQIP screening and ranking process to determine the highest priority applications that will be ranked and funded first. Select **up to 8 Priority Resource Concern Categories** for your LWG Ranking Pool Categories. Please select your top 8 priority resource concern categories for CSP as well. For more information about resource concern categories see *Nationally Applicable Resource Concern Categories for CSP Assessments* and *Resource Concern Categories, Resource Concerns and Conservation Practices*.

Priority	EQIP (Up to 8 PRCC's)	CSP Ag Land (crop, pasture, range) (Top 8 PRCC's)	CSP Forestry (Top 8 PRCC's)
1	Source Water Depletion	Degraded Plant Condition	N/A
2	Terrestrial Habitat for Wildlife & Invertebrates	Fire Management	N/A
3	Inefficient Irrigation Water Use	Livestock Production Limitation	N/A
4	Bank Erosion from Streams, Shorelines, or Conveyance Channels	Concentrated Erosion	N/A
5	Pest Pressure	Soil Quality Limitation	N/A
6	Plant Productivity and Health	Source Water Depletion	N/A
7	Inadequate Livestock Water Quality, Quantity, and Distribution	Terrestrial Habitat	N/A
8	Soil: Aggregate Instability	Wind and Water Erosion	N/A



Recommendation for Distribution of LWG Funds

**2021-2023 Average initial Team allocation \$**           \$647,350          

Review the proposed list of Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 fund pools and last year’s team categories. Like FY2023, each LWG will receive an FY2023 EQIP allocation. Identify how you would like LWG funds to be divided into categories. Applications will be ranked against other applications within each category. You may identify categories by land use, geographic priority area, or other strategic funding need. Funds will be distributed among the selected categories within the LWG ranking pool based on your recommendations. Identify **up to five** categories below.

Depending on the average allocation above and expected average contract cost per category, it may be appropriate to only identify 2-3 Ranking Pool Categories to allocate funds initially. You may designate an initial allocation of 0% to one or more of the five team categories and only recommend allocating funds to those categories during the reallocation process or through additional funds NRCS-ID *may* receive from NRCS National Headquarters. For example, special projects or smaller contracts could be funded with excess funds. These 0% categories should be used with caution as they do require ranking questions and must improve identified priority resource concerns and they may not receive funding.

LWG Ranking Pool Category	Percentage of LWG Funding (0-100%)
<i>Example: Irrigated Cropland</i>	40%
Focused Conservation	65%
Wildlife	20%
Range	10%
Seasonal High Tunnel	5%
Irrigated Ground (Crop and Pasture)	0%
Total	100%

Month, Year



### Priority for Reallocation of Funds

If high priority applications within a ranking pool category do not use all the funds allocated, indicate the recommended order in which excess funds should be reallocated. The recommendations below will be considered in reallocating funds but cannot be guaranteed.

Priority	LWG ranking pool category
1	Wildlife
2	Range
3	Irrigated Ground
4	Seasonal High Tunnels
5	Focused Conservation

How would you like the State Program Manager to move the re-allocated funds through the priority categories?

*Answer: Let the Team Lead decide how to move money through the priority pools.*



### EQIP Local Ranking Concepts

For categories retained from FY2023, review the ranking questions used to evaluate applications and identify any recommended changes. For new categories, develop approximately five qualities of a project that should cause it to rank higher e.g., certain practices will be applied, certain resource concerns will be addressed, or conditions or qualities of the field make it a higher priority.

Note: Starting in FY24, applications that earn a ranking score of 10 or lower will not be funded regardless of available funds. Please consider this as you build your ranking concepts for this year.

	LWG Ranking Pool Category	List desired qualities of a priority project
	<i>Example: Irrigated Cropland</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Soil erosion is reduced on an HEL field</li> <li>• Flood to sprinkler conversion</li> <li>• A filter strip or buffer will be planted</li> </ul>
1	Focused Conservation (65%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased irrigation water efficiency</li> <li>• Improved surface water delivery rates</li> <li>• Benefit multiple landowners/water users</li> </ul>
2	Wildlife (20%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remove fence from the landscape</li> <li>• Retrofit existing fence lines to wildlife friendly specifications</li> <li>• Improve fish passage in waterways</li> <li>• Reduce streambank erosion for aquatic health</li> </ul>
3	Range (10%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve plant community</li> <li>• Enhance livestock distribution for uniformed grazing</li> <li>• Install/remove fences for even livestock distribution</li> <li>• Protection/improvements of riparian areas</li> </ul>
4	Seasonal High Tunnel (5%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extend plant growing season for produce harvest</li> <li>• Address soil health concerns</li> <li>• Addition of conservation cover/pollinator planting borders</li> </ul>
5	Irrigated Ground (0%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Address soil health concerns</li> <li>• Increased amount of perennial species</li> <li>• Implemented pollinator planting plots</li> </ul>

Follow up action recommended for Team Lead: Develop approximately 5 Ranking questions per category that fit within NRCS policy and submit those back to the LWG participants to review prior to submitting recommendations.

Month, Year



## Inflation Reduction Act Recommendations

The Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) authorized an additional \$19.5 billion over five years for climate smart agriculture through several of the Natural Resources Conservation Service conservation programs that yield climate-change mitigation benefits. NRCS-Idaho is projected to receive \$9.8 million for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program and \$3.2 million for the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) in fiscal year (FY) 2024.

These funds will provide direct climate mitigation benefits and will expand access to financial and technical assistance for producers to advance conservation on their farm, ranch or forest land through practices like cover cropping, conservation tillage, wetland restoration, prescribed grazing, nutrient management, tree planting and more. To ensure funding is targeted towards climate-change mitigation, a list of conservation practices and enhancements has been developed. All activities on the *Idaho Climate Smart Agriculture and Forestry (CSAF) Mitigation Activities List FY2023* are eligible for IRA funds. This list may change in FY 24.

To continue with the agency's mission of prioritizing locally lead conservation, Local Work Groups (LWG) will identify conservation priorities for the IRA funding allocated to the LWG. This pool will be open to all land uses/operation types, but funding selections will be prioritized by using recommended characteristics of priority projects, key resource concerns and priority conservation practices from the CSAF list. Conservation plans must include one or more CSAF practice to be eligible for IRA funds.

### IRA-EQIP Local Ranking Concepts

Proposed Team LWG IRA allocation: approximately \$575,000. This is an estimated amount; actual funding amounts will be determined when NRCS-ID receives the FY24 budget.

For your Team LWG IRA ranking pool, develop approximately five qualities of a project that should cause it to rank higher e.g., certain practices will be applied, certain resource concerns will be addressed, or conditions or qualities of the field make it a higher priority. You may prioritize certain land uses, areas within your team, or use other strategies to focus this IRA funding through these ranking priorities.

Note: Starting in FY24, applications that earn a ranking score of 10 or lower will not be funded regardless of available funds. Please consider this as you build your ranking concepts for this year.





IRA Ranking Pool

List desired qualities of a priority project

Example

- Soil erosion is reduced on an HEL field
  - A filter strip or field border will be planted on cropland
  - Forest health will be improved with thinning to proper stocking levels
  - Perennial species will be planted to convert cropland to pastureland
  - Multiple resource concerns are addressed by climate smart/CSAF practices
  - Multiple CSAF/core practices are planned (e.g. no-till, cover crops, pasture/range planting, prescribed grazing)
- 
- Increase perennial vegetation
  - Benefit/protect/enhance/restore a riparian area's vegetative quality and quantity
  - Priority practices: Cover Crop, Prescribed Grazing, Residue & Tillage Management: Reduced Till, Conservation Cover, and Field Borders
  - Multiple CSAF/core practices are planned (e.g. no-till, cover crops, pasture/range planting, prescribed grazing)
  - Multiple resource concerns are addressed by climate smart/CSAF practices
  - Increase energy savings through Irrigation Pipeline (430), Microirrigation Systems (441), Sprinkler System (442), and/or Pumping Plant (533)

Follow up action recommended for Team Lead: Develop approximately 5 Ranking questions that fit within NRCS policy and submit those back to the LWG participants to review prior to submitting recommendations.

1. Does the application include/increase perennial vegetation?
  2. Is a practice applied to benefit/protect/enhance/restore a riparian area's vegetative quality and/or quantity?
  3. Does the application have any priority practices (Cover Crop, Prescribed Grazing, Residue & Tillage Management: Reduced Till, Conservation Cover, and Field Borders)?
  4. Does application include qualifying energy saving practices that meet the energy savings threshold?
- Due to newness of program, Team Lead is to distribute ranking points evenly over the determined LWG priority practices.

Month, Year



Special Projects/Long Term goals for LWG:

There are many projects that may not fit within the team fund pool due to cost, complexity, resource concerns, or lack of appropriate payment scenarios. Please list and describe potential projects, ideas you have, or potential funding sources outside NRCS and we can help try to find a program that fits, such as the Regional Conservation Partnership Program.

Does the Local Work Group have a long-term plan they would like to implement to streamline the LWG process i.e., focus on a particular area/resource concern this year and then move to another priority next year?

*Long term plan implementation of wildlife friendly practices that will aid farmers/ranchers with their livestock but also enhance multiple species' migration through our districts.*

Signatures

Chairperson of the LWG: Ray Owen Date: 10/12/23

NRCS Team Lead: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_