



## Great Lakes Restoration Initiative GLRI – EQIP Priority 15/16 Cover Crop System Sign-Up Plan of Operations for Fiscal Year 2016

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) offers financial assistance to agricultural producers to implement on-farm conservation practices. Eligible land is determined by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and is based on an identified resource concern. Eligible producers may apply for financial assistance for conservation practices that will address the identified resource concerns.

### **Eligible Watershed Areas:**

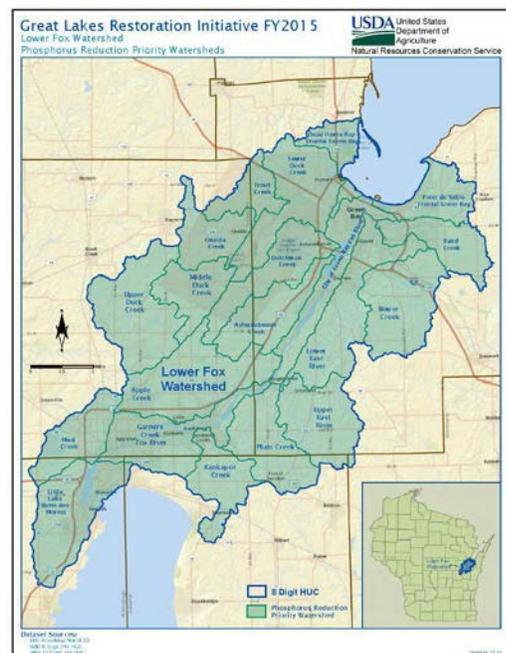
The map to the right identifies the Wisconsin Phosphorus Priority 15/16 areas where the Cover Crop System sign-up will occur. The entire Lower Fox Watershed has now been identified as the Phosphorus Priority 15/16 area.

The Watershed Boundary Dataset (WBD) is the delineation used to identify the watershed boundaries.

### **Eligible Practices and Payment Rates:**

See the documents posted on the Wisconsin SharePoint for the list of eligible conservation practices and payment rates for the Fiscal Year 2016 GLRI-EQIP Phosphorus Priority 15/16 Cover Crop System sign-up. Applicants who certify they are a Beginning Farmer, Limited Resource Farmer or a Socially Disadvantaged Farmer are eligible to receive a higher practice payment rate.

Payment limits will be the same as those established for the NRCS-WI FY16 EQIP General sign-up, with the following exceptions.



### **Application Period:**

EQIP applications are accepted on a continuous basis throughout the year. The Fiscal Year 2016 GLRI-EQIP Phosphorus Priority 15/16 Cover Crop System sign-up period application deadline is March 4<sup>th</sup>, 2016. All eligible applications received by the close of business March 4th, 2016 will be evaluated and ranked for funding consideration.

Interested agricultural producers may apply in person, by telephone, fax, email, or letter at the local NRCS Service Center. The following link provides the location and contact information for local NRCS Service Centers:

<http://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app?service=page/CountyMap&state=WI&stateName=Wisconsin&stateCode=55>

### **Fund Pools:**

The following fund pool has been established for the Fiscal Year 2016 GLRI-EQIP Phosphorus Priority 15/16 Cover Crop System sign-up:

GLRI-Phosphorus Priority 15/16 Cover Crop System

Applications for Conservation Activity Plan(s) (i.e. Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan CAP, Integrated Pest Management Plan CAP, Drainage Water Management Plan CAP, Nutrient Management Plan CAP) will be a single stand-alone application/contract and will not be included (i.e. merged) with applications/contracts for non-CAP conservation practices.

A separate application form (i.e. NRCS-CPA-1200) does not need to be submitted if the applicant already has an existing unfunded application submitted for Fiscal Year 2014 or 2015 EQIP.

### **Resource Concerns:**

Addressing phosphorus runoff resource concerns from cropland and pasture in the Lower Fox Watershed via implementation of core conservation practices is the priority for the Fiscal Year 2016 GLRI-EQIP Phosphorus Priority 15/16 Cover Crop System sign-up and is reflected in the application ranking tool.

### **Screening:**

All applications will receive a High, Medium, or Low application priority as identified on the document titled "FY15 GLRI Screening Tool" which is posted on the Wisconsin SharePoint.

### **Ranking Criteria:**

Ranking applications will be done according to the application ranking document posted on the Wisconsin NRCS GLRI webpage. All rankings will be conducted in ProTracts. Only those applications which are identified as High or Medium priority will be ranked. Applications identified as High priority will be funded ahead of applications identified as Medium priority. Medium priority applications will only be ranked and approved for funding if there is an insufficient quantity of High priority applications to fully obligate the Wisconsin financial assistance allocation.

Low priority applications will not be ranked. In the event of application ranking score ties, the application that has the higher tracking code (i.e. random number generated in ProTracts) will receive funding priority.

### **Funding:**

NRCS will allocate the available Fiscal Year 2016 GLRI-EQIP Phosphorus Priority 15/16 Cover Crop System funds based on the numerical ranking system set forth on the Wisconsin NRCS website. Applications will be selected for plan development and contracted in ranked order according to the application priority and ranking score as funds allow.

If there are insufficient funds available to fund an application, applications not selected for contracting will be deferred to the next EQIP application ranking period.