

## **INSTRUCTIONS FOR USING THE FY04 EQIP RANKING CRITERIA PALOUSE LOCAL WORK GROUP**

### **Ranking the Applications – Using the Worksheet**

Important - Before granting points to an application for any resource modifier:

- 1) The modifier must apply to the area to be treated under the application.
- 2) The application must include a conservation practice eligible for EQIP cost share or incentive payments, that will address the resource modifier for which points are being awarded.
- 3) The total ranking score awarded for a given application category may not exceed the maximum score for that application category.

### **The Local Work Group will apply a Ratio system to all applications, as follows:**

- 1) One application category scored – multiply the total category score by 1.0
- 2) Two application categories scored – multiply the total score for all categories by .55
- 3) Three application categories scored – multiply the total score for all categories by .35
- 4) Four application categories scored – multiply the total score for all categories by .26
- 5) Five application categories scored – multiply the total score for all categories by .23

### **DRY CROP APPLICATION CATEGORY (Maximum points = 300)**

#### ***“The RKLS is >60 on cropland” (90 points)***

Values assigned by the Local Work Group target high potential sheet & rill erosion on cropland. For evaluation, use the predominant soil map unit for the cropland included in the application. Use the most current factors in the Field Office Technical Guide for R and K. The standard LS may be used if the actual LS has not been previously documented in the applicant’s case file.

#### ***“There is a soil condition concern” (125 points maximum)***

This modifier addresses soil tilth, crusting, water infiltration, organic matter, compaction, and soil contaminants. Points are granted if there is sufficient indication that FOTG Quality Criteria is not met on the land included in the application. This may be based on case file information and applicant interview. The LWG has assigned different points for this modifier based on the land use or the concern:

|              |        |
|--------------|--------|
| Organic M    | 65 pts |
| Compaction   | 60 pts |
| Soil Tilth   | 0 pts  |
| Crusting     | 0 pts  |
| Infiltration | 0 pts  |
| Contaminants | 0 pts  |

#### ***“Ephemeral gullies on cropland need treatment” (30 points)***

Points are granted if there is sufficient indication that excessive erosion is occurring from one or more ephemeral gullies within the cropland included in the application. This may be based on case file information, aerial photo interpretation, topographic maps, and applicant interview. Different points may be assigned by the LWG based on the proposed treatment.

#### ***“Direct Seed will be used in a system” (90 points)***

The intent is to discourage use of the No-Till or Direct Seed practices in a manner that does not teach a producer how to convert into a No-Till/Direct Seed system – such as Direct Seed winter wheat only on pea ground.

#### ***“Producer agrees not to burn on cropland” (30 points)***

To be documented within the conservation plan under the appropriate residue management practice, and agreed to by the land operator.

**IRRIGATED CROP APPLICATION CATEGORY** (Maximum points = 75)

***"Irrigation System will be improved & /or IWM will be applied"*** (75 points)

Points will be awarded if the current irrigation system will be improved and irrigation water management will be applied; or if irrigation water management will be applied. This includes replacing an open delivery system with pipeline, replacing a leaky delivery pipeline, converting from wheel lines to a center pivot system, & converting from overhead sprinklers to a micro system.

Irrigation Water Management is defined as the process of determining and controlling the volume, frequency, and application rate of irrigation in a planned, efficient manner. The purposes of IWM include managing soil moisture to promote desired crop response; optimizing use of available water supplies; decreasing non-point source pollution of surface and groundwater resources; and to minimize irrigation induced soil erosion. It includes the use of devices such as tensiometers, watermarks, or neutron probes to determine moisture levels in the soil.

**GRAZING LAND CATEGORY** (Maximum points = 150)

***"There is an excessive invasion of weeds or woody vegetation"*** (60 points maximum)

Grant points if there is sufficient indication that there are adverse impacts to plant production, condition, and quality goals as a result of invasive weeds or woody vegetation. Evaluation may be based on aerial photography and applicant interview. LWG has assigned points based on extent of problem:

|                                     |        |
|-------------------------------------|--------|
| 75 - 100% of planning unit impacted | 60 pts |
| 50 - 74% of planning unit impacted  | 45 pts |
| 25 - 49% of planning unit impacted  | 30 pts |
| < 25% of planning unit impacted     | 15 pts |

***"Prescribed grazing will be applied"*** (60 points)

Points will be awarded if the applicant agrees to apply prescribed grazing on the proposed contract acres. The definition of prescribed grazing is the controlled harvest of vegetation with grazing animals managed with the intent to achieve a specified objective. The purposes are: to improve or maintain the health & vigor of the desired plant community; maintain or improve water quality and quantity, reduce soil erosion and maintain or improve soil condition; and improve or maintain animal health and productivity. It includes developing a grazing schedule for the operating unit to document expected quantity and quality of forage for each pasture; number of livestock by kinds and class, and periods of grazing, resting and other treatment for each management unit.

***"Livestock have uncontrolled access to riparian areas"*** (60 points maximum)

Grant points if there are riparian areas that are not fenced and there is sufficient indication that grazing of domestic animals occur within these areas. Evaluation may be based on aerial photos, case file information, and applicant interview. LWG has assigned points based on proposed treatment:

- a. Riparian area will be fenced 30 pts
- b. Prescribed grazing w/o fencing 15 pts
- c. (a or b) + riparian forest buffer 60 pts

***"Water Development is a factor for proper grazing distribution"*** (60 points)

Grant points if there is sufficient indication that lack of adequate water quantity or availability are limiting factors for achieving proper grazing distribution. Evaluation may be based on aerial photos, case file information, the National Range and Pasture Handbook, and applicant interview.

**FOREST APPLICATION CATEGORY** (Maximum points = 100)

***"Forest stand improvement will be applied"*** (100 points)

Points will be awarded if the applicant agrees to apply forest stand improvement on the proposed contract acres. The definition of forest stand improvement is to manipulate species composition and stocking by cutting or killing selected trees and understory vegetation. The purposes are: to improve understory forage production, aesthetics, wildlife & fish habitat, recreation, hydrologic conditions; to improve or sustain timber production; to initiate forest stand regeneration; or a combination of purposes. Documentation for this practice includes: the extent and size of the treatment area; spacing, density and numbers of preferred species and understory species; stocking rates in terms of basal area, spacing or trees per acre by species and size class distribution; and the method, felling direction and timing of tree cutting.

## **LIVESTOCK APPLICATION CATEGORY** (Maximum points = 275)

### ***“A CNMP will be included (livestock operations)” (150 points)***

Grant points if the application is a livestock operation with lands where animal manure is applied, and will include the development and implementation of a Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan that meets NRCS criteria. Evaluation may be based on case file information and applicant interview.

### ***“Storage is needed for animal manure” (125 points)***

Grant points if a waste storage facility is needed and included in the application. Evaluation may be based on applicant interview, livestock numbers, and current storage capability.

### ***“Livestock Confinement or feeding areas adjacent to streams or other bodies of water will be relocated creating buffers with livestock exclusion” (55 points)***

Grant points if applicant agrees to move feeding operation away from affected stream, and install an approved buffer practice with fenced livestock exclusion. Buffer may be grazed with an approved prescribed grazing plan. Points may also be awarded when the feeding operation is adjacent to an intermittent stream if there is likelihood that manure and/or sediment from the feeding activity will be readily transported to a perennial stream, lake or other water body. Feeding areas will be relocated no less than the minimum buffer width specified in the current NRCS Riparian Forest Buffer standard, practice 391.

## **ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS** (Maximum points = 100)

### ***“Proposed contract area is adjacent to a 303(d) listed stream or drains into it via a defined tributary” (25 points maximum)***

Grant points if the application has a 303(d) listed stream running through it, or is adjacent to such a stream, and the proposed treatment will address one or more identified water quality concerns of that listed stream. The 1998 list of 303(d) streams can be found at the following website:

[http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/303d/1998/wrias/1998\\_water\\_segs.pdf](http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/303d/1998/wrias/1998_water_segs.pdf)

If the application area is not adjacent to a listed stream, grant points if it is upstream and adjacent to a tributary (perennial or intermittent) of that stream as identified on a USGS quadrangle map, and the proposed treatment will address one or more identified water quality concerns of the listed stream. In these instances, the LWG has assigned different points based on proximity to the listed stream.

|                               |        |
|-------------------------------|--------|
| Adjacent to stream segment    | 25 pts |
| Upstream distance < ¼ mile    | 20 pts |
| Upstream distance ¼ to ½ mile | 15 pts |
| Upstream distance ½ to ¾ mile | 10 pts |
| Upstream distance ¾ to 1 mile | 5 pts  |
| Upstream distance > 1 mile    | 0 pts  |

### ***“Planned practices will assist the producer in complying with laws/regulations” (25 points)***

Grant points if the application includes practices that will assist the person in complying with the Dairy Waste Law, AFO/CAFO regulations, or the Forest Practices Act. In order to qualify for points, compliance must be enforceable by an agency with the ability to impose fines or sanctions for violation. Points may not be granted if the applicant is under a court order to carry out a plan. Nor can EQIP be used to assist applicant come into compliance in sodbusting or swampbusting situations. Evaluation may be based on case file information and applicant interview.

### ***“A buffer practice will be installed” (25 points)***

Grant points if the application includes a buffer practice that will provide a water quality benefit. Filter strips, field borders, grassed waterways, hedgerow plantings, field windbreaks, shelterbelts, contour grass strips, grass buffer strips, and riparian forest buffers are all examples of conservation buffers. Evaluation may be based on aerial photos, topographic maps, and applicant interview.

### ***“A practice will be implemented to benefit terrestrial species occupying the proposed contract area” (25 points)***

Grant points if the application includes one of the following conservation practices and provides direct wildlife benefit for terrestrial species that occupy the proposed contract area.

|                                |  |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Riparian Forest Buffer         | Upland Wildlife Habitat Mgmt.                      |
| Wetland Wildlife Habitat Mgmt. | Restoration & Mgmt. of Rare and Declining Habitats |