

National Bulletin: 300-24-30

Date: 04/28/2023

Subject: LTP–Refining Source Water Protection Local
Priorities for Fiscal Year 2025

Action Required By: August 23, 2024

Purpose: This national bulletin provides state conservationists (STC) and directors of the Caribbean and Pacific Island areas with information for updating high priority areas for source water.

Expiration Date: September 30, 2024.

Background: The 2018 Farm Bill amends the Food Security Act of 1985, Section 1244, with a provision providing for the protection of source water through targeted conservation practices. This provision, section 1244(n), provides that the Secretary must encourage the protection of drinking water sources through the following methods:

- Identifying local priority areas for drinking water protection in each state. This is done in collaboration with [state technical committees](#) and community water systems and may address concerns about either the quality or quantity of source water or both.
- Providing increased incentives for practices that relate to water quality and quantity and protect drinking water sources while also benefitting producers.
- Dedicating at least 10 percent of funding for conservation programs (excluding the Conservation Reserve Program) to source water protection. Inflation Reduction Act funding delivered through these conservation programs will also have 10 percent reserved for source water protection.

[NI 440-313](#) provides guidance for determining high priority areas, such as the characteristics of high priority areas for source water, providing increased payment rates, practices protecting source water in these areas, and other policy for meeting this source water mandate.

Explanation: STCs may revise and update high priority areas for source water protection and the associated potential threats (water quality or quantity). STCs will determine these changes by collaborating with drinking water partners, including community water systems and the state technical committee.

Use the guidance in NI 440-313 and this bulletin to submit changes to previously identified high priority areas for source water.

The following risk factors should be considered when selecting areas where agricultural land uses may impact source water:

- Identified water quality resource concerns at watershed and area scale (e.g., nutrients, sediments, pathogens, and pesticides)
- Reports of or likelihood of harmful algal blooms

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- Water system violations related to agricultural land uses
- Size of population served by source water protection areas (SWPA)
- Ground water systems served by an aquifer designated as “sole source”
- Known areas of depletion in aquifers and ground water management areas
- Other risks that may impact source water
 - Karst geology
 - Highly erodible soils
 - Degraded habitat
 - Livestock access to surface water
 - Wildfire risk
- Opportunity to address risks to source water and related resource concerns
 - Fixing impaired surface waters
 - Improving aquatic habitat

Collaboration with STACs. The Farm Bill source water provision encourages collaboration with state technical committees and community water systems to identify local priority areas. Communication with state partners leverages the knowledge of local partners to identify local priority areas. To help STCs and NRCS staff connect with state partners, several resources are linked below.

The American Water Works Association has local sections in all states, with local contacts available under “[Find your local AWWA Section.](#)”

The [Association of State Drinking Water Administrators \(ASDWA\)](#) maintains a list of source water contacts in each state.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) also maintains a list of [source water contacts](#) and [tribal drinking water contacts](#) in each EPA region.

Revisions to high priority areas. STCs and NRCS staff must use the web application with map interface to add and remove HUC12s from existing high priority areas. The [User Guide for SWPA Web Application](#) offers instructions for navigating the application, adding and removing watersheds from the state’s high priority areas.

Please make any changes to the original high priority areas through the [NRCS FY25 SWPA Selector Web Application](#) **August 23, 2024.**

Contact: For more information regarding the selection and revision of high priority areas, please contact John Bullough at john.bullough@usda.gov.