

National Bulletin: 300-25-20

Date: 4/2/2025

Subject: LTP – Refining Source Water Protection Local
Priorities for Fiscal Year 2026

Action Requested By: August 22, 2025

Purpose: This national bulletin gives state conservationists and directors of the Caribbean and Pacific Island areas the action date to update high-priority areas for source water.

Expiration Date: September 30, 2025.

Background: Section 1244(n) of the Food Security Act of 1985 provides that the Secretary of Agriculture must encourage the protection of drinking water sources by:

- Identifying local priority areas for drinking water protection in each state by collaborating with state technical advisory committees (STAC), community water systems, and the state drinking water agency
- Increasing incentives for practices related to water quality and quantity and protect drinking water sources while also benefitting producers
- Dedicating at least 10 percent of the total funds for conservation programs (except the Conservation Reserve Program) to source water protection each year

The Natural Resources and Conservation Service (NRCS) issued [440 NI 313](#) to define high-priority areas and give guidance for meeting this source water mandate. Under 440 NI 313, state conservationists may update high-priority areas to address concerns about either the quality or quantity of source water or both.

Explanation: High-priority areas for source water are open for changes. States are asked to review their high-priority areas and update as needed. Use guidance in [440 NI 313](#) and this bulletin to submit changes. The Association of State Drinking Water Administrators (ASDWA) maintains a list of state [source water contacts](#) to ease collaboration with STACs and community water systems.

States should prioritize small (12 digit) watersheds with the greatest density of SWPAs. Where agricultural land uses may impact source water, consider the following risk factors:

- Identified water quality resource concerns at watershed and area scale (nutrients, sediments, pathogens, and pesticides)
- Reported or likelihood of harmful algal blooms
- Water system violations
- Size of population served by source water protection areas (SWPA)
- Ground water systems served by a sole source aquifer
- Known areas of aquifer depletion or ground water management areas
- Other risks that may impact source water:
 - Karst geology

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- Highly erodible soils
- Degraded habitat
- Livestock access to surface water
- Wildfire risk
- Opportunity to address risks to source water and related resource concerns:
 - Impaired surface waters
 - Aquatic habitat

Use the [Source Water Protection Areas Web Application](#) to select new high priority SWPAs (HUC12s) and change existing local priorities by **August 22, 2025**. The web application has a map interface to add and remove HUC12s from existing high-priority areas and includes instructions on how to navigate the application.

Contact: For more information about choosing and revising high priority areas, please contact John Bullough at john.bullough@usda.gov.