

NB 300-21-34 LTP – Refining Source Water Protection Local Priorities for Fiscal Year (FY) 2021

National Bulletin: 300-21-34 **Date:** June 2, 2021
Subject: LTP – Refining Source Water Protection Local Priorities for Fiscal Year (FY) 2021

Action Requested By: September 30, 2021

Purpose. To provide State conservationists (STCs) and directors of the Caribbean and Pacific Island Areas with the opportunity to update high priority areas for source water. STCs and directors will work with drinking water partners to identify updates as needed for these high priority areas for source water protection and the associated potential threats (water quality or aquifer depletion).

Expiration Date. September 30, 2021

Background. The 2018 Farm Bill amends the Food Security Act of 1985, Section 1244, the administrative provisions for conservation programs, to add a provision providing for the protection of source water through targeting conservation practices. This provision, 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 the total funds available for conservation programs (excluding CRP), each year beginning in FY 2019 through FY 2023, to be used for source water protection.

NI 440-313 provides guidance for the characteristics of high priority areas for source water, for providing increased payment rates for practices protecting source water in these areas, and other policy for meeting this source water mandate.

Explanation. NI 440-313 provides that additional guidance will give STCs the opportunity to revise and update high priority areas for source water. If STCs make this determination through collaboration with community water systems, the state drinking water agency and the State Technical Advisory Committee (STAC), they may submit a revised listing of watersheds defining the high priority areas for source water in their state.

STCs will use the guidance in NI 440-313 and below to indicated revised high priority areas, based on HUC12 watersheds, as a refinement to those that were previously identified.

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

- Nutrients, sediment, pathogens, pesticides – identified water quality resource concerns at watershed/area scale
- Reported or likelihood of Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs)
- Water system violations
- Size of population served by SWPAs
- Ground water systems served by an aquifer designated as “sole source”
- Known areas of aquifer depletion or ground water management areas
- Other risks that may impact source water:
 - o Karst geology
 - o Highly erodible soils
 - o Degraded habitat
 - o Livestock access to surface water
 - o Wildfire risk
- Opportunity to address risks to source water and as well as related resource concerns
 - o Impaired surface waters
 - o Aquatic habitat

The following EPA source water protection area spatial data are available for States to consider in selecting high priority areas:

- Wellhead protection areas (ground water systems):

<https://epa.maps.arcgis.com/home/item.html?id=068fa5fa5f63465eb908374ae8da353a>

- Source water protection areas (surface systems):

<https://epa.maps.arcgis.com/home/item.html?id=c95164e0e40a48888c9b9520a521eb50>

These data represent the density of source water protection areas aggregated at the HUC12 scale (percentage of the HUC12 in a source water protection area). These data are a good representation of the source water protection areas modeled by EPA and that NRCS is using to track the 10 percent of conservation program funding. States should focus on HUC12s with the greatest density of SWPAs to incorporate into high priority areas, where possible.

Providing information on revisions to high priority areas. For each HUC12 selected, the type of systems addressed (ground or surface water) and the source water threat (water quality or aquifer depletion) must be included using the spreadsheet available at the link below:

https://usdagcc.sharepoint.com/sites/nrcs_orc/Shared%20Documents/Forms/AllItems.aspx?RootFolder=%2Fsites%2Fnrcs%5Forc%2FShared%20Documents%2FSource%20Water%20Protection%20FB%202018&FolderCTID=0x01200002938FF8F4A43445B41069158B54B76B

Please do not edit the spreadsheet on SharePoint. Download the spreadsheet, enter required information and email as described below.

Please provide the high priority source water protection areas (HUC12s) and any modifications to the original local priorities on the "Source Water Local Priority Refinement FY22" spreadsheet by September 30, 2021. The Source Water coordinator position is currently vacant but will be filled and contact information will be available on the contact page for the Areawide Planning Branch. Please assure that the most current WBD dataset for HUC12 is used, and the additional requested attributes have been included in the spreadsheet for selected HUC12s.

Contact. For additional information or clarification, please contact Martin Lowenfish, Areawide Planning Branch, at martin.lowenfish@usda.gov.

/s/

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