

**NB 300-23-28 LTP – Refining Source Water Protection Local Priorities for Fiscal Year (FY) 2024**

**National Bulletin:** 300-23-28 **Date:** May 5, 2023  
**Subject:** LTP – Refining Source Water Protection Local Priorities for Fiscal Year (FY) 2024

**Action Required By: August 25, 2023**

**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, 2023

**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. STCs shall make this determination through collaboration with partners including community water systems, the State drinking water agency, and the State Technical Advisory Committee (STAC).

STCs will 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 these areas where agricultural land uses may impact source water:

- Nutrients, sediments, pathogens, and 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 source water protection areas (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 related resource concerns:
  - o Impaired surface waters
  - o Aquatic habitat.

The following Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) SWPA spatial data are available for States to consider in selecting high priority areas:

- Percent HUC12 in wellhead protection areas (ground water systems):  
<https://epa.maps.arcgis.com/home/item.html?id=b6e08515c946454292c9533dbecbdb25>

Percent HUC12 in SWPAs (surface systems):

- Percent HUC12 in SWPAs (surface systems).

[Percent HUC12 in Source Water Protection Area \(Surface\) - Overview \(arcgis.com\)](#)

This data represents the density of SWPAs aggregated at the HUC12 scale (percentage of the HUC12 in an SWPA). This data is a good representation of the SWPAs modeled by EPA and is what 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. These maps can also be viewed in the NRCS FY24 SWPA Selector Web Application below.

**Revisions to high priority areas.** STCs and NRCS staff will now use a web application with a map interface to add and remove HUC12s from existing high-priority areas. Attachment A offers instructions on how to navigate the application and use it to add and remove watersheds from the state's high-priority areas.

<https://gis-states.sc.egov.usda.gov/portal/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=205a9501094048d3a8c60a1d41767c28>

**Please follow the link above to select new high priority SWPAs (HUC12s) and to make any modifications to the original local priorities on the "NRCS FY24 SWPA Selector" Web Application by August 25, 2023.**

**Contact.** For additional information regarding the selection and revision of High Priority Areas, please contact John Bullough, at [john.bullough@usda.gov](mailto:john.bullough@usda.gov)

/s/

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[Attachment A: User Guide for SWPA Web Application](#)