

RCPN Narrative Elements for Preproposal (4700 character limit per item)

Project Name:

Funding Pool:

State:

1. Describe how each partner meets the eligibility criteria in Section III.A. of the announcement.

2. Specify the geographic focus of the project area. This can be based on habitat type, land uses, political jurisdiction of State or local government, or any other appropriate method to identify the project area. Note that the project area does not need to be contiguous, but all areas should have a common primary resource concern that the project addresses.

3. Identify the project objectives and the natural resource concerns that the project will address and how the partners identified those concerns, see listing of priority resource concerns in Section II.B. A complete list of NRCS approved natural resource concerns may be found on the RCPP Web site at:

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/farbill/rcpp/>

4. A general description of the plans for evaluating outcomes, including plans for monitoring and modeling, and for reporting on progress to achieve the objectives of the application.

5. A brief description of the types and sequence of implementation of conservation practices that the project will implement, for example: conservation activity plans (EQIP only), enhancements (CSP only), wetland restoration activities (ACEP, HFRP, sponsor –held floodplain easements), easement acquisition activities (ACEP, HFRP, sponsor-held floodplain easements), other partner activities to be implemented during the project timeframe.

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6. If applicable, indicate how the project will “assist producers in meeting or avoiding the need for natural resource regulatory requirements.” Section 1271B(d)(4)(A) of the 1985 Act.

7. A description of any requested program adjustments of terms (adjustments to regulations or policy), including AGI waivers, by covered program, with an explanation of why the adjustment of terms is needed in order to achieve the objectives of the project.

8. Whether and how the project requests alternative funding arrangements.

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9. Any additional information that has not specifically been requested but will help reviewers understand your proposal.

RCPN Narrative Elements for Full Proposal (4700 character limit per item). Only to be completed if selected to submit a Full Proposal

12. A description of how the partner(s) will collaborate to achieve the objectives of the partnership agreement and the roles, responsibilities, and capabilities of the partner(s). Applications that include resources from other sources than the lead applicant must include a letter or other documentation from the other partners confirming this commitment of resources. Potential partners should also describe whether and how the project will coordinate with other local, State or national activities, including regional plans adopted by government entities that address resource concerns identified in the project area.

13. Applicants must clearly state, by project objective, how they intend to leverage Federal funds along with partner resources (identify in-kind and cash contributions).

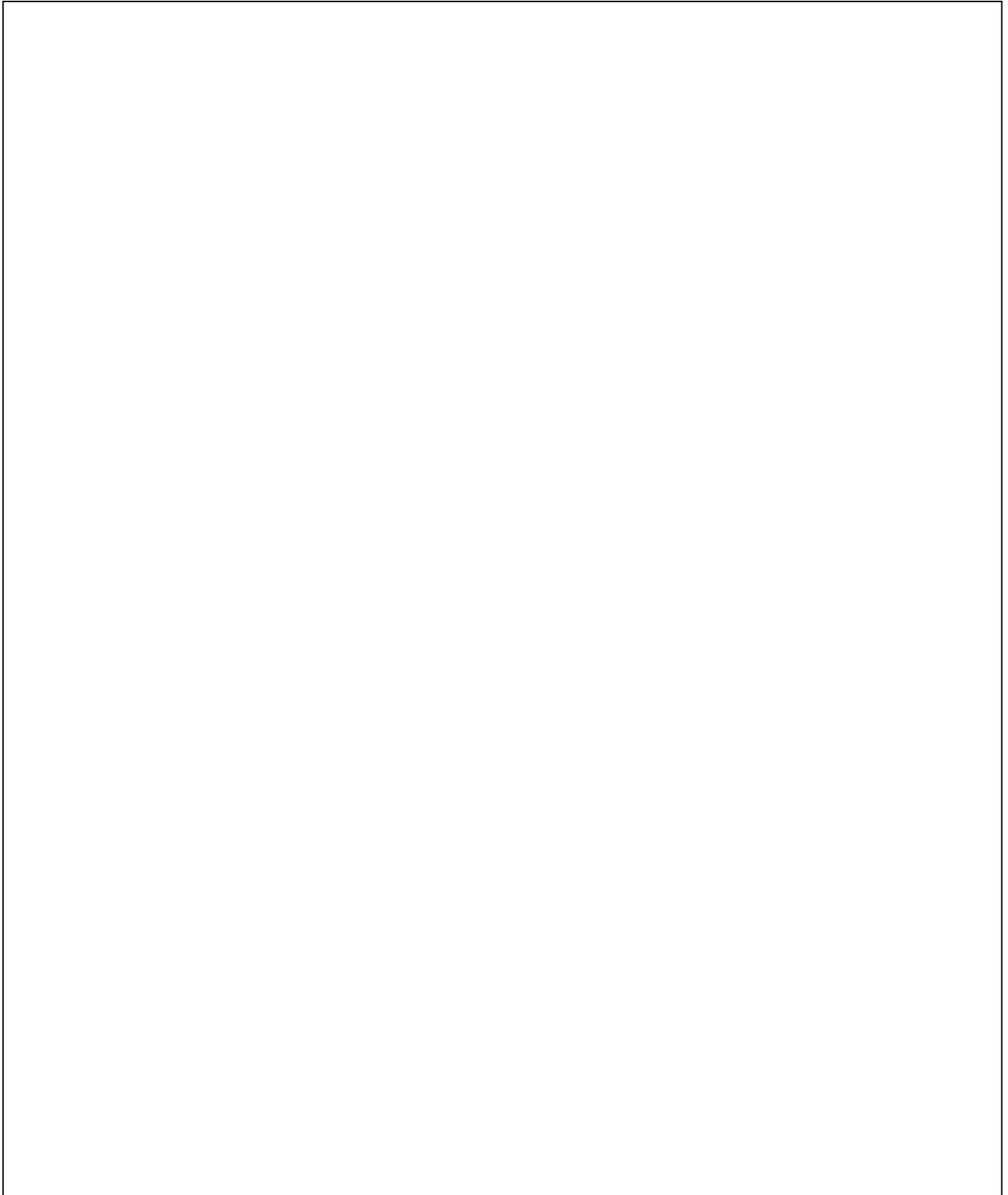
14. Describe the categories of intended producer and landowner participants. (See definition of producer in Appendix A).

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15. Natural Resource Objectives and Actions

A. Identify the specific primary natural resource concern and any secondary resource concerns to be addressed through the project. Provide details about the natural resource concern(s) to be addressed and how the concern(s) were identified.

B. List the proposed objectives and how the objectives will address the identified resource concerns. Objectives should be specific, measurable, achievable, and results-oriented. Include a timeline for completion and demonstrate cost effective use of agency, partner, and producer resources. Describe how objectives will lead to environmental outcomes and how the applicant will measure these outcomes. Environmental outcomes should consider either local or regional resource concerns and priorities, or both, as appropriate for the fund pool (CCA, National, or State).

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16. For each objective, identify the actions to be completed to achieve the objective and to address the identified natural resource concern, Note which actions are to be addressed through this project using NRCS program assistance and which actions are being addressed through non-Federal funding sources or other resources provided.

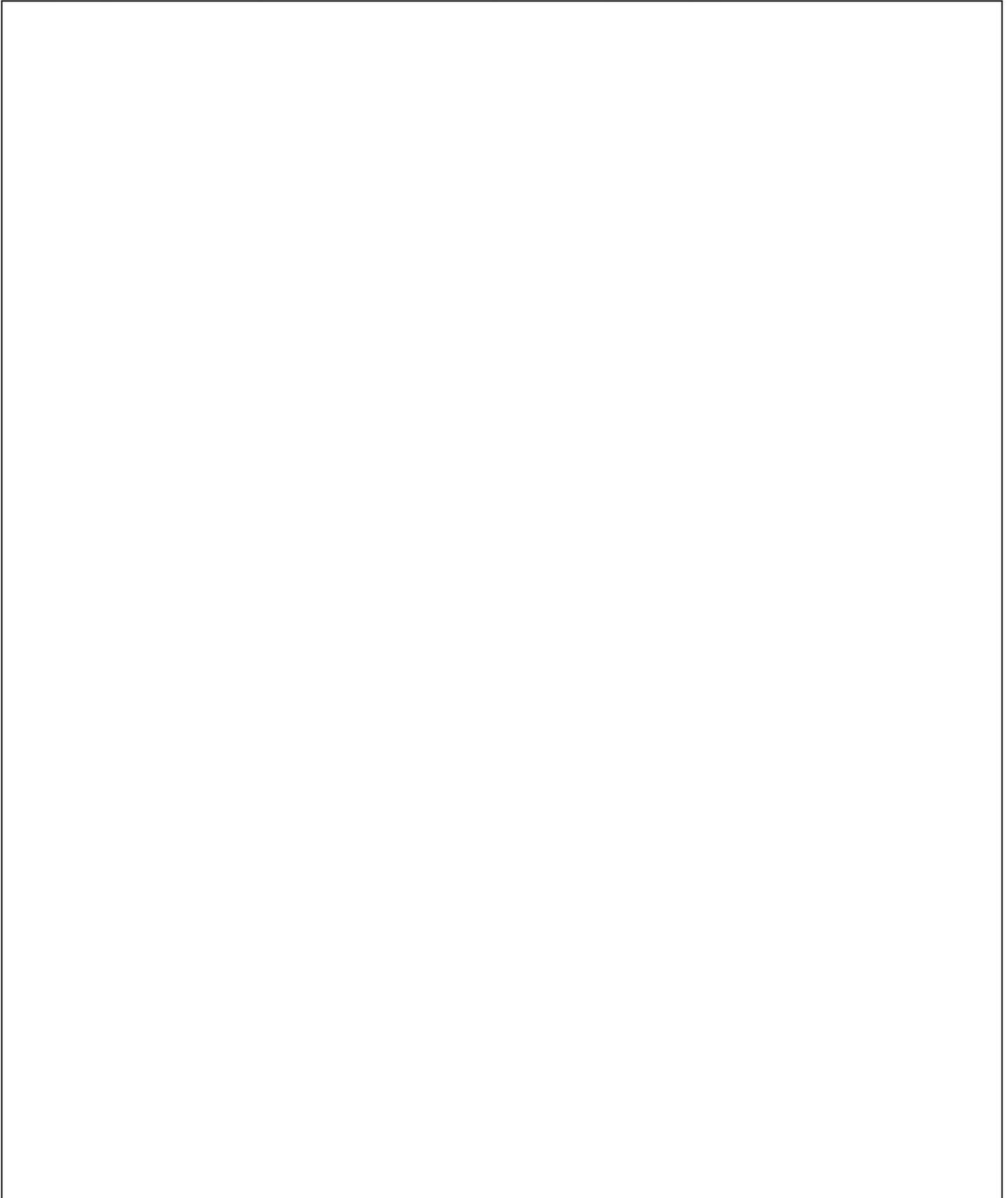
17. Briefly describe the major land uses of the area with special emphasis on the lands that will be included in the project.

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18. Briefly describe why the particular area was chosen, including the scientific basis for choosing the area (e.g., high levels of nutrient yields in a locally, regionally, or nationally significant water body; the area contains know habitat for an endangered or listed species; the area has experienced significant land-use change from agriculture to other uses; the area has a history of flooding or drought, etc.) and why targeted conservation in this area will contribute to CCA, national or State priorities.

19. Describe the cost-effectiveness of the proposed approach in terms of achieving the stated goals of the project. Briefly describe whether and how the application contributes to the efficient use of funding compared to at least one alternative approach, which may include an “as is” scenario describing the cost-effectiveness of current program delivery in the project area. The Lead Partner is encouraged to consider other alternative approaches to achieving the stated goals of the project and the relative cost-effectiveness of these approaches, and why the applicants chose the approach described in the application. Describe how you will target lands most critical to achieving the primary resource concern objectives within the project area. Consider how this might affect the cost effectiveness of your approach.

20. A description of the project timeline, not to exceed 5 years in length, and a project implementation schedule which details when the potential Lead Partner anticipates finishing the project and submitting annual reports and final report. To simplify description of the project's timeline, consider using a Gantt or similar bar chart to illustrate the timing for implementing project conservation actions, complying with NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act), reporting dates, monitoring schedule, outreach meetings, and other pertinent project activities.

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21. Description and extent of the conservation activity plans, conservation practices, enhancements, wetland restoration activities, easement acquisition activities, and other partner activities, by program, to be implemented during the project timeframe and the general sequence of implementation of the project. Include partner contributed TA efforts and those that the partner requests NRCS provide using eligible approved conservation practices and enhancements. List easement acquisition activities to be implemented by the partners and how they will be submitted by the partners/applicants to NRCS for review and approval. Describe any activities that are innovative or include outcome-based performance measures implemented by the partner.

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22. A description of the plans for assessing and evaluating the results of the project along with plans for reporting on progress to achieve the objectives of the application. Priority will be given to projects where the Lead Partner can provide resources or services or conduct activities to evaluate effects of conservation practices and activities implemented through the project.

23. Lead Partners should consider different approaches for evaluating project outcomes and propose the best approach given partner resources and capacity. Approaches may include, but are not limited to, the following: identification of issues of concern and related priority source areas within a watershed, followed by an assessment of relevant conservation implemented in the critical areas to address the identified resource concern(s); monitoring at field or applicable broader scale (e.g., watershed designated critical habitat) to document the effects of conservation practices installed; or simulation modeling to estimate practice effects.

24. Identify potential criteria to be used by NRCS to evaluate and rank agricultural producers' or landowners' RCPP program applications in the project area that are linked to NRCS' overarching metrics for judging the success of the RCPP program: solutions, contributions, innovation, and participation. Those criteria should reflect local priorities in addressing the primary resource concern as well as local considerations for conservation implementation. For all applications (CCA, national, and State), potential Lead Partners should collaborate with the appropriate NRCS State Conservationist(s) or his or her designee to develop these criteria. For approved projects, this joint effort will help NRCS select covered program applications that will best accomplish the project's intended conservation goals and address priority resource concerns identified by the Lead Partner in the application. Additional information regarding the process NRCS uses to evaluate and rank individual applications is found in each of the covered programs regulations. (See list of NRCS State Conservationists and their addresses in Appendix B).

25. An estimate of the percentage of eligible producers and landowners in the project area who may participate in the project, along with an estimate of the total number of participants located in the project area. Include a description of how the Lead Partner will provide for outreach to producers with special emphasis on beginning farmers or ranchers, limited resource farmers or ranchers, socially disadvantaged farmers or ranchers, eligible veteran farmers or ranchers, and Tribal producers and how many are expected to participate in the project.

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26. Describe the partner's or partners' history of working with agricultural producers or landowners to address the conservation objectives to be achieved.

27. Describe any barriers expected in working with landowners to adopt conservation, and how those barriers will be addressed. Explain how the Lead Partner will encourage participation to guarantee success of the project. Identify any groups of producers who may submit joint applications to address resource issues of common interest and need. Describe how the Lead Partner will assist producers in applying for NRCS programs, including acting on the behalf of a producer at the producer's request. Demonstrate the applicants' ability to conduct outreach and to gain the cooperation of producers in the targeted area.

28. If applicable, indicate how the project will help producers in the area in “assisting producers in meeting or avoiding the need for natural resource regulatory requirements.” Section 1271B(d)(4)(A) of the 1985 Act. Briefly describe the regulation or potential regulation; the impact or potential impact of the regulation on producers, including any economic impact or impact on production; what mechanism (e.g., State-level or “safe-harbor” agreement or Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances) will allow project activities to be considered under the regulation.

29. A description of any requested adjustments of terms, including AGI waiver requests, by covered program, with an explanation of why the adjustment of terms is needed in order to achieve the objectives of the project. If a Lead Partner is requesting specific covered program flexibilities that depend on detailed participant or project information, the application must provide the needed information. Lead Partners should contact the appropriate NRCS State Conservationist, or his or her designee, to determine the specific information that may be required. (See list of NRCS State Conservationists and their addresses in Appendix B.) Please read Part I-A of the Announcement thoroughly if requesting covered program adjustments. Lead Partners should contact the appropriate NRCS STC, or his or her designee, regarding potential adjustments being sought to determine if they are allowable. The National Office will review requests for adjustment of terms; and base approval of those requests on how the proposed adjustments meet statutory requirements, intent, and priorities of the program.

30. If the project will request an alternative funding arrangement, include a detailed description of the proposed arrangement. Include how the proposed arrangement will meet all requirements for: RCPP; applicable covered programs; and participating individuals and entities, specifically eligibility conditions, payment limitations, Adjusted Gross Income requirements, conservation compliance requirements, and contract implementation requirements. Note any proposed NRCS roles as outlined in section III.C. Detailed information on proposed alternative funding arrangements may be provided as an attachment to the project proposal and may be in addition to the required documents. More details on specific requirements of alternative funding arrangement proposals will be provided to selected preproposals.

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31. If the proposal includes any activities that are not covered by one of the NRCS conservation practice standards, briefly identify the beneficial and adverse effects of those activities on affected natural resources (soil, water, air, plants, and animals) and specially statutorily protected resources (e.g., cultural and historic resources, wetlands, threatened and endangered species, etc.). NEPA regulations at 40 CFR parts 1500-1508 and the NRCS regulations implementing NEPA at 7 CFR part 650, require that an environmental review and appropriate documentation be prepared for all Federal actions. As part of the application packet, applicants conducting activities other than NRCS conservation practices are required to provide environmental information pertaining to their project to help NRCS determine the appropriate NEPA documentation. If project actions are covered by an existing NEPA document, provide the name of the document, a link, or indicate how a copy can be obtained. NRCS may require applicants to provide additional information or otherwise assist the agency, if it requires such information or assistance, to ensure that the Federal funding meets environmental requirements. Applicants need to work with State Conservationists to ensure NEPA requirements are met. NRCS cannot approve funding until the environmental review requirements demonstrating compliance with NEPA are met. The NEPA process and associated permitting can be a lengthy process and should be accounted for in the project budget, schedule of activities, and project timeline (Appendix F 19.). Note: Applications for projects with potentially adverse impacts may need to be modified in order to achieve acceptable and beneficial levels of environmental impacts. NRCS may choose not to approve funding for projects that may result in unacceptable adverse environmental impacts.

32. For projects requesting use of watershed authorities, identify the Project Sponsor, any existing watershed plans and NEPA documents pertaining to the proposed watershed activity and provide the name of the documents, a link, or indicate how copies can be obtained.

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