MN CREP
CP2 (Native Grasses)
Environmental Benefits Scoring Sheet Instructions
05/12/2025

Scoring Process for MN CREP Applications

Scoring is used to compare the environmental benefits of MN CREP applications fairly and consistently. Applications are only scored against others with the same conservation practice type.

To ensure accuracy, follow the provided instructions when completing the scoring sheet:

- Carefully review the guidelines before filling out the form.
- The score sheet will automatically calculate the total score.
- If an "Error" message appears, too many checkboxes have been selected—adjust accordingly to clear the error.

Question 1: Habitat Complex Size

To determine the habitat complex size, calculate the total acreage of the MN CREP application along with any permanently protected habitat that is immediately adjacent (directly touching) the offered land. Include acreage from any additional **CREP** applications submitted simultaneously, **or that have already been accepted.**

Permanent Habitat (or Permanently Protected Land) shall mean those areas that are permanently protected or soon will be protected, including but not limited to: Approved CRP contracts as a part of this MN CREP, DNR WMAs, SNA's, Public Waters/Wetlands, USFWS WPAs, State and Federal Wildlife Refuges, Nature Conservancy Preserves and Managed Areas, State and National Forests, perpetual RIM, WRP, and USFWS Conservation Easements, etc.

This should not include CRP lands or lands enrolled in other short-term conservation programs.

Question 2: Acres of permanent habitat within 1.5 miles of the CP2 offered area

Using the definition for permanently protected lands from question 1. Calculate the total number of acres of permanently protected habitat within 1.5 miles of the proposed application boundary.

ArcPro Instructions:

1. In the "Map" tab under the "Selection" group, click "Clear" to unselect any currently selected features.
2. Right-click on the proposed boundary shapefile under the "Contents" pane → "selection" → "Select All"
3. Navigate to the "Edit" tab → Use the dropdown under the "Tools" group to select the "Buffer" tool under the "Construct" category.
4. A "Modify Features" pane will be displayed. Here, the selected features can be changed, if needed.
5. Select a template from a layer in the contents menu that will be used to draw the buffer of the boundary.
6. "Buffer Distance": Set to 1.5 miles ("mi") → "Rings" will stay set at 1.
7. Click the "Buffer" button at the bottom of the "Modify Features" pane. A "Show Preview" option is also available to ensure the buffer has been created correctly before running the "Buffer" operation.
8. Your 1.5 mi buffer will now appear. You can optionally save your edits to retain the buffer.

ArcMap Instructions:

Enable the "editor" toolbar: Customize > Toolbars > Editor
With the editing toolbar selector, select your CREP easement boundary shapefile/layer
On the editor toolbar, select "Editor" and then "Start Editing"
If a dialog appears, choose your CREP easement boundary shapefile/layer and hit "OK"
On the editor toolbar, select "Editor" and then "Buffer"

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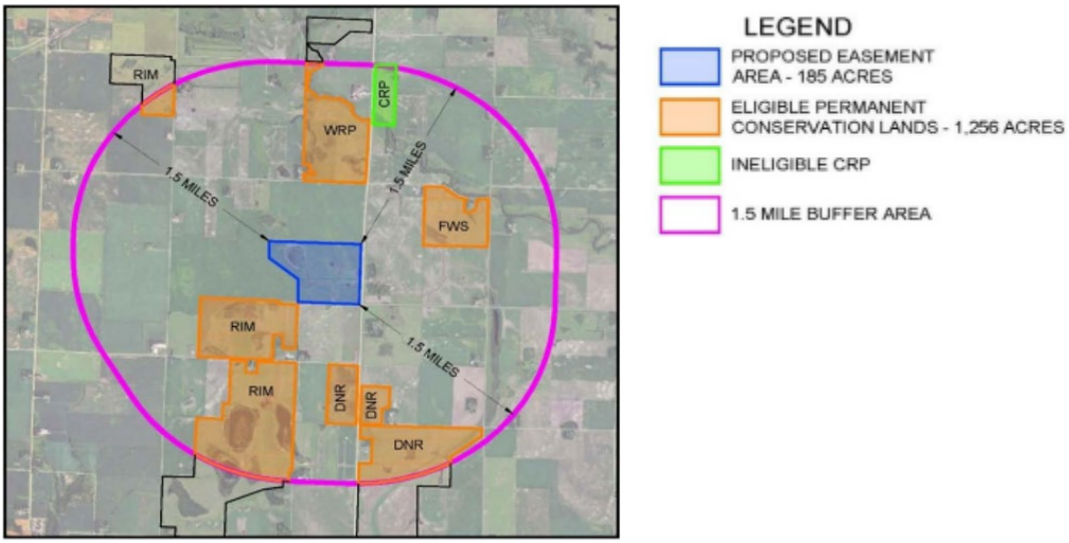
Click “Template” and again choose your CREP boundary shapefile/layer and hit “OK”
Under Distance, enter exactly “1.5mi” including the units
Your 1.5-mile buffer will now appear. You can optionally save your edits to retain the buffer.



Question 3: Wildlife Action Network (WAN) Score

Use the WAN GIS layer found on the MN CREP for SWCDs web page under the Geospatial Resources accordion. This layer can also be found under the Easements -> Geospatial Resources web page.

The Minnesota DNR developed the WAN layer using 10 data layers to assess aquatic and terrestrial habitat quality statewide. Five layers with near-complete statewide coverage were used to rank areas from poor to excellent. WAN highlights key biological areas to guide conservation efforts against threats like climate change, invasive species, and habitat loss. By preserving large, connected areas, the network supports biodiversity and enhances conservation effectiveness in addressing population declines.

If the proposed application boundary includes multiple wildlife action network scoring thresholds, score the majority of the offered area and assign the corresponding score.

Question 4: Minnesota Biological Survey (MBS) Rating OR Adjacency to Remnant Prairie

The MBS layer can be found on the MN CREP for SWCDs web page under the Geospatial Resources accordion. This layer can also be found under the Easements -> Geospatial Resources web page.

If the proposed application boundary includes multiple MBS scoring thresholds, score the highest ranking within the offered area and assign the corresponding score.

The MBS was developed to improve our understanding of the distribution and status of the state's flora, fauna, and native plant communities, including mapping all known remaining native prairies. To account for remnant prairies not yet mapped in the MBS layer, we included an option to consider the adjacency of the MN CREP application to existing remnant prairie, allowing for additional protection through the proposed application.

Question 5: Additional Wildlife Benefits

The Additional Wildlife Benefits layer can be found on the MN CREP for SWCDs web page under the Geospatial Resources accordion. This layer can also be found under the Easements -> Geospatial Resources web page.

If the proposed application boundary includes multiple additional wildlife benefit scoring thresholds, score the majority of the offered area and assign the corresponding score.

Question 6: Riparian Adjacency

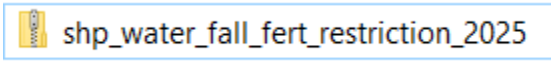
What type of water resource is the land adjacent to, or what type of water resource does this proposed application drain to first when it leaves this property? Pick the highest scoring option if multiple situations apply. Not applicable situations may include flat landscapes with little-to-no runoff, but most situations should fit into a scoring category.

Question 7: Vulnerable Groundwater Areas

The Vulnerable Groundwater layer for the purposes of answering this question can be found on the MN CREP for SWCDs web page under the Geospatial Resources accordion. This layer can also be found under the Easements -> Geospatial Resources web page. You can also download the data direct form this link: https://gisdata.mn.gov/dataset/water-fall-fert-restriction-2025. There are 7 total layers in this layer package, but only "Coarse Texture Soils" and "Karst" are needed for scoring and ranking

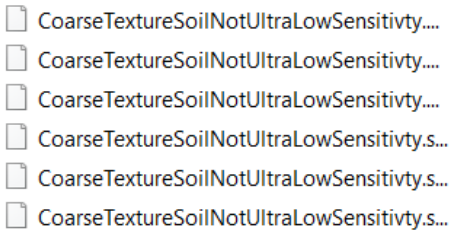
1. **Download the Shapefile**

2. **Save as compressed (zip) folder:**

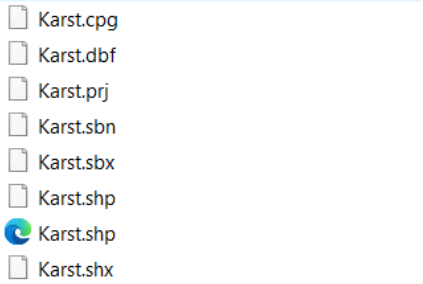


3. **Extract layer from compressed folder**

4. **Add Coarse Texture and Karst Shapefiles to ArcPro:**
   - **Coarse Texture Files:**



   - **Karst Files:**



This GIS layer was developed by the MN Department of Agriculture (MDA). It identifies areas with vulnerable groundwater which are areas with coarse textured soils where nitrates can move easily through soil and into groundwater, contaminating drinking water sources. Coarse Textured Soils were extracted from SSURGO: https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/resources/data-and-reports/soil-survey-geographic-database-ssurgo.

If any portion of the proposed application boundary encompasses vulnerable groundwater areas (coarse texture soil and/or karst areas), score this question "yes."

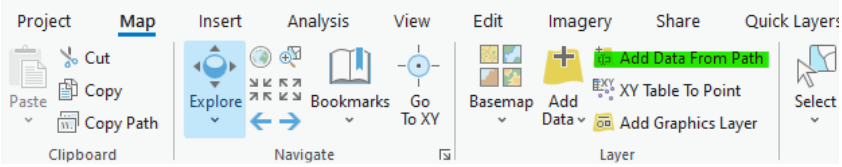
Question 8: Important Areas for Surface Drinking Water

The Important Areas for Surface Drinking Water layer can be found on the MN CREP for SWCDs web page under the Geospatial Resources accordion. This layer can also be found under the Easements -> Geospatial Resources web page.

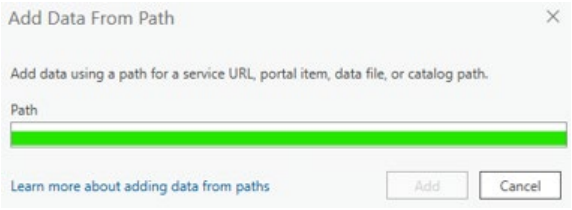
Or use this URL to add a data path directly from the online source:
https://apps.fs.usda.gov/arcx/rest/services/EDW/EDW_ForeststoFaucets_02/MapServer

To add data to ArcGIS PRO, add the data path (screenshots highlighted in green below)

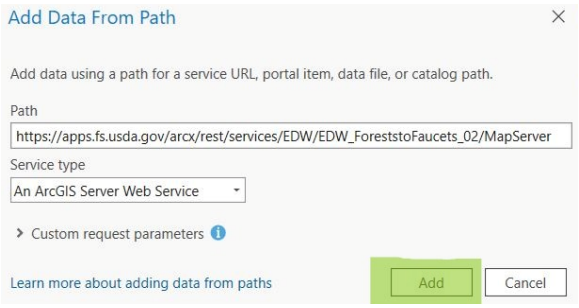
1.



2.



3.



If any portion of the proposed application boundary encompasses an Important Area for Surface Drinking Water with a score of 71 or higher, score this question with 8 points.

USDA's "Forests to Faucets" research identifies important watersheds for drinking water supply based on the population served, vegetated cover, riparian condition, and hydrology. The tool can also assess threats to water supply under current and future climate and land uses conditions, offering information for protecting or restoring forests that are important for drinking water

Question 9: Crop Productivity Index (CPI)

The Natural Resources Conservation Service provides maps and tables of crop productivity index ratings via the Web Soil Survey. There are two methods commonly used:

1. Import a shapefile to define the area of interest in Web Soil Survey. On the Area of Interest (AOI) tab, use "Import AOI," and then select "Create AOI from Shapefile".

2. Use the Area of Interest tab to define your area of interest. Navigate to an area by zooming in on a map or by selecting from a quick navigation choice list. After you find the area, define it as the Area of Interest (AOI) by drawing a rectangle or polygon around it using a map tool. You must complete this step before you can go to the next steps.

Next page

Web Soil Survey: Soil Data Explorer → Suitabilities and Limitations for Use → Suitabilities and Limitations Ratings → Vegetative Productivity → Minnesota Crop Productivity Index (not "Crop Productivity Index")→ Select “View Rating” button

Use the **predominant soil type within the area of interest to score this question**

More information on the Minnesota CPI can be found here: https://www.mngeo.state.mn.us/chouse/soil_cpi.html

Question 10: Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan (CWMP) Considerations

List a page number of the plan or draft plan, and include a description of how this easement contributes to a priority/goal/other aspect of the CWMP