

WRRSP Project Planning Outline and Guidance

This guidance integrates planning work that has to be completed for WRRSP project nominations with planning work that has to be completed for WRRSP projects as a prerequisite to the award of loan assistance or the disbursement of funds for habitat restoration.

For projects involving protection of habitat, or restoration of habitat in those cases where all necessary restoration activities can be defined prior to loan award, a final plan will be prepared and approved prior to loan award. For projects where the responsible entity must acquire land in order to have the access necessary to identify specific restoration measures needed, a restoration/protection plan will be prepared prior to loan award which contains an abbreviated implementation plan (Section VIII). A final implementation plan will then be prepared subsequent to loan award and acquisition of the property. In this circumstance the restoration plan prepared before loan award will address all of the items in the following outline, with the exception of those items identified as being part of the final implementation plan submitted after loan award, under VIII A below.

Please note that the following outline is intended as a guide to what the contents of a project plan should be. For individual projects, either more or less information may be needed based on the specific project circumstances. Applicants are therefore encouraged to meet with Ohio EPA, DEFA staff to define the scope of planning before starting preparation of the plan.

In the following outline, items also addressed in WRRSP project nominations are denoted by an asterisk (*).

- I. Plan Summary
 - A. A synopsis of the contents of the plan, focusing on the selected alternative and the implementation section of the plan.
- II. Description of Water Resources to be Protected/Restored
 - A. Identification and Location of Water Resources*
 - 1. HUC 12 identification number¹
 - 2. Location Map for Project Area Within Ohio
 - 3. High Quality Topographic Maps detailing the Project Area

¹ HUC (Hydrologic Unit Code) is a system of numbering watersheds for identification developed by the United States Geological Survey. A HUC 12 is a 12-digit code.

B. Overview of Water Resources

1. Using A above, provide descriptive information for the HUC 12 unit and the waterbody segment, which contains the project area such as found in the biological and water quality monitoring assessments found on Ohio EPA's website² and from firsthand observations of the project site.* In the case of wetlands, discuss the setting/connection with other water bodies or groundwater and vegetative classification.
2. Identify assigned beneficial uses, anti-degradation categories referring to Ohio Water Quality Standards³. In the case of wetlands, indicate ORAM score, wetland regulatory category and acreage. *
3. Identify the current status of the water resources relative to meeting designated aquatic life uses or, in the case of wetlands, category 3⁴.

C. Biological Features of the Water Resource*

1. Rare, threatened, or endangered plant and animal species
2. Invasive, non-native species and their potential impacts
3. Current habitat quality of the resource in question
4. Other important/unique environmental features or resources

III. Description of Surrounding Land Use*

A. Land Cover Description

1. Identify percentages of different categories of land use within the HUC 12, as well as within the project area.
2. Identify currently protected lands within the HUC 12 and project area.
3. Discuss the status and trends of land use and describe how these may affect water quality and aquatic habitat in the future.

IV. Identification of Key Issues Related to Support of Aquatic Life Uses or Wetland Category 3*

A. Making reference to QHEI, HHEI, or ORAM,⁵ provide a narrative description

²This information can be found at: http://epa.ohio.gov/dsw/document_index/psdindx.aspx.

³Standards based on designated uses provided in the Ohio Administrative Code for waterbodies in Ohio.

⁴Wetlands are designated, as provided in the Ohio Administrative Code, as either category 1, 2 or 3 wetlands. Category 3 wetlands are the highest quality wetlands in Ohio.

⁵QHEI (Qualitative Habitat Evaluation Index), HHEI (Headwater Habitat Evaluation Index) and ORAM (Ohio Rapid Assessment Method) are indices developed by Ohio EPA for determining habitat quality and/or type of water resources.

of past habitat modifications or other problems relating to habitat either threatening or preventing attainment of aquatic life use, or for wetlands, attainment of category 3.

- B. Describe the origins of impairments or threats, including both point and nonpoint sources, relating these to what is known about the current status and trends of the water resource in question.
- C. Identify and describe the history of previous water quality improvement efforts in the watershed
- D. Identify and describe current efforts that are occurring in the watershed which will help meet water quality standards, especially aquatic life designated uses or, in the case of wetlands, category 3. If an Ohio EPA-approved TMDL or WAP exists for the area, relate the current efforts to the implementation recommendations of the report.
- E. Develop a problem/issue statement regarding habitat integrity, related to attainment or maintenance of aquatic life use or wetland category 3, which takes into account A-D above and surrounding land uses as covered in III. above.

V. Restoration/Protection Objective*

- A. Based on the problem/issue statement regarding habitat integrity, and the causes identified for either non-attainment or threats to attainment of aquatic life use or, in the case of wetlands, attainment of category 3, describe the habitat restoration/protection objectives for the WRRSP project.
 - 1. If the project is in an area covered by either a TMDL⁶ or WAP⁷ that has been approved by Ohio EPA, indicate whether the restoration/protection objective regarding habitat integrity is consistent with the findings of this planning document.

VI. Alternatives to Achieve Restoration/Protection Objective

⁶TMDL (Total Maximum Daily Load) plans are comprehensive plans prepared for watersheds, which are prepared and adopted by Ohio EPA and local watershed groups to meet the requirements of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act (a.k.a., Clean Water Act). Further information on TMDLs in Ohio can be found at <http://www.epa.ohio.gov/dsw/tmdl/index.aspx>.

⁷WAPs (Watershed Action Plan) are locally developed plans for watersheds done either separately or in conjunction with TMDL plans. These plans follow planning guidelines developed by Ohio EPA, Division of Surface Water.

- A. Develop alternatives to meet the identified habitat needs which will achieve the stated restoration/protection objective. The alternatives should address the following items.
 - 1. For projects involving land acquisition, a comparison of fee simple land acquisition versus conservation easements.
 - 2. For projects involving habitat restoration and protection, different feasible alternative methods of restoring habitat should be considered.
 - 3. For projects involving protection of existing high-quality habitat, different management methods for protection should be considered.
 - 4. For projects involving potential acquisition of several properties within a defined corridor area, identify alternative acquisition/protection strategies.
 - 5. Develop preliminary cost estimates for all identified alternatives
 - 6. Identify, for all alternatives developed, the different parties that would be responsible for their implementation, indicating what the relationship would be between the parties relative to ownership of property rights and management responsibilities.
 - 7. If the project is located in a watershed with an Ohio EPA-approved TMDL or WAP, identify for alternatives developed whether or not they are included in the plans recommended measures for implementation.

VII. Selected Alternative and Basis for Selection

- A. Based on a comparison of costs and the effectiveness of the different alternatives at achieving the restoration/protection objective, select the alternative which best achieves the objective at a reasonable cost.
- B. If the project is located in a watershed with an Ohio EPA-approved TMDL or WAP, identify whether or not the selected alternative is included in the plans recommended measures for implementation.

VIII. Implementation Plan for Selected Alternative

- A. For all projects, the implementation plan should address the following items.
 - 1. Identify the parties responsible for implementing the project. This should include the: 1) sponsor(s), 2) owner(s) of the property(ies), 3) entity(ies) responsible for restoration of the property(ies) and 4) the entity(ies) responsible for the perpetual management of the property(ies).
 - 2. The qualifications of the parties responsible for restoration work and perpetual management of properties should be identified.
 - 3. Identify the agreements that will be put in place between the different responsible parties. These would typically include: the sponsorship

agreement, and the environmental covenant agreement or conservation easements.

4. A detailed description of the tasks that will be performed to complete the project.
 5. A detailed, line item budget for the project must be provided. The budget should specifically identify the costs for: land acquisition, restoration activities, and administration costs such as legal and appraisal expenses. Within these categories, the budget should break out the following costs: personnel, non-personnel, contractors and consultants, materials, equipment and labor. A format for the budget is provided in Appendix A to this outline.
 6. A schedule for completion of the identified tasks, indicating by month the estimated time necessary for completing each task, as well as the entire project. This schedule should fit within the generally estimated time frame for construction and the one-year operation/certification period for the wastewater treatment facilities loan being used to sponsor the WRRSP project.
 7. A plan for perpetual management of the properties. This plan should identify: a) who will be responsible for property management and the qualifications of their staff to undertake such work; b) the standards and management techniques that will be used to manage the properties to ensure that habitat quality is permanently maintained; and c) how property management will be funded.
 8. A plan for monitoring properties. Follow-up monitoring should provide information on the success of restoration work, as well as the habitat quality of restored areas, addressing the following elements: a) the amount of acreage finally restored, including acreages of the various habitat types; b) for streams, the resulting QHEI value for the restored or protected habitats; c) for wetlands, the ORAM score for the restored or protected habitats; and d) if available, the aquatic life use of the restored or protected water resources. The plan should provide for annual reporting on the progress of restoration work and on protection of habitats.
- B. For projects involving either 1) fee simple land acquisition or 2) acquisition of a conservation easement for properties defined at the time of plan preparation, an appraisal of the property must be provided by a certified appraiser.
1. For fee simple land acquisition, the appraisal should identify the fair market value of the property, based on an analysis of the property and sales of comparable properties in the local area.
 2. For easement acquisition, the appraisal should identify the fair market value of the property rights being acquired through the conservation easement and the value of the residual rights retained by the property

- owner, based on an analysis of the property and sales of comparable properties in the local area.
3. For all properties, a title search of the property should be assembled and provided, along with an attorney=s opinion identifying all encumbrances on the title and the effect of the encumbrances on the property restrictions to be applied, as applicable, through either an environmental covenant or conservation easement.
- C. For projects involving acquisition of a number of potential properties within a defined corridor (termed corridor projects), the following items should be addressed in lieu of B above.
1. Provide the long-term acquisition and restoration/protection strategy for the corridor. This should encompass both earlier and later acquisition efforts and acquisition efforts by other entities.
 2. Define the criteria to be used for selection of properties for acquisition within the corridor area, based on achieving the restoration/protection goals for the corridor.
 3. Identify priority properties for acquisition, based on the selection criteria and the availability of properties at the time of plan preparation.
 4. Identify the monetary value of the priority properties, based either on appraisals, comparable sales, or another equivalent valuation of property in the area. This value will be used to develop Exhibit 1-A of the loan agreement. Subsequent to loan award, at the time of acquisition of properties, either in fee simple or conservation easements, appraisals from certified appraisers will need to be provided as part of the document submitted to justify the disbursement of funds for the acquisition. The appraisals from certified appraisers should address the elements identified in B above.
 5. Provide a plat map of the corridor area, showing the boundaries of the corridor area and all properties within the corridor area. Properties identified as priorities for purchase should be shown, along with priority sequence for WRRSP funding, on the map.
- D. For projects involving restoration, where restoration plans can only be completed after land acquisition is completed, the preliminary implementation plan submitted prior to loan award will cover in detail the items in A above through item 3 and also addressing items 4-8 to the extent possible. A final implementation plan will then be completed and submitted after land acquisition, completely addressing items 4-8.

Appendix A

WRRSP Project Budget Outline

The primary purpose of the WRRSP budget is to provide enough detail of the tasks and costs expected to be incurred by the implementer in implementing the WRRSP project to allow the Ohio EPA to determine that the tasks and costs are reasonable and within the eligible scope of the WRRSP project. The budget also provides a baseline upon which to monitor disbursements of WRRSP funds.

Generally, WRRSP projects include land acquisition and/or stream/wetland restoration. The associated costs can include tasks performed by the implementer itself and/or costs incurred by the implementer such as land acquisition, administrative and legal fees and/or activities the implementer has contracted out to another party.

The budget outline must provide a narrative description of the tasks to be completed and the costs for each. Additionally, the tasks must be broken down into three primary categories, as appropriate, and presented on a project budget outline as follows:

A. Implementer/Personnel (brief description of each and cost/item)

1. Salaries/Wages (indicate how the amount is calculated)
2. Benefits (should be a percentage of salaries/wages)

B. Implementer/Non-Personnel (brief description of each and cost/item)

1. Materials (e.g. trees, plants, grass seed, riprap)
2. Equipment (e.g. bulldozer/backhoe rental)
3. Administrative/Legal Fees (e.g. title searches, closing costs)
4. Property (number of parcels and estimated cost/parcel)

C. Implementer Contracted Services (brief description of each and cost/contract)

1. Consultants (cost/task)
2. Restoration Work (cost/task)
3. Other (Cost/task)