

National Ranking Criteria (Must be 200 points Maximum)		
National Ranking Factors and Scaling	Max. Points	Points
<p>1. Percent of prime, unique, and important farmland in the parcel to be protected Instructions: Assign 1 point for each 1% of Prime farmland and 0.5 points for each 1% percent Statewide important farmland. Maximum points is 20. Assign 0 points for all other soil types. If there is a split in the total percentage, round down. Example: Parcel has 30% prime (30 points) and 35% Statewide (17.5 points) = 48 points, but since 20 points are the maximum points awarded for this criterion, the points scored is equal to 20.</p>	20	
<p>2. Percentage change in the acres of permanent grassland, pasture, and rangeland, other than cropland and woodland pasture, in the county in which the parcel is located between the last two USDA Censuses of Agriculture (USDA - NASS - Census of Agriculture) Instructions: Referencing the Census table in the Appendix, assign 0 points for any increase in permanent grassland, pasture, and rangeland, assign 3 points for a change (decrease) of -0.1% to -10%; assign 5 points for a change (decrease) of -11% to -20%, assign 10 points for a change (decrease) of -21% to -100%</p>	10	
<p>3. Percent of cropland, pastureland, grassland, and rangeland in the parcel to be protected (i.e., open land). Use the online mapping tool and select the Imagery base map to provide an estimate). Instructions: Assign 0.33 points for each 1% of open land in the parcel. If there is a split in the total percentage, round down. Maximum of 10 points Example: Parcel has 30% open land = 10 points</p>	10	
<p>4. Ratio of the total acres of land in the parcel to be protected to average farm size in the county according to the most recent USDA Census of Agriculture. (USDA - NASS - Census of Agriculture) Instructions: Please see appendix where the average farm size is listed for each county and follow instructions to calculate points based on the size of the applicant's parcel(s). Assign 0 points for a ratio of 1 or less, 15 points for ratio of 1 or more</p>	15	
<p>5. Decrease in the percentage of acreage of farm in the county in which the parcel is located between the last two USDA Censuses of Agriculture (USDA - NASS - Census of Agriculture). Please see appendix where points are pre-calculated for each county. Instructions: Referencing the attached table, assign 0 points for a decrease (-) of 0 percent or less, 10 points for decreases of 0 to 5 percent, 15 points for a decrease (-) of 5 percent or more. An increase in percentage (+) receives 0 points.</p>	15	
<p>6. Percent population growth in the county as documented by the most recent United States Census (Census Bureau Home Page) Instructions: Referencing the attached table, assign 0 points for growth rate of less than the State growth rate, 2 points for growth rate of 1X to 25X the State growth rate, 5 points for growth rate of 25X to 50X the State growth rate, 10 points for a growth rate of more than 50X the State growth rate</p>	10	
<p>7. Population density (population per square mile) as documented by the most recent United States Census (Census Bureau Home Page) Instructions: Referencing the attached table, assign 0 points for population density less than the State population density, 5 points for population density of 1X to 2X times the State population density, 10 points for a population density of 2X or more</p>	10	
<p>8. The existence of a farm succession plan or similar plan established to address farm viability for future generations. Instructions: Assign 0 points for no written plan, assign 15 points for an existing written plan or if the applicant is enrolled in a program to develop a written plan.</p>	15	

<p>9. Proximity of the parcel to other protected land, including military installations, parks, National Forest, and conservation easements Instructions: Assign 0 points for less than 50 acres of other protected land within a mile of the boundaries of the parcel, 15 points for 51-100 acres of protected land within a mile of the boundaries of the parcel, 30 points for 101 acres or more of protected land within a mile of the boundaries of the parcel</p>	30	
<p>10. The proximity of the parcel to other agricultural operations and agricultural infrastructure. Instructions: Assign 10 points for less than 250 acres of agricultural land within a mile of the boundaries of the parcel, 20 points for 251-500 acres of ag. land within a mile of the boundaries of the parcel, 30 points for 501 acres or more of agricultural land within a mile of the boundaries of the parcel</p>	30	
<p>11. Parcels ability to maximize the protection of contiguous acres devoted to agricultural use Instructions: Assign 20 points if the parcel will be contiguous with another protected or conserved parcel(s) on one side, 30 points if the parcel will be contiguous with other protected or conserved parcels on 2 or more sides, 0 points if the parcel is non-contiguous to any other protected or conserved parcels</p>	30	
<p>12. Currently enrolled in CRP in a contract that is set to expire within a year Instructions: Assign 3 points for Yes, 0 points for No</p>	3	
<p>13. The parcel is a Grassland of Special Environmental Significance that will benefit from the protection under the long-term easement. Please contact the following NRCS Conservationists directly: Obediah Racicot, Assistant State Conservationist for Programs, USDA/NRCS – Colchester, VT, (802) 951-6796 x 228, Obediah.racicot@vt.usda.gov; Rita Thibodeau, Acting Assistance State Conservationist, USDA – NRCS, Amherst, MA, (413) 253-4379, rita.thibodeau@usda.gov; Joyce Purcell, Assistant State Conservationist for Programs, USDA – NRCS – Tolland, CT, (860) 871-4028, joyce.purcell@ct.usda.gov; Brunilda Velez, Assistant State Conservationist for Programs, USDA – NRCS – Warwick, RI, (401) 822-8820, brunilda.velez@ri.usda.gov. Instructions: Assign 2 points if Yes, 0 points if No</p>	2	
<p>Total Points for National Ranking Factors</p>	200	

State/LISW-RCPP Ranking Criteria (Must be 200 points Maximum)		
State/LISW-RCPP Ranking Factors and Scaling	Max. Points	Points
SUSTAINABILITY		
<p>1. The application package contains a long-term (10+ years) forest management plan completed by a professional forester <u>and</u> a landowner statement of intent (letter) signifying their willingness to have land managed for commercial harvests or other economic gain. If the land is currently enrolled in the VT Use Value Appraisal Program (UVA), MA Chapter 61 program (Ch. 61), Connecticut PA-490 (490), or RI Farm, Forest and Open Space Program (RIGL 44-27), note this fact in the landowner statement of intent. SCALE: Active long-term forest management plan and a landowner statement of intent for land not in the UVA, Ch.61, 490, or RIGL 44-27 (both plan and statement attached) = 5 points; Active Long-term forest management plan and a landowner statement of intent for land in the UVA, Ch.61, or RIGL 44-27 (both plan and statement attached) = 10 points</p>	10	
NATURAL RESOURCE FEATURES		
<p>2. The number of acres of forestland and farmland in the LI Sound Watershed and in Vermont, Massachusetts, or Rhode Island SCALE: 0.50 points for each acre of forestland and farmland in the watershed. Any parcel with over 100 acres of farm and forestland with the LI Sound Watershed is given the maximum points.</p>	50	
<p>3. Percent of prime, unique, and important farmland in the parcel to be protected SCALE: 0.5 points for each 1% of Prime farmland and 0.1 points for each 1% percent Statewide important farmland. Assign 0 points for all other soil types. All fractions will be rounded down. The maximum score is 5 points (See Appendix for VT Waiver for Soils).</p>	5	
<p>4. Percent of cropland, pastureland, grassland, and rangeland in the parcel to be protected (i.e., open land) SCALE: 0.33 points for each 1% of open land in the parcel All fractions will be rounded down. Maximum of 5 points.</p>	5	
<p>5. The number of acres in an area defined as within 100 feet of the bank of a stream, river, or other waterbody the protection of which would contribute to overall water quality of the surface and groundwater. SCALE: 2 points for each acre of land within a 100-foot buffer as measured from the bank or high water mark associated with the surface water. Any parcel with over 10 acres in the buffer area is given the maximum points (20)</p>	20	
<p>6. Within a surface drinking water source protection area or watershed? Due to security issues, most states do not allow “drinking water source protection areas” at the parcel level to be made available to the public. In order to determine whether the parcel you are interested in conserving is located in a designated “drinking water source protection area,” please contact Kira Jacobs directly: Kira Jacobs, Source Water Protection Program, U.S. EPA, 617-918-1817, jacobs.kira@epa.gov SCALE: 0.20 points for each acre of land within a surface drinking water source protection area or watershed for a total of 20 points. Any parcel that has more than 100 acres in these water source protection areas and watersheds receives the maximum of 20 points.</p>	20	
<p>7. The number of acres in an area defined as having above average resiliency to climate change. SCALE: 0.15 points for each acre of land within a ¼ mile of an area of land with above average resiliency to climate change. Any parcel over 100 acres is given the maximum points (15)</p>	15	

<p>8. The number of acres in the parcel within or abutting high-value lands prioritized by state agencies (State Wildlife and Forest Action Plans); included in the CT River Watershed Landscape Conservation Design (connecttheconnecticut.org) Tier 1 Cores, Tier 2 Cores, or Connectors, or Nature’s Network Cores or Connectors; by Regional Conservation Partnerships or other large landscape conservation or stewardship initiatives.</p> <p>SCALE: 0.4 points for each acre of land within each of these three categories of priority habitat or forest cores or connectors. Any parcel having 100 or more acres that meet these conditions receives the maximum points of 40</p>	40	
<p>9. Parcel ability to protect high sensitivity historical or archaeological features. In order to determine whether the parcel you are interested in conserving contains “high sensitivity historical or archaeological features,” please contact the following NRCS Conservationists directly: Obediah Racicot, Assistant State Conservationist for Programs, USDA/NRCS – Colchester, VT, (802) 951-6796 x 228, Obediah.racicot@vt.usda.gov; Rita Thibodeau, Acting Assistance State Conservationist, USDA – NRCS, Amherst, MA, (413) 253-4379, rita.thibodeau@usda.gov; Joyce Purcell, Assistant State Conservationist for Programs, USDA – NRCS – Tolland, CT, (860) 871-4028, joyce.purcell@ct.usda.gov; Brunilda Velez, Assistant State Conservationist for Programs, USDA – NRCS – Warwick, RI, (401) 822-8820, brunilda.velez@ri.usda.gov. SCALE: 10 points if the parcel contains “high sensitivity historical or archaeological features.” 0 points if the parcel does not contain “high sensitivity historical or archaeological features.”</p>	10	
<p>10. Parcel ability to maximize the protection of contiguous acres devoted to forest habitat or forest products.</p> <p>SCALE: 10 points if the parcel does not abut, but is within ¼ mile of protected forest managed for forest products. 15 points if abutting other protected forestland managed for forest products. 5 points if the parcel does not abut, but is within ¼ mile of protected forest managed for forest habitat. 10 points if abutting other protected forestland managed for forest habitat. Maximum points (25) given if the parcel abuts other protected land managed both for forest products and forest habitat.</p>	25	
<p>Total Points for State Ranking Factors</p>	200	

APPENDIX

NRCS Vermont Waiver Area for Soils:

440-528.33(8)(1)(i). Land Eligibility requires that for ACEP-ALE parcels being enrolled under the Soils, category consist of at least 50 percent combination of prime, unique, or statewide important soils in order to be eligible for participation in the program. 440-528.33(8)(1)(ii) allows for the State Conservationist with the advice of the State Technical Committee, to increase or decrease the required percentage of prime, unique, or statewide important soils for a specific area or region of the state.

The majority of Vermont's prime and statewide important soils are located in the Lake Champlain and Connecticut River Valley Major Land Resource Areas MLRA 142 and 145 (For more information on MLRA locations see <http://soils.usda.gov/survey/geography/mlra/>).

Vermont's soils distribution on its topography and historically small farms have made meeting the 50 percent requirement challenging. Landowners and their productive farms outside these MLRA areas are at a competitive disadvantage for participation in ACEP-ALE under Criteria I. For farmland located outside these MLRAs to be eligible under the Vermont NRCS General Waiver, parcels submitted for consideration must contain no less than **35 percent** prime, unique, statewide or locally important soils and must include an explanation regarding one or more of the following factors:

- The viability of the farm due to size and access to market infrastructure.
- Contributions of the farm to the state's agricultural industry, or
- Conservation of compatible natural resources.

Applicants are encouraged to provide additional information for Vermont NRCS State Conservationist to consider when reviewing requests for soils waivers, specifically whether the application:

- Provides a significant environmental benefit beyond what is normally provided by these projects (ecosystem services, carbon sequestration, etc.).
- Leverages a much larger conservation project than what is specific to the application (contiguous habitat or important state lands, etc.).
- Adds a significant amount of land to an already conserved block of land.

