**Forestry BMP Verification – Principals and Protocols – June 2012 DRAFT**

At our June FWG meeting, we will be discussing how to finalize a draft of the protocols for verifying forestry BMP’s. This is the current working draft that incorporates the latest Principles as proposed by the CBP Verification Steering Committee (draft document posted to FWG website).

***Urban RFB and Urban Tree Planting BMP Principle***

1. Ensure tree planting acreage represents a ***net gain*** in overall tree cover

(This covers Verification Steering Committee Principles 1-5.)

Protocol 1: **Programmatic support**. Establish whether local jurisdiction has an urban forestry partner/staff (a.k.a. forestry program) trusted by state forestry agency—that also likely: has a UTC assessment, goal, and implementation plan, has ordinances that protect urban trees, and conducts health monitoring of urban forest and applies maintenance to newly planted trees and others in need— could receive ***full credit*** (100%) for this practice as reported. Jurisdiction should be able to ensure that trees are not required to be planted because of trees that were removed. Both a professional assessment of existing canopy (i.e., baseline survey) and established, trusted forestry program are the minimum needed to receive full credit.

* + 1. Jurisdictions without a trusted urban forestry partner/staff reporting could be discounted 40%for uncertainty of survival/net gain in tree cover
    2. An additional discount (70%) is applied if a proxy for trees “trees sold” or simply a website submission is used and trees were not viewed by a professional

Protocol 2: **Data**.

New Plantings: Maintain detailed record-keeping at local level for each project--- record details such as species (e.g., large native shade-tree or other), age at planting (whether balled and burlaped or bare-root), how planted (contract or volunteers), and

Existing urban forest:

Protocol 3: **Reporting**.

New Plantings: Simplify and standardize local information for reporting up to state and NEIEN. Need to produce a sample spreadsheet of essential information for reporting new plantings.

Existing urban forest: For the reporting period, what information can be provided that indicates trees have been maintained?

Protocol 4: **Monitoring.** For existing forest, a combination of on-the-ground monitoring can be combined with regular review (once every 3-5 years) of aerial imagery of the jurisdiction’s tree canopy

**Protocol 5: Replacement/Removal of practice from ledger**

New Plantings: Trees that do not survive will be replaced within a year or removed from reporting ledgers.

Existing urban forest:

***Agricultural Riparian Forest Buffer and Tree Planting BMP Principles***

1. Practice needs to represent a ***net gain*** in acres to count (Principle 1)

Protocol 1: **Baseline**. Ascertain RFB baseline for a given area (watershed segment or hydrogeomorphic region) using high resolution imagery and Land Image Analyst or other tool. Re-sample 10% of the area every 5-7 years to verify there has been a net gain in those watershed segments reporting such.

Protocol 2: **Review data** reported as cost-share practice to ensure proper design and no double-counting (Principle 1).

* 1. State forestry agency reviews cost-share project data from USDA/USGS prior to NEIEN input
  2. Work to establish a unique identifier for each project to avoid duplicate records
  3. Need to differentiate re-enrolled CREP acres from new CREP acres

Protocol 3: **Effectiveness**. Ensure buffers function effectively (Principle 2).

1. Non-cost shared buffers should be properly installed and maintained. Details about the planting could be documented by the responsible party.
2. Capture width of buffer in reporting documentation (not just acres of practice). Narrower buffers (>35’ and <100’) could eventually be discounted. (Side note: could NRCS/FSA begin tracking buffer length or width?)
3. 10% of new, non-cost share RFB installations should be monitored (in keeping with USDA cost-share practice)
4. Remove practice from database/model if it is no longer there
5. Revisit project every 5 years to see that there is sheet flow (no channelization through buffer)
6. Locate buffers where they are hydrologically connected-- (are we ready for this?)

***Forest Harvesting BMP Principle***

1. Forest harvest BMP rate of implementation needs to be determined every 5 years by state (e.g., sampling or survey)
   1. Could have field checklist of how practice was implemented, verified
   2. Focus on forest harvesting BMPs that are most important to water quality?
   3. States that don’t know rate of private land harvest should be discounted…
   4. If states have information on forest harvesting, they can submit acres and override the 1% harvest rate assumption
   5. States with regulations and monitoring programs in place could use that info in lieu of forest harvest BMP implementation sampling
   6. Adaptive management –BMP monitoring to determine if a practice worked (should this be incorporated into verification?)