

**NEW YORK STATE
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND MARKETS**

Ecosystem Based Management

Soil Health Mini-Grants

for the

Great Lakes Basin

&

Mohawk River Basin

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)

**Funds to improve the soil health and quality in the Great Lakes and Mohawk
River Watershed**

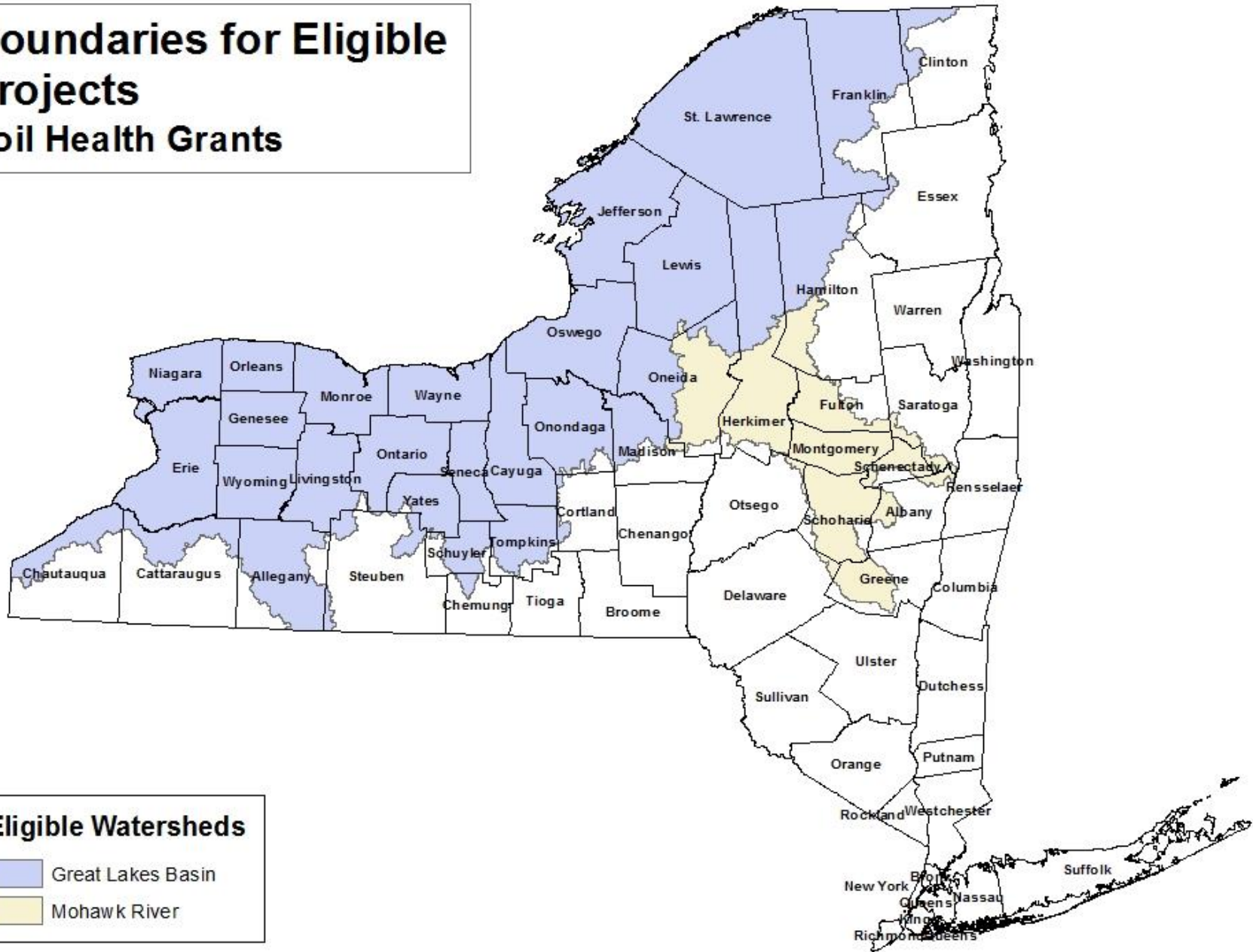
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Boundaries for Eligible Projects Map.....	3
Proposal Submission Requirements.....	4
Questions and Answers.....	4
General Program Information.....	4
Eligibility.....	6
Project Costs.....	7
Proposal Format.....	8
Project Evaluation and Scoring.....	8
Awards.....	9
Contracts.....	9
Payment.....	9
Reporting Requirements.....	10
Liability.....	10
Freedom of Information.....	10
NYS Master Contract.....	10
Other Considerations.....	11
NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation Requirements.....	11
NYS Environmental Quality Review Act Requirements.....	11
Debriefing.....	11
Workers’ Compensation and Disability Requirements.....	12
Registration Requirements for Applicants.....	12
Appendix (Application).....	13
Appendix (Application Checklist).....	16
Appendix (Ecosystem-Based Management Principles).....	18
Appendix (Proposal Evaluation Score Sheet).....	19

TIMELINE

Release RFP	June 5, 2014
Deadline for Questions	July 16, 2014
Final Questions and Answers Posted	July 18, 2014
Deadline for Proposals	July 28, 2014
Announce and Award Grants	September 2014

Boundaries for Eligible Projects Soil Health Grants



Eligible Watersheds

- Great Lakes Basin
- Mohawk River

PROPOSAL SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Proposals for funding under the Ecosystem Based Management Soil Health Mini Grants must conform to the format provided through the Grants Gateway. **PROPOSALS MUST BE SUBMITTED in the Grants Gateway by 4:30 p.m. local time on July 28, 2014** to be considered for funding. Applicants, and not computers or servers, are responsible for the timely submission of proposals. *Proposals received after the scheduled date and time will not be accepted.* Faxed, mailed or e-mailed proposals will not be accepted.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Prospective applicants with questions concerning this RFP should present those questions to:

Lauren Prezorski
New York State Soil & Water Conservation Committee
10 B Airline Drive
Albany, NY 12235
(518) 457-3738 (phone)
Lauren.prezorski@agriculture.ny.gov

All questions must be submitted in writing to Ms. Prezorski by July 3, 2014. Applicants should note that all clarifications are to be resolved prior to the submission of a proposal. A list of questions about the RFP, answers to those questions as well as any addenda to the RFP, will be added to the Frequently Asked Questions Document posted in the “Funding Opportunities” section of the Department’s website, <http://www.agriculture.ny.gov/RFPS.html>, along with the electronic version of this RFP. Questions and responses will be posted on the website starting no later than July 3, 2014 through July 11, 2014. If you are unable to access the website, please contact Ms. Prezorski to arrange for alternate delivery. All questions and answers shall be incorporated into the RFP as a formal addendum.

1. GENERAL PROGRAM INFORMATION

1.1 Introduction

This Request for Proposals (RFP) applies to proposals submitted for funding consideration from the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) Ocean and Great Lakes Initiative (Ecosystem Based Management).

The New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets (Department) and the New York State Soil and Water Conservation Committee (State Committee) invites Soil and Water Conservation Districts, or groups of Conservation Districts acting jointly, to submit proposals for funding under the Ecosystem Based Management (EBM) Program. Funds are available for soil health/quality improvement projects in the Great Lakes and Mohawk River Watersheds. All projects must consist of activities that will foster the adoption of soil health practices on farms.

1.2 Background Information

Soil health is the capacity of the soil to function. According to Ray Archuleta, Soil Health expert with the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service’s East National Technology Center, it is

“not the fertilizer, but the ecosystem that feeds the plant”. Healthy soil has better infiltration, water storage and soil cover, which allows crops to better withstand both storm events and droughts and protects the environment by reducing sediment and nutrient runoff, leaching and reducing the impacts of flooding. Soil health management involves a reduction in soil disturbance while maintaining a year-round living cover. Prescribed cover crops naturally produce the fertilizer crops require, reduce the impacts of compaction, and stabilize the soil. Healthy soils also infiltrate more water, reducing the impacts of flooding; holding the water for longer crop availability. They require less energy inputs, greater carbon sequestration and in the end, are far more profitable for the farmer. These principles together are a culmination of the principles behind Ecosystem-based Management, “healthy, productive and resilient ecosystems provide important services that people, communities and the economy need.”

Soil quality has become one of agriculture’s leading concerns on a national level. In an effort to increase the integration of the principles of ecosystem-based management into the principles of soil health, funding has been made available for the Great Lakes (includes St. Lawrence River Watershed) and Mohawk River Basins.

To support County Soil and Water Conservation Districts within these watershed boundaries in developing initiatives which align with the Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) process by being planned and implemented based on local needs, funding of up to \$25,000 per county will be available on a competitive basis to develop and implement local initiatives which support soil quality improvements.

1.3 Information for Applicants

The New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets and the New York State Soil and Water Conservation Committee are pleased to announce the availability of funds to support soil quality improvement programs. This funding comes from the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF), as part of the Ocean and Great Lakes Program (Ecosystem Based Management). Healthy soils hold tremendous potential to enhance and improve water and air quality; they are vital to the long term sustainability of our agricultural industry. For this reason, approximately \$400,000 has been allocated to support pilot efforts to build local programs and initiatives that support and encourage the adoption of soil quality improvement practices.

1.4 Available grant funding and match requirements

Approximately \$400,000 is available for Soil Health Mini-Grants with a maximum award level of \$25,000 per County. Matching funds are not required, but are strongly recommended. Portions of a project funded from other State sources will not be considered match. The Department reserves the right to award a portion of a grant request.

1.5 Match requirements

Although funding requests do not require matching funds, they are strongly encouraged.

Eligible forms of match include other grants from non-state funding sources, SWCD personnel salaries devoted to the project, if not funded with other State grant sources, overhead expenses, consultant services, supplies, materials, farmer time and labor, equipment use, etc. The cash

value of services must be reasonable, and is subject to adjustment by the Department. The State funded portion of the project cannot be increased as a result of budget changes or variations.

All applications that include match are required to complete the “Match Template” and upload the document under Program Specific Questions in order for match to be applied.

Letters of commitment from the project sponsor, all landowners/operators, employers of all personnel, and other entities providing monetary or technical assistance must be submitted. These letters should be uploaded as a single PDF document in the Grants Gateway.

2. ELIGIBILITY

2.1 Applicant eligibility

Eligible applicants are County Soil and Water Conservation Districts within the eligible geographic boundaries identified in this RFP. Partnership applications are encouraged and can include additional conservation partners or multiple Conservation Districts. Only one Conservation District can be listed as the applicant on the application form. If the project involves one or more partners, the applicant names on the application form must be an eligible applicant and must assume responsibility for entering into a state assistance contract with the Department. In addition, the application must include a letter from all participating partners stating their involvement in the proposed project. One application per County will be accepted. If multiple applications are submitted, only the first complete application will be accepted.

2.2 Project Location

Eligible projects must be located within the geographic boundaries defined below:

Great Lakes Basin Grants

“Great Lakes Basin” refers to the watersheds of Lake Erie, Lake Ontario (including the Finger Lakes) and the St. Lawrence River Watershed as identified on the map on Page 1 of this RFP.

Mohawk River Basin

“Mohawk River Basin” refers to the entire Mohawk River Watershed as identified on the map on Page 1 of this RFP.

2.3 Project Eligibility

Proposed projects must meet the following project eligibility criteria in order to be fully evaluated and scored:

- All projects must address soil quality on agricultural lands.
- Projects should demonstrate a link to the County Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) Strategy.
- Be based on sound agricultural practices and follow the AEM planning process.
- All projects must have defined measurable outcomes or deliverables.

- Must have the capability of being completed and invoiced within two years of signing a state assistance contract with the Department of Agriculture and Markets.
- Must focus on implementation of conservation practices. (Proposals that are strictly for education and/or outreach will not be considered for funding.)

Examples of eligible projects that could potentially be completed within two years of contract approval may include, but are not limited to: implementation of cover crops, conservation tillage, organic amendments, identifying and managing soil constraints, purchasing equipment to overcome obstacles of farmer adoption of soil health practices, fostering farmer-led consortiums or alliances, etc.

2.4 Project Completion Terms

It is anticipated that the Department will announce grant awards by September 2014. A proposed project must be capable of being completed and fully reimbursed no later than two years after signing a state assistance contract with the Department. If you receive a grant award, the Department will monitor the progress of the proposed work and will recapture awarded project funding if significant progress is not made by the grantee.

3. PROJECT COSTS

3.1 Eligible expenses include:

- Plans and specifications, including personal services to conduct individual farm level planning.
- Consultant and legal services
- Soil health and manure sampling tests
- Equipment purchase or rental
- Education and outreach efforts in direct relation to soil quality project implementation
- Other direct expenses related to planning and implementation.

State assistance payments may not be used to cover the lease or purchase of equipment unless the equipment is part of well-defined implementation program. (e.g. a no-till seed drill would only be eligible if it is part of a program that will result in the implementation of on-the-ground conservation practices. The project outcome would be acres implemented and the equipment purchase would be considered under the cost effectiveness category.) It is advisable for applicants to request clarification on the eligibility of specific equipment during the open questions and answers period and all determinations will be added to a Frequently Asked Questions Document.

All costs associated with the operation and maintenance of BMPs and equipment will be the sole responsibility of the landowner and/or operator and cannot be used as a match to State Funding.

3.2 Ineligible Expenses

Ineligible expenses include costs paid from other State resources and costs incurred prior to contract approval from the Department. These expenses will not be reimbursed by the State.

4. PROPOSAL FORMAT

4.1 Application Form Instructions

Proposals must be submitted through Grants Gateway, which follows the questions on page 14 of this RFP.

4.2 Application Checklist

Please complete, sign and submit the checklist with your application to ensure all proposal requirements have been met.

5. PROJECT EVALUATION AND SCORING

All applications that meet all the eligibility criteria will be further evaluated and scored by at least four (4) evaluators. Evaluators will record proposal scores based on the criteria in section 5.1 of this RFP. The scores of the evaluators will be aggregated to make up the proposals total score. All proposals will then be ranked by their grand total score from highest to lowest to make up the final ranked list for awards. Proposals that receive a score of less than 50% of the maximum available aggregate score will not be considered for funding. Proposals will be funded in the order of rank until eligible funding is exhausted or no eligible applications remain.

5.1 Consideration will be given to the following factors in rating proposals:

1. Well-Planned, Local Programs for Increasing the Adoption of Soil Quality Improvement Practices (Maximum score of 10 points)
2. Scope of Work and Time Frame (Maximum score of 5 points)
3. Partner Involvement (Maximum score of 5 points)
4. Cost Effectiveness (Maximum score of 5 points)

Applications that demonstrate the following will receive higher scores:

- A good understanding of the obstacles or barriers within your County that may be limiting the adoption of soil health practices.
- A well thought out, creative approach to overcoming these obstacles/barriers.
- Exceptional cost-effectiveness.
- Strong collaboration efforts with other County/Regional partners.
- Alignment with Ecosystem Based Management Principles (see Appendix for list of EBM Principles)
- A strong plan for ongoing sustainability.

5.2 Tie Breaker

If there is a numerical tie after the application has been scored, the application with the greatest percentage of leveraged overall grant funds will determine placement on the ranking list. For example, if two applications score 75 points, and one leverages 15%, the other 10%, the one with

greater (15%) match contribution will be funded first. If both applications leverage an identical match, then the proposals with the greatest number of implemented acres will be funded before the other project.

6. AWARDS

Sponsors whose proposals are selected for funding will be notified as soon as possible. Selected proposals must comply with all applicable federal, State and local laws and rules and regulations for funding to be awarded. Evidence of such compliance may be required.

Implementation proposals which are selected for funding may be subject to further review by the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) prior to development of a contract as described in section 14 of this RFP.

7. CONTRACTS

Once an application has been selected for funding, the Department will notify the sponsor of the need to provide information necessary to complete the contract. Payments cannot be made until the contract is fully executed. A minimum of 10 percent of the State assistance payment will be withheld pending satisfactory completion of the contract.

If the Department is unsuccessful in negotiating a contract which will achieve the deliverables in a manner consistent with the proposal as approved and any applicable laws or regulations, the Department reserves the right to rescind its approval of the proposal for funding and instead award the funding to other eligible unfunded project proposals.

The standard term for all projects will be two full construction seasons plus three months for project administration and completion of the final report. The earliest contract start date would be January 1, 2015 and the latest end date would be December 31, 2016. These dates may be subject to change. The project sponsor may request a different term, if necessary. Funding of proposals that extend over more than one State fiscal year will be subject to the reappropriation of funds.

8. PAYMENT

Payment for invoices submitted by the Contractor shall only be rendered electronically unless payment by paper check is expressly authorized by the Commissioner, in the Commissioner's sole discretion, due to extenuating circumstances. Such electronic payment shall be made in accordance with ordinary State procedures and practices. The Contractor shall comply with the Comptroller of the State of New York's procedures to authorize electronic payments. Contractor acknowledges that it will not receive payment on any invoices submitted under this Agreement if it does not comply with the Comptroller of the State of New York's electronic payment procedures, except where the Commissioner has expressly authorized payment by paper check as set forth above.

9. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Department staff will monitor the progress of each funded project.

The Department reserves the right to modify the reporting requirements during the course of the project. At a minimum, progress reports will be required two (2) times per year as specified by Department. In addition, an original and one copy of a comprehensive final report will be required within sixty (60) days following completion of the project. For all projects, the final report shall include a final budget report detailing expenditures; a detailed description of the work completed, problems encountered, if any, and lessons learned, as well as, such other information as the Department may deem necessary. In addition, the Department reserves the right to visit any or all of the projects during or after project completion.

Final reports for projects shall also include photographs of the work site before and after practice implementation, BMP Procurement Records, and Consultant Engineer's Certification of BMPs (if needed).

The Department reserves the right to make all final reports available to the NYS Ocean and Great Lakes Ecosystem Conservation Council and the general public.

The Department reserves the right to conduct a follow-up evaluation of funded projects in order to determine long-term impacts.

The Department and Comptroller's Office reserves the right to audit the Project Sponsor's books and records relating to the performance of the project during and up to six (6) years after the completion of the project.

10. LIABILITY

The State will not be held liable for any costs incurred by any District for work performed in the preparation of and production of a proposal, or for any work performed prior to the formal execution of a contract.

11. FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

All proposals submitted and all related contracts and reports may be subject to disclosure under the Freedom of Information Law.

12. NYS MASTER CONTRACT

New York State has developed a standard "Master Contract" containing standard clauses required in all State Contracts. The Master Contract will be executed for all projects awarded under the Soil Health Mini Grants, and applicants are responsible for complying with the terms and conditions contained therein.

13. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

The Department reserves the right to:

- reject any or all proposals received with respect to this RFP;
- waive or modify minor irregularities in proposals received after prior notification and concurrence of the applicant;
- request from an applicant additional information as deemed necessary to more fully evaluate its proposal;
- amend the program's specifications after their release, with appropriate written notice to all potential applicants;
- select only certain portions of proposals for State funding;
- negotiate the terms of any agreement proposed by the applicant; and
- make all final decisions with respect to the amount of State funding and the timing of payments to be provided to an applicant.

All eligible proposals submitted in response to this RFP will become the property of the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets.

14. NYS OFFICE OF PARKS, RECREATION AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION REQUIREMENTS

Projects which include ground disturbing activities, construction of new buildings, or modification of buildings over 50 years old will be subject to further review by the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP). The Department reserves the right to request such additional information as is necessary to allow OPRHP to make a determination regarding the potential impacts of the project on historical sites or artifacts and possible alternatives which avoid or mitigate adverse impacts.

15. NYS ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY REVIEW ACT REQUIREMENTS

Some projects may be subject to review under the New York State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA). The Department reserves the right to request additional information as needed to comply with SEQRA requirements.

16. DEBRIEFING

Pursuant to section 163(9)(c) of the State Finance Law, an unsuccessful bidder has the right to a debriefing regarding the reasons its application was not selected for award. Upon request, the Department will provide a debriefing to any unsuccessful applicant as to the reasons that the proposal submitted was not selected for an award. To request a review of an unsuccessful application contact Ms. Judy Giovannetti, Division of Fiscal Management, by phone at: (518) 457-6172 or via e-mail at judy.giovannetti@agriculture.ny.gov A review should be requested by an unsuccessful applicant within thirty (30) days of the date of the notice that its proposal was not selected for an award.

17. WORKERS' COMPENSATION AND DISABILITY INSURANCE REQUIREMENTS

New York State Workers' Compensation Law sections 57 and 220 require that the Department not enter into a contract unless proof of Workers' Compensation and Disability Insurance in a form satisfactory to the New York State Workers' Compensation Board has been secured.

Recipients of grants under this RFP will be required to produce proof of Workers' Compensation and Disability Insurance in a form satisfactory to the New York State Workers' Compensation Board prior to the execution of the contract.

Please refer to the Workers' Compensation and Disability Insurance Requirements posted on the Department's website, www.agriculture.ny.gov under the heading of this RFP or visit the New York State Workers' Compensation Board website, www.wcb.ny.gov for more information. You may contact the Board's Bureau of Compliance with any questions related to workers' compensation or disability insurance at (866) 298-7830.

18. REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS FOR APPLICANTS

The State of New York has initiated a new statewide prequalification process designed to facilitate prompt contracting for not-for-profit vendors. New York Soil & Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) are exempt from this *prequalification process*, however, the State requires any such SWCD that intends to seek a State grant to *register* on the State's new Grants Gateway. Applicants will be asked to submit commonly requested documents, and answer frequently asked questions once. The application requests organizational information about the applicant's capacity, legal compliance, and integrity. To learn more about this initiative and prequalification, please visit the Grants Reform website (<http://www.GrantsReform.ny.gov/Grantees>) where you can preview the questions and required documents.

All applicants are required to register prior to grant application and execution of contracts. If applicant is not registered as required, the Department may not be able to evaluate that applicant's proposal.

The following is a summary of the steps that must be undertaken in order for you to register.

- Go to the Grants Reform website (<http://www.grantsreform.ny.gov/Grantees>) and download a copy of the Registration Form. Please review the instructions for submission of this Form. The form must be signed and notarized by an authorized representative of your organization, and must be submitted as soon as possible in order to gain access to the Grants Gateway.
- Upon submission of your Registration Form, you will be provided with a User ID allowing you to gain access to the New York State Grants Gateway.
- Applicants who have already submitted registration materials and received their user credentials do not have to re-register.
- Please refer to the Gateway Training Materials and resource links posted on the "Grantees" section of the Grants Reform website for help. If you still have questions, please address them to the Grants Reform Team at: GrantsReform@Budget.ny.gov with "Prequalification" in the subject line. **If you have not yet registered, please do so immediately.**

Mini Grant Application Form
Great Lakes and Mohawk River Basin Mini Grants

Please Answer ALL Questions

Part 1: Applicant Information

1. Applicant Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD): [Click here to enter text.](#)
2. Contact Person: [Click here to enter text.](#)
3. Mailing Address: [Click here to enter text.](#)
4. Phone: [Click here to enter text.](#)
5. Email Contact: [Click here to enter text.](#)

Part 2: General Project Information:

1. Project Location: Choose a Watershed
2. Project Name: [Click here to enter text.](#)
3. Project County or Counties: [Click here to enter text.](#)

Part 3: Project Timing and Costs:

1. Proposed Start Date: [Click here to enter a date.](#)
2. Expected Completion Date: [Click here to enter a date.](#)
3. Total Project Costs: [Click here to enter text.](#)
4. Grant Amount Requested: [Click here to enter text.](#) (*maximum amount is \$25,000*)
5. Project Match (if any): [Click here to enter text.](#)
6. If you have applied/received any additional funding for the projects within this proposal, indicate the funding source and amount:
Source(s): [Click here to enter text.](#)
Amount(s): [Click here to enter text.](#)

Part 4: Project Narrative

1. Short Project Description (up to 250 characters): [Click here to enter text.](#)
2. Describe the project, including: what will be done, how it will be accomplished, the local need, environmental benefits, how it links with your AEM Strategy goals, and any education or outreach methods to be used: [Click here to enter text.](#)

3. Described who will do the project, their affiliation, role and qualifications: [Click here to enter text.](#)
4. Describe the project location and target audience for the project: [Click here to enter text.](#)
5. Please provide a timeline description for how the project will be completed in two years or less: [Click here to enter text.](#)
6. Describe how your project will involve conservation partners: [Click here to enter text.](#)
7. Describe how your project will leverage support, if applicable: [Click here to enter text.](#)
8. Please provide a project budget and narrative using the following categories:
 - a. Personal services
 - b. Supplies and Materials
 - c. Contractual Services
 - d. Equipment (purchase or rental)
 - e. Other (with description)
 - f. Administration

If project match is included, please include amount, category and narrative using the Match Template provided.

IMPORTANT: When completing the budget section of your Grants Gateway application, please only include Grant Requested funds in the budget section. Project match must be submitted separately using the Match Template.

Part 5: SWCD Resolution and Certification

SWCD resolution authorizing this project.

Please see sample resolution for preferred format and language. The sample may be used but is not required.

I hereby affirm under penalty of perjury that information provided on this form and attached statements and exhibits is true to the best of my knowledge and belief. False statements made herein are punishable as a Class A misdemeanor pursuant to Section 210.45 of the Penal Law.

(Title) _____ of (entity)

(date) _____ (signature) _____ (print name)

NOTE: If the project application may include participating landowner(s) that are either SWCD Board Members or Employees, please attach a copy of the official Board Meeting minutes that reflect the process for the selection of the farm(s), disclosure of interests, and necessary recusals from the authorizing resolution.

Part 6: Additional Project Information

1. Have all farms included in this proposal been inventoried and assessed using the AEM Tier I and II process?
 Yes No
2. How many Soil Health Tests are anticipated to be needed: [Click here to enter text.](#)
3. How many acres of Soil Health Practices will be implemented: [Click here to enter text.](#)
4. Please describe the soil health practices that you anticipate implementing through this project: [Click here to enter text.](#)
5. How many farms will be addressed through this project: [Click here to enter text.](#)
6. If CAFO farms are part of the target audience, are they compliant with appropriate requirements: (CAFO = Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation)
 Yes No N/A *(If no, the farm is not eligible to participate in this program)*
7. Watershed(s)/aquifer(s)/wellhead protection area(s) to be addressed in this proposal:
[Click here to enter text.](#)
8. 12-digit hydrologic unit code (HUC) #(s): [Click here to enter text.](#)
9. Describe how the project fits with your local AEM Strategy. Include which priority units it will address and their level. [Click here to enter text.](#)

2014 Ecosystem Based Management

Soil Health Mini-grants

CHECKLIST FOR PROPOSAL ELIGIBILITY AND COMPLETENESS

Please complete and sign this checklist and submit it with your application form.

APPLICATION

- Proposal submitted in time to be **received** by the Department's Division of Fiscal Management by **4:30 p.m., July 28, 2014***
- Proposal submitted by eligible applicant, as described in RFP *
- Original and 5 copies of proposal submitted
- All questions in Application Form completed
- Applicant is registered in the NYS Grants Gateway
- SWCD Resolution submitted
- Commitment letters submitted

PROJECT

- Project meets the eligibility criteria detailed in RFP *
- Project located in eligible geographic area as detailed in RFP *
- Project duration is 2 years or less

BUDGET AND COSTS

- If match included, source of match identified and does not include State funds
- Proposal does not request more than \$25,000 in funding **
- Budget Information included and complete
- All costs for which grant funds are requested are eligible **
- If match included, Match Template is completed and uploaded

*** Required element of proposal. Applications not meeting these requirements will be returned and not considered for funding.**

**** If the proposal does not meet these requirements only the portion of the proposal that includes eligible costs up to \$25,000 will be considered for funding.**

Signature of Applicant _____

Date _____

BMP Operation and Maintenance Guidelines

A BMP that is funded by this Soil Health Mini-Grants opportunity must be maintained and properly operated for the conservation purposes for which the practice was approved. The project sponsor must ensure that active BMPs, at a minimum, be operated and maintained by the Landowner and/or Operator for the lifespan period. For information on BMPs including life spans please refer to the Draft Agricultural Management Practices Catalog.

Available Funding

The Department of Agriculture and Markets has made available approximately \$400,000 for the Soil Health Mini-Grants competitive projects through NYS Oceans and Great Lakes Ecosystem Conservation (EBM) funding.

Soil Health Mini Grant Hourly Rate Recommendation

The following rates were acquired from SWCDs as a result of our inquiry as part of the 2012 annual reports submitted.

The new hourly rates which can be used by SWCDs, in lieu of providing justification for calculating their actual salary, benefit and overhead, to calculate total personnel services costs are as follows:

	<u>Hourly Rate</u>	<u>Overhead</u>	<u>Total</u>
Managerial	\$50	\$5	\$55
Technical	\$34	\$5	\$39
Secretarial	\$34	\$5	\$39

Districts may use their actual salary, benefit and overhead figures in lieu of the above set rates. In those cases, full documentation must be provided to obtain payment. In cases where interns, seasonal or part-time employees are used, actual hourly rates will have to be used and justified.

These rates, including overhead expenses, can also be used for local agency personnel (NRCS, CCE) as well as private sector consultants. These individuals will also have the option to use and fully justify their own actual rates. Overhead expenses cannot be used for actual rates.

IMPORTANT: When using State Rates in Grants Gateway, enter \$0 under the annual salary prompt.

Ecosystem Based Management Principles

What is Ecosystem-based Management?

In the New York Ocean and Great Lakes Ecosystem Conservation Council's Report, "*Our Waters, Our Communities, Our Future*," ecosystem-based management (EBM) is defined as an innovative approach to management that is distinct from traditional models. EBM recognizes that humans are integral parts of any ecosystem and that ecosystems are vital in supporting human life. It emphasizes the need to establish strong partnerships to address complex and often contentious issues and requires the integration of ecological, social, economic, and institutional perspectives.

The principles that generally guide EBM are:

- EBM emphasizes the *protection* of ecosystem structure, functioning, and key processes based on science;
- EBM is *place-based* in focusing on a specific ecosystem and the range of activities affecting it;
- EBM explicitly accounts for the *interconnectedness within systems*, recognizing the importance of interactions among many target species or key services and other non-target species;
- EBM acknowledges the *interconnectedness among systems*, such as air, land and sea;
- EBM *integrates* ecological, social, economic, and institutional perspectives, recognizing their strong interdependencies and mutual influences;
- EBM emphasizes *collaborative governance processes*, working together with citizens, landowners, businesses, local governments, interested organizations, and others to face problems, identify opportunities, make feasible improvements, and find common solutions. The processes are often as unique as the situation, but the common theme is the active participation of partners.

New York Ocean and Great Lakes Ecosystem Conservation Council's Report, "[*Our Waters, Our Communities, Our Future*](#)".

New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets
2014 Ecosystem Based Management
Soil Health Mini-grants
EVALUATION SCORE SHEET

Instructions: Evaluate each component of the proposal, per criteria described in the left hand column. Provide comments at the bottom.

SCORING KEY

Total Points Available	Exceeds All or Most Requirements	Exceeds Some Requirements	Meets Requirements	Meets Some But Not All Requirements	Does Not Meet Most Requirements	Meets No Requirements
10	9-10	7-8	5-6	3-4	1-2	0
5	5	4	3	2	1	0

Review Criteria	Max Points	Score
<p>Project Clearly demonstrates a well-planned local program for increasing the adoption of soil health practices -- How well does the applicant address the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Watershed analysis has already been conducted to document high priority farms for soil health implementation, consistent with AEM concepts and approach outlined in AEM Guide. There is good documentation of understanding the current local obstacles for farmer adoption of soil health practices. The proposal clearly identifies the number of farms and acres in which soil health practices will be implemented, and includes an aggressive or innovative approach to achieving these goals. The project addresses the objectives and goals outlined in the County AEM Strategy. The project is consistent with Ecosystem Based Management Principles: 	10	
<p>Adequate Scope of work and Time Frame -- How well does the applicant address the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The feasibility of the project is clearly demonstrated. There is demonstrated experience and ability of the sponsor and project staff to undertake the proposed activity. Project deliverables are clearly defined and consistent with program objectives. Proposal clearly defines 	5	

<p>what is to be done, how it will be done, who will do it and when it will be done.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project is consistent with, or in cooperation with, other watershed planning and/or implementation activities in the project area or is part of a phased effort in the watershed. • Practices to be installed are listed in DEC's Agricultural Management Practice Catalog or consistent with the Cornell Soil Health Assessment Training Manual. 		
<p>Evidence of partner support -- How well does the applicant address the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposal uses a coordinated and integrated interdisciplinary team of professionals to maximize the ability to reach a diverse farm audience. • The proposal clearly defines partner affiliation and involvement (e.g. If local partner is the County Water Quality Coordinating Committee, the proposal identifies which members.) 	5	
<p>Project is cost effective -- How well does the applicant address the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acres of soil health practices to be implemented are cost effective relative to the ecosystem benefits. • Estimated time to complete and hourly rates being charged for equipment, administrative or technical/engineering services are reasonable. (e.g. reflect average costs documented in the NRCS Field Office Technical Guide; administrative, technical, and engineering services reflect an appropriate percentage of the total project cost). • Equipment purchases, if needed, are well justified by the number of acres for which they will be used, both during and following the contract period. 	5	
TOTAL Points	25	

Reviewer's Comments:

Name: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____