Watershed Restoration Initiative

Project Prioritization Score Sheet – Fiscal Year 2028

Project Name: _____

Region: _____Database Project Number: _____

Total Score (153 Points Possible) _____

NOTE: This score sheet should be used to guide Utah's Watershed Restoration Initiative (UWRI) project prioritization and funding decisions, but some interpretation may be necessary. Statewide prioritization/rankings by the UWRI/DNR leadership may weigh proposed project costs funded by the project proponent compared to requested partnership funds.

POLICY AND LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

Does the project support at least one of the three legs of Utah's Watershed Restoration Initiative? Utah's Watershed Restoration Initiative is a partnership-driven effort to conserve, restore and manage ecosystems in priority areas across the state to enhance Utah's

- Watershed Health and Biological Diversity
- Water Quality and Yield for all Uses
- Opportunities for Sustainable Uses

YES • NO • If NO, do not Rank or Fund.

If NEPA or a cultural resource clearance is required prior to project implementation, have these been completed or will they be completed before the tentative project starting date?

YES • NO • If NO, do not Rank or Fund.

Does the project manager have any outstanding WRI completion reports that are past due more than one year?

YES • NO • If YES, do not Rank or Fund.

Proposals requesting funding for pre-implementation work only such as; NEPA, cultural resource clearances, stand exams, wildlife/botanical/ESA surveys, etc. should be presented to the regional team for general comments/suggestions only. These proposals DO NOT need to be ranked using these ranking criteria. Regional ranking team comments/priorities may be applied to the list if desired. Please select WRI-NEPA as a funding source for these proposals.

WRI funding requests should be limited to under $1,000,000 per proposal (or per year for multi-year proposals) and project footprint should be contained within no more than 4 contiguous HUC 10 watersheds. See map page for details at wri.utah.gov

UWRI CORE-VALUES CONSIDERATIONS

WATER QUALITY AND YIELD FOR ALL USES

WATER QUALITY

Does the project have the potential to improve or protect water quality? Benefits to water quality would include reducing the risk of severe wildfire, reductions in pollutants, nutrient loading and/or sediment loading. Higher scores should be given to projects within watersheds that supply drinking water to communities or include drinking water facilities. Watersheds immediately adjacent to perennial water bodies and riparian systems, exceeding TMDLs, or identified as impaired should also be awarded more points. **Maximum points possible for this section - 10**	**0 – 10**

WATER QUANTITY

Does the project have the potential to increase water quantity? Possible considerations may include; projects that show direct benefits to instream flows, expansion of hydric vegetation, are likely to turn intermittent channels to perennial, and /or increases in natural hydrologic storage capacity; changing grazing management, changes to the vegetation class, brush and/or weed management, soil modifications that can directly affect the water regime, etc. **Maximum points possible for this section - 10**	**0 – 10**

WATERSHED HEALTH AND BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

WATERSHED HEALTH

Consider the project's overall impact on the watershed's health and resilience. Higher points should be awarded to projects that include more than one ecological community and/or projects that are located in an ecological type that contributes greater value to overall watershed health such as aspen, riparian, stream, wet meadow or wetland sites. **Maximum points possible for this section - 10**	**0 - 10**

THREAT ABATEMENT - SPECIES

Project addresses priority Level 3 threat(s) to key **species** of greatest conservation need as identified in the Utah Wildlife Action Plan (WAP) and/or Level 3 threat(s) to high interest game and fish species (HIG/F). Very High, High, and Medium refer to the highest level of a threat's impact to any WAP or HIG/F species. For a complete list of WAP threats by species and habitats please visit our website at watershed.utah.gov **Maximum points possible for this section - 10**	**VH = +10** **H = +8** **M = +6**

HIGH INTEREST GAME AND FISH (HIG/F)

HIG/F Rank: Up to five points will be given if any of the project's benefiting species includes high interest game/sportfish species (any species with a numerical HIG/F ranking in the UWRI database). Points are only awarded once for the highest scoring HIG/F species. For example, if the proposal lists two R4 species and one R5 species, it should receive 2 points for the R4 species.	**R1 = +5** **R2 = +4** **R3 = +3** **R4 = +2** **R5 = +1**
Project Quality/Need/Benefit: Assess the project's quality and need relative to the entire suite of high interest game and fish species listed in the proposal. This section is designed to elevate projects that may have a higher benefit to the listed HIG/F species. Higher points should be awarded to projects that take place in areas of greater need, have a larger impact on threats associated with HIG/F species and to projects with a more complete list of species that may benefit from the project. Project proposals should include at least a sentence or two for each species listed to receive full points for this section. **Maximum points possible for this section – 10**	**0 - 5**

SPECIES OF GREATEST CONSERVATION NEED (SGCN)

SGCN Rank: Project will benefit species of greatest conservation need. Up to five points will be given if any of the project's benefiting species includes species with an N1-N5 National Conservation Status as identified in the Utah Wildlife Action Plan. Points are only awarded once – for the single most at-risk species listed as a benefiting species in the proposal. For example, if the proposal lists three N1, one N2 and two N3 benefiting species, it only gets 5 points for the N1 species. For conservation status definitions visit the NatureServe website at: http://explorer.natureserve.org	**N1 = +5** **N2 = +4** **N3 = +3** **N4 = +2** **N5 = +1**
Project Quality/Need/Benefit: Assess the project's quality and need relative to the suite of species of greatest conservation need selected. This section is designed to elevate projects that may have a higher benefit to the selected species. Higher points should be awarded to projects that take place in areas of greater need, have a larger impact on threats associated with species and to projects with a more complete list of species that may benefit from the project. Project proposals should include at least a sentence or two for each species listed to receive full points for this section. **Maximum points possible for this section - 10**	**0 - 5**

OPPORTUNITIES FOR SUSTAINABLE USES

SUSTAINABLE USES OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Does the project have the potential to provide or improve sustainable uses of Utah's natural resources? Examples may include grazing, sustainable timber harvest, biomass utilization, hunting/fishing, recreation, etc. **Maximum points possible for this section - 15**	**0 - 15**

OTHER ECOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

PROJECT LOCATION AND TIMING (WHY HERE? WHY NOW?)

LOCATION: Score the justification given for project location. Higher scores should be given to proposals that tie project location to multiple target areas highlighted in publicly scrutinized planning/recovery documents. Example plans: Utah's Wildlife Action Plan, Species/Ecosystem Recovery Plans/Conservation Strategies, State/County Resource Management Plans, Big Game Unit Management Plans, Utah Wildfire Risk Assessment Portal, BLM Resource Management Plans, USFS Forest Management Plans, Sagebrush Conservation Strategy, Etc. In addition, higher scores should be given to project proposals that properly utilize remote sensing and/or wildlife collar data to improve the location and overall design of projects. Preferred data sources include; TNC's Landscape Conservation Forecasting or the USU/WRI Ecosystem Departure Planning Product: ECO Score and Utah's Wildlife Migration Initiative. Please visit the important documents page at watershed.utah.gov for more information on these useful data sources. TIMING: Score the project proponent's justification for why the project should be implemented at this time. For example, is the project area at risk of crossing an ecological or other threshold? Higher scores should be given to projects where waiting to implement could result in crossing a threshold wherein future restoration would become much more difficult, cost prohibitive, or even impossible. **Maximum points possible for this section - 15**	**0 - 15**

FIRE - REDUCED CATASTROPHIC RISK, IMPROVED REGIME CONDITION

If applicable, score how the proposed project will reduce the risk of large unwanted fires, decrease/remove hazardous fuels, such as invasive species and forested areas impacted by insect and disease, and promote landscape resilience. Consider the value of any features being protected by reducing the risk of fire. Values at risk may include; communities, permanent infrastructure, municipal watersheds, critical wildlife habitat, etc. Consider the scale of the project and how effectively it will reduce fire risk; also consider the distance of the project from values-at-risk. Higher points should be awarded to projects designed to protect human health and safety. **Maximum points possible for this section - 10**	**0 - 10**

FUTURE MANAGEMENT

Does the project include details on future management that will ensure the long-term success of the project? This may include; post-treatment grazing rest and/or management plan changes, wildlife herd/species management plans, ranch plans, conservation easements or other permanent site protection plans, resource management plans, forest plans, etc. Consideration should be given to the need and opportunity for follow-up treatments, where applicable, as well as adaptive management if project objectives are not being met. If seeding is included as part of the treatment plan, full points should only be awarded if a grazing rest agreement will be signed by all applicable parties prior to project initiation. **Maximum points possible for this section - 10**	**0 - 10**

ADMINISTRATIVE & PARTNERSHIP CONSIDERATIONS

PARTNER INCLUSION

Does the project contain a description of affected partners and how these partners were/will be engaged in the planning, implementation and monitoring of the project? Points should not be given for the number of partners, but rather for the completeness of the effort to contact and include partners during project planning.	**0 - 10**
If applicable, does the project cross jurisdictional boundaries? If the proposed project area borders other ownerships, was consideration given to expand the project to a broader landscape? If no opportunity exists, award full points. If an opportunity existed and minimal or no outreach occurred, score accordingly. **Maximum points possible for this section - 15**	**0 - 5**

PROJECT-LEVEL MONITORING

Does the monitoring plan adequately measure/determine if the project's objectives are being achieved, both in the short and long term? Does the monitoring plan include a strategy/commitment to produce reports/photos to be uploaded to the UWRI website? **Maximum points possible for this section - 10**	**0 - 10**

RELATION TO MANAGEMENT PLANS

Does the project help to meet specific goals and objectives and/or management opportunities identified in natural resource/species-oriented and/or publicly scrutinized planning and assessment documents? Projects that claim they meet multiple objectives should naturally include more than one plan and/or multiple objectives from a single plan. Points will be awarded based on the completeness of tying management plans to stated goals/objectives and not to the total number of plans listed. Please be thorough. **Some examples of natural resource-oriented plans; species management plans, wildlife management area plans, herd unit management plans, eco-regional assessments/sub-assessments, resource management plans, forest management plans, community wildfire preparedness plans, species recovery plans, watershed/TMDL plans, allotment and/or grazing management plans, state or county resource management plans, cooperative weed management plans, fuel/fire management plans, wildlife action plan, etc. **Maximum points possible for this section - 10**	**0 - 10**

WRI PROPOSAL/PROCESS IMPROVEMENT

Project Manager Engagement Bonus Points: Consider awarding up to 5 bonus points to project managers who have shown an exceptional effort to engage with reviewers in the comment section of the WRI database, including adequately responding to questions/concerns and detailing what, if anything, was changed in the proposal due to these conversations.	**0 to +5**
Proposal Quality Deductions/Bonus Points: Score the proposal's overall completeness and quality. Consider awarding up to 3 bonus points for exceptionally well written/concise proposals which have all the required information allowing regional ranking teams to score the proposal quickly and accurately. Proposals that are missing critical information, including photos, seed mixes and any other supporting documentation should receive deductions.	**-3 to +3**
Completion Report Deductions: Does the project manager have any outstanding completion reports (pending complete status in database) from previously funded UWRI projects or were they late in submitting any completion reports from the previous funding cycle? If so, consider deducting up to 5 points based on the severity of the issue(s). If project managers failed to include project photos as part of their most recently submitted completion report(s) consider deducting up to 3 points. **Maximum points possible for this section - +8**	**0 to -5**