

**Fiscal Year 2026
ACEP-ALE Ranking Criteria**



National Ranking Questions (Points Possible: 200)

Question #	Ranking Question	Answer Choices	Points Awarded
1	Percent of prime, unique, and important farmland in the parcel to be protected:	Total acres less or equal to 50% of total easement	0
		Total acres 51% - 60% of total easement	4
		Total acres 61% - 70% of total easement	8
		Total acres 71% - 80% of total easement	12
		Total acres great than 80%	17
2	Percent of cropland, pastureland, grassland, and rangeland in the parcel to be protected:	Total acres less or equal to 33% of total easement	0
		Total acres 34% to 40% of total easement	4
		Total acres 41% to 50% of total easement	8
		Total acres greater than 50%	17
3	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:	Ratio: <1	0
		Ratio: 1 - 2	7
		Ratio: >2	15
4	Decrease in the percentage of acreage of farm and ranch land, in county in which the parcel is located, between the last two USDA Censuses of Agriculture:	0%	0
		1% - 5%	1
		6% - 10%	5
		11% - 15%	9
		> 15%	16
5	Decrease in the percentage of acreage of permanent grassland, pasture, and rangeland (other than cropland and woodland pasture), in the county in which the parcel is located in, between the last two USDA Censuses of Agriculture:	0%	0
		1% - 5%	3
		6% - 10%	5
		11% - 15%	8
		> 15%	15

Fiscal Year 2026
ACEP-ALE Ranking Criteria

6	Percent population growth in the county as documented by the most recent United States Census (www.census.gov):	0	0
		1 - 2 times the State growth rate	4
		> 2 times the State growth rate	7
		> 3 times the State growth rate	15
7	Population density (population per square mile) as documented by the most recent United States Census (www.census.gov):	0	0
		1 - 2 times the State population density	4
		> 2 times the State population density	7
		> 3 times the State population density	15
8	Existence of a farm or ranch succession plan or similar plan established to address farm viability for future generations:	No Plan	0
		A plan exists	7
		Plan documented and performed by industry professional	15
9	Proximity of the parcel to other protected land, such as compatible military installations, land owned in fee title by the United States or an Indian Tribe, State or local government, or by a nongovernmental organization whose purpose is to protect agricultural use and related	Easement offer area (EOA) boundary >3 miles from protected land boundary	0
		EOA is greater than 1 mile but less than or equal to 3 miles in proximity	4
		EOA is within 1 mile of protected land boundary	7
		EOA boundary adjoins protected land boundary	15
10	Proximity of the parcel to other agricultural operations and agricultural infrastructure:	Easement offer area (EOA) boundary >3 miles in proximity	0
		EOA is greater than 1 mile but less than or equal to 3 miles in proximity	4
		EOA is within 1 mile of protected land boundary	7
		EOA boundary adjoins	15
11	Parcel ability to maximize the protection of contiguous or proximal acres devoted to agricultural use:	Parcel does not increase a protected agricultural use area	0
		If parcel expands agricultural use protected area	5
		If parcel links two noncontinuous corridors of protected agricultural use	15

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12	Is the land is currently enrolled in CRP in a contract that is set to expire within one year and is grassland that would benefit from protection under a long-term easement?	Yes	10
		No	0
13	This land is grassland of special environmental significance that would benefit from protection under a long-term easement?	Yes	10
		No	0
14	Percent of the fair market value of the agricultural land easement that is the eligible entity's own cash resources for payment of easement compensation to the landowner and comes from sources other than the landowner?	Yes	10
		No	0

State Ranking Questions (Points Possible: 200)

1	Parcel contains the habitat(s) for species of interest?	No species	0
		Federally listed candidate species	10
		Federally listed threatened and endangered species	20
2	◊For Cropland, is 50% or more of the parcel a soil land capability classification of:	Class III	13
		Class II	27
		Class I	40
3	±For Rangeland, is the proposed grassland parcel in an annual precipitation zone of:	< 8 inches	10
		8 - 12 inches	20
		13 - 16 inches	30
		> 16 inches	40

Fiscal Year 2026
ACEP-ALE Ranking Criteria

4	Has the landowner implemented new vegetative or structural conservation based projects or improvements on the property?	None	0
		Within last 9 years	10
		Within last 6 years	20
		Within last 3 years	30
5	Is property affiliated with the proposed conservation easement part of a contiguous, unfragmented landscape that is protected from future development?	None	0
		Contiguous on 1 side	10
		Contiguous on 2 sides	20
		Contiguous on 3 or more sides	40
6	◊For Cropland, is the water supply:	A non-dependable or non-assured depleting groundwater source	0
		Annually determined based on stored water supplies and/or marginally depleting groundwater aquifer	20
		Assured long-term water delivery irrigation system and/or a non-depleting groundwater aquifer	40
7	±For Rangeland, is there a source of perennial or intermittent streams, lakes or ponds within the easement area?	None	0
		Has intermittent rivers and streams, seasonal lakes and other seasonal waterbodies	20
		Has perennial rivers and streams, permanent lakes and other permanent waterbodies	40
8	Will selection of the project provide protection to a 303d waterbody within 5 miles of the parcel?	No	0
		Yes	30

Total Points Possible: 400

◊- Question applicable to Cropland Only

± - Question applicable to Rangeland Only