Factors to consider for priority setting

Based on state assistance projects, prioritizing discussions and other sources

Impaired waters/watersheds:

- Which impaired watersheds are more restorable and might recover most quickly?
- Would high value/high risk areas be better to work on now vs. later?
- How should high value/low risk areas be prioritized when there are moderately valuable areas with higher risks?
- How can a prioritized schedule for impaired waters restoration optimize for net benefits protected and regained?
- How important are many successful recoveries to program survival?

Special scenario analyses on watershed subsets:

- How well does it work to define a leading impairment scenario and prioritize its most valuable but at risk watersheds?
- How does restorability differ across all nutrient impaired waters? Pathogens? Sediments?
- Among watersheds affected by specific most common impairments?
- Across all urban waters?
- Agriculture, mining, silviculturally dominated watersheds?
- For fish restoration?
- Among threatened waters?

TMDL implementation:

- How do waters with TMDLs appear to differ in restorability?
- Which TMDLs are good prospects? Are all the TMDLs for some specific pollutants better prospects for recovery as a group overall (e.g., pathogens vs mercury)?
- Is this due to good implementation planning, manageable load reduction needs, funding or community support, or other factor?
- Can this be translated to feasibility and effectiveness of implementation actions?

Revealing level of difficulty:

- What factors make some watersheds potentially difficult to restore?
- Will senior officials want to be aware of these challenges?
- What are implications for funding and workloads?
- How should chances of early success factor into priority setting procedures?
- How should immediacy of potentially significant resource loss factor into priority setting procedures?

Nonpoint source control:

- How can considering restorability factors help provide input for watershed plans or funding statewide nonpoint program strategies?
- Should prioritization approaches sort out options for PS impairments separately from NPS/mixed impairments?
- Should prioritization mainly try to organize by type of control action taken on priority waters?

Informing EPA/state/local communication:

- How can well documented prioritizing procedures inform EPA/state/local or state/watershed dialogues and partnering on restoration strategies?
- Will better understanding lead to better priority actions and more restoration success?
- Can statewide large watershed priorities for generally targeted action be coordinated with local subwatershed priorities for specific implementation?

Watershed/subwatershed planning:

- Which combination of restorable subwatersheds might achieve the greatest net progress?
- Which subwatersheds could be targeted for restoration to help the larger watershed?
- Is it more important to prioritize local, subwatershed recovery or prioritize subwatershed progress to help downstream goals on larger water bodies?
- Is there an opportunity to prioritize restoration where it can connect healthy corridors, increase healthy patch size, or progressively move downstream from healthy headwaters?

Targeting unmonitored areas:

- Which unmonitored areas that score poorly in RPS but haven't been reported as impaired might be monitored for possible impairment?
- Or, can high restorability scores help target monitoring toward where recoveries may be underway?
- Should prioritizing watersheds in lean times consider prioritizing discovery of new impairments?

Establish a baseline for tracking future recoveries:

- In the future, will high scoring watersheds recover more frequently than the lower scoring ones?
- Which specific indicators are most strongly associated with recoveries in your area?
- How will changing priorities be handled?

Healthy watersheds assessment:

- Which RPS indicators consistently score highly for field-monitored healthy watersheds?
- Do RPS social indicators provide important insights on 'healthy but threatened' watersheds?
- Which RPS indicators can be used to provide a 'potential healthy watersheds' first cut?

Integrating protection and restoration:

- How can restoration and protection collaborate rather than compete for limited resources?
- What synergies are possible through linking healthy watersheds protection and restorability methods?