**Section 760.170 Evaluation of Written Application**

a) The Department shall review each written application submitted in accordance with the program criteria set forth in Section 20 of the Act. Farmers who satisfy all of the following criteria applicable to their operations and submit the required fees may be designated by the Department as a "Rivers-Friendly Farmer":

1) *Soil loss on cropland is at or below the tolerable soil loss levels* (T values) *as certified by a local Soil and Water Conservation District* [505 ILCS 106/20(1)];

2) An *approved farm conservation plan is on file at the local Soil and Water Conservation District* [505 ILCS 106/20(2)]; and

3) *If the farm* has *a vegetative filter strip adjacent to a body of water*, *the strip* is currently present, is being maintained, and *was* originally *constructed in accordance with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Technical Guide* [505 ILCS 106/20(3)].

b) In addition to the criteria contained in subsection (a) of this Section, the Department may consider the applicant's participation in the CRP, CREP, EQIP, CPP or Agricultural Areas Programs in determining the applicant's eligibility for the Rivers-Friendly Farmer designation.

c) Within 60 calendar days after receipt of a completed application form and required fees, the Department, in consultation with a local conservation entity, shall evaluate the written application and determine whether the applicant is eligible to receive the "Rivers-Friendly Farmer" designation.

d) The Department's consultation with the local entity shall include a review by the local conservation entity of the various items listed in subsections (a) and (b) of this Section. The local entity shall issue to the Department a certification regarding whether the applicant's farm meets or does not meet the requirements of the aforementioned subsections.

e) The Department shall, upon receipt of a certification issued by a local SWCD, forward the $35 processing fee to the local SWCD.