

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE
CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD
WETLAND CREATION

(Ac.)

CODE 658

DEFINITION

The creation of a wetland on a site location that was historically non-wetland.

PURPOSE

To establish wetland hydrology, vegetation, and wildlife habitat functions on soils capable of supporting those functions.

CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES

This practice applies only to sites where hydric soils do not exist and the objective is to establish specific wetland functions.

This practice does not apply to:

- The treatment of point and non-point sources of water pollution (Constructed Wetland – Code 656).
- The rehabilitation of a degraded wetland or the reestablishment of a former wetland so that soils, hydrology, vegetative community, and habitat are a close approximation of the original natural condition and boundary that existed prior to the modification. (Wetland Restoration – Code 657).
- The rehabilitation of a degraded wetland, the reestablishment of a former wetland, or the modification of an existing wetland, where specific wetland functions are augmented beyond the original natural conditions; possibly at the expense of other functions. (Wetland Enhancement – Code 659).
- The management of fish and wildlife habitat created under this standard.

CRITERIA

General Criteria Applicable to All Purposes

The purpose, goals, and objectives of the creation shall be clearly defined in the creation plan, including soils, hydrology, vegetation and fish and wildlife habitat criteria that are to be met and are appropriate for the site and the project objectives.

The soils, hydrology and vegetative conditions existing on the site, the adjacent landscape, and the contributing watershed shall be documented in the planning process.

The nutrient and pesticide tolerance of the plant and animal species likely to occur shall be evaluated where known nutrient and pesticide contamination exists. Sites suspected of containing hazardous material shall be tested to identify appropriate remedial measures. If remedial measures are not possible or practicable, the practice shall not be planned.

Water rights, if applicable, shall be assured prior to creation.

Upon completion, the site shall meet the appropriate wetland criteria and provide wetland functions as defined in the project's objectives.

Invasive species, federal/state listed noxious plant species, and nuisance species (e.g., those whose presence or overpopulation jeopardize the practice) shall be controlled on the site. This includes, but is not limited to, the manipulation of water levels or topography to control unwanted vegetation. The establishment and/or use of non-native plant species shall be discouraged.

Establish vegetative buffers around the

created wetlands to reduce the movement of sediment and soluble and sediment-attached substances carried by runoff. Use Filter Strip (393) to determine the minimum width of the vegetative buffer.

The water quality of the drainage area shall be suitable for the intended use of the wetland.

Avoid disturbance to ground nesting species during the primary nesting season.

Criteria for Soils

Created wetlands shall be located in landscape positions and soil types capable of supporting the planned wetland functions.

Changes to soil hydrodynamic and biogeochemical properties such as permeability, porosity, pH, or soil organic carbon levels shall be made as needed to meet the planned objectives.

Criteria for Hydrology

The hydroperiod, hydrodynamics, and dominant water source shall meet the project objectives. The creation plan shall document the adequacy of available water sources based on groundwater investigation, stream gage data, water budgeting, or other appropriate means.

The work associated with the wetland shall not adversely affect adjacent properties or other water users, the capacity of drainage systems on other properties, or back surface water onto an adjoining property, unless agreed to by signed written letter, easement or permit.

Any existing surface or subsurface drainage systems that would affect or be affected by the wetland shall be located and measures taken to determine the extent of those systems. Existing drainage systems will be utilized, removed, or modified as needed to achieve the intended purpose.

Structures to control the water level shall be installed, as needed, for the establishment of desired hydrologic conditions for management of vegetation and for optimum wildlife and fish use. These structures shall meet the requirements of Structure for Water Control (587). Water levels required and the timing of changes shall be specified. Refer to Iowa Biology Technical Note 20.

Water control structures that may impede the movement of target aquatic species or species of concern shall meet the criteria in Fish Passage (396). Preclude fish access to the wetland unless fish habitat is an objective.

Use other structural practices, macrotopography (excavations/fills causing an elevation change over 6 inches) and/or microtopography (excavations/fills causing an elevation change less than 6 inches) to meet the planned objectives.

Macrotopographic features, including ditch plugs installed in lieu of re-filling surface drainage ditches, shall meet the requirements of other practice standards to which they may apply due to purpose, size, water storage capacity, hazard class, or other parameters. If no other practice standard applies, they shall meet the requirements for Dike (356) unless there is no potential for damage to the feature or other areas on or off site due to erosion, breaching, or overtopping.

Engineering structures constructed for wetland creation shall approximate or mimic existing natural topography and micro- and macrotopography.

Criteria for Vegetation

Hydrophytic vegetation planned to meet the selected wetland functions shall be compatible with the planned soil and hydrologic conditions. Preference shall be given to native wetland plants with localized genetic material.

The appropriate species will be established by seeding or planting.

Vegetative establishment shall address species, functional, and structural diversity.

Adequate substrate material and site preparation necessary for proper establishment of the selected plant species shall be included in the plan. Loosening of compacted soils, addition of organic matter, or other soil preparation activities shall be accomplished where necessary to establish desired vegetation.

The minimum number of native species to be established shall be based upon the types of vegetative communities present and the vegetation type planned. To achieve habitat diversity and minimize the adverse effects of

climate, disease, and other limiting factors, several species adapted to the site will be established. Seeding rates shall be based upon the percentage of pure live seed and labeled with a current seed tag from a registered seed laboratory identifying the germination rate, purity analysis, and other seed statistics.

Refer to Conservation Cover (327), Tree/Shrub Establishment (612), Restoration and Management of Declining Habitats (643), Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management (644), and NEH, Part 650, Chapter 13, and applicable Iowa Job Sheets and Technical Notes for vegetation establishment guidance.

If uplands are planned as part of a wetland creation then native species shall be used for these areas as well. Refer to Conservation Cover (327) for herbaceous restorations or Tree/Shrub Establishment (612) and Upland Wildlife Habitat Management (645) if trees and/or shrubs are desired.

CONSIDERATIONS

Hydrology Considerations

Consider the general hydrologic effects of the restoration, including:

- Impacts on downstream stream hydrographs, volumes of surface runoff, and groundwater resources due to changes of water use and movement created by the restoration.

Consider the impacts of water level management, including:

- Increased predation due to concentrating aquatic organisms, including herptivores, in small pool areas during drawdowns.
- Increased predation of amphibians due to high water levels that can sustain predators.
- Decreased ability of aquatic organisms to move within the wetland and from the wetland area to adjacent habitats, including anadromous fish and herptivores, as water levels are decreased.
- Increases in water temperature on-site, and in off-site receiving waters.

- Changes in the quantity and direction of movement of subsurface flows due to increases or decreases in water depth.
- The effect changes in hydrologic regime have on soil bio-geochemical properties; including oxidation/reduction, maintenance of organic soils, and salinity increase or decrease on adjacent areas.
- The potential for water control structures, dikes, and macrotopographic features to negatively impact aquatic organism passage.

Vegetation Considerations

Consider:

- The relative effects of planting density on wildlife habitat versus production rates in woody plantings.
- The potential for vegetative buffers to increase function by trapping sediment, cycling nutrients, and removing pesticides.
- The selection of vegetation for the protection of structural measures that is appropriate for wetland function.
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- The potential for invasive or noxious plant species to establish on bare soils after construction and before the planned plant community is established.
- Consider establishing herbaceous vegetation by a variety of methods over the entire site or a portion of the site, and at densities and appropriate depths.

Soil Considerations

Consider changes of physical soil properties, including:

- Increasing or decreasing saturated hydraulic conductivity by mechanical compaction or tillage, as appropriate.
- Incorporating soil amendments.
- The effect of construction equipment on soil density, infiltration, and structure.

Consider changes in soil bio-geochemical properties, including:

- Increasing soil organic carbon by incorporating compost.
- Increasing or decreasing soil pH with lime, gypsum, or other compounds.

Wildlife Habitat Considerations

Consider:

- The addition of coarse woody debris on sites to be restored to woody plant communities for an initial carbon source.
- The potential to restore habitat capable of supporting wildlife with the ability to control disease vectors such as mosquitoes.
- The potential to establish fish and wildlife corridors linking the site to adjacent landscapes, streams and waterbodies and to increase the sites colonization by native flora.
- The need to provide barriers to passage for unwanted or predatory wildlife species.

PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

Plans and specifications for this practice shall be prepared for each site. Plans and specifications shall be recorded using approved specifications sheets, job sheets, or other documentation. The plans and specifications for structural features will include, at a minimum, a plan view, quantities, and sufficient profiles and cross-sections to define the location, line, and grade for stakeout and checkout. Plans and specifications shall be reviewed and approved by staff with appropriate job approval authority.

The following list of Construction Specifications is intended as a guide to selecting the appropriate specifications for each specific project. The list includes most, but may not contain all, of the specifications needed for a specific project:

- IA-1 Site Preparation
- IA-5 Pollution Control
- IA-6 Seeding and Mulching for Protective Cover
- IA-9 Drainage Tile Investigation and Removal
- IA-11 Removal of Water

- IA-21 Excavation
- IA-23 Earthfill
- IA-26 Topsoiling
- IA-45 Plastic (PVC, PE) Pipe
- IA-46 Tile Drains for Land Drainage
- IA-52 Steel Pipe Conduits

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

A separate Operation and Maintenance (O&M) Plan will be prepared for sites that have structural features. The plan will include specific actions for the normal and repetitive operation of installed structural items, especially water control structures, if included in the project. The plan will also include the maintenance actions necessary to assure that constructed items are maintained as constructed for the life of the project. It will include the inspection schedule, a list of items to inspect, a checklist of potential damages to look for, recommended repairs, and procedures for documentation.

Management and monitoring activities needed to ensure the continued success of the wetland functions may be included in the above plan, or in a separate Management and Monitoring Plan. In addition to the monitoring schedule, this plan shall include the following as appropriate:

- The timing and methods for the use of fertilizers, pesticides, prescribed burning, or mechanical treatments
- Circumstances when the use of biological control of undesirable plant species and pests (e.g. using predator or parasitic species) is appropriate, and the approved methods.
- Actions which specifically address any expected problems from invasive or noxious species
- The circumstances which require the removal of accumulated sediment.
- Conditions which indicate the need to use haying or grazing as a management tool, including timing and methods.
- The timing and level setting of water control structures for the establishment and maintenance of vegetation, soil, and wildlife functions.

REFERENCES

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