

**NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE
CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD
NEW JERSEY**

WETLAND WILDLIFE HABITAT MANAGEMENT

(Ac.)

CODE 644

DEFINITION

Retaining, developing or managing wetland habitat for wetland wildlife.

PURPOSE

To maintain, develop, or improve wetland habitat for waterfowl, shorebirds, fur-bearers, or other wetland dependent or associated flora and fauna.

CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES

On or adjacent to wetlands, rivers, lakes and other water bodies where wetland associated wildlife habitat can be managed. This practice applies to natural wetlands and/or water bodies as well as wetlands that may have been previously restored (657), enhanced (659), and created (658).

CRITERIA

Habitat development and management necessary to achieve the purpose(s), shall be based on a wildlife habitat appraisal using New Jersey Wildlife Fact Sheets and/or USFWS Habitat Suitability Index (HIS). The evaluation procedure shall be used to determine a habitat suitability for either individual fields, home range areas, habitat type or natural community as well as to provide an overall evaluation for the entire property or operation unit. HIS models for individual species can be found at the following web site:
<http://www.nwrc.usgs.gov/wdb/pub/hsi/hsiindex.htm> .

New Jersey Wildlife Fact Sheets can be found under Biology within the Field Office Technical Reference Materials. Other technical information can be obtained from the national NRCS web site at: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov> , under technical/biology.

The evaluation will result in a habitat suitability index for individual species. This will consider the type, amount, and distribution of habitat elements required.

If the evaluation determines that the current habitat quality is less than 0.5, recommendations shall be made to improve the existing habitat so that the planned condition will have a quality rating of 0.5 or above.

If the evaluation is at 0.5 or above, alternatives will be recommended that will result in the necessary management to preserve, maintain, or improve the existing habitat in its present state or toward optimum conditions.

Application of this practice alone, or in combination with other supporting and facilitating practices, shall result in a conservation system that will enable the planning area to meet or exceed the minimum quality criteria for wildlife habitat established in Section III of the FOTG.

Identify wildlife species management goals and objectives. For the desired species, identify the types, amount and distribution of habitat elements and the management actions necessary to achieve the management objectives.

Native plants will be used wherever possible.

Sites containing hazardous waste will be remediated prior to the installation of this practice.

Invasive plant species and federally/state listed noxious and nuisance species shall be controlled on the site. Removal of woody vegetation is not allowable under NJ Wetlands laws.

CONSIDERATIONS

Consider effects management will have on disease vectors such as mosquitoes.

Consider effects on downstream flows or aquifers that would affect other water uses or users.

Consider effects on fish and wildlife habitats that would be associated with the practice.

Establishing vegetative buffers on surrounding uplands can reduce the delivery of sediment and soluble and sediment-attached contaminants carried by runoff and/or wind.

The nutrient and pesticide tolerance of the species planned should be considered where known nutrient and pesticide contamination exists.

Consider effects on temperature of water resources to prevent undesired effects on aquatic and wildlife communities.

Soil disturbance associated with the installation of this practice may increase the potential of invasion by unwanted species.

Adding dead snags, tree trunks or logs can provide structure and cover for wildlife and serve as a carbon source for food chain support.

For discharge wetlands, consider underground upslope water and/or groundwater source availability.

When determining which species to plant, consider microtopography and different hydrology levels.

Consider effects of management actions on compliance with state and federal hunting regulation (e.g., baiting).

Water level draw-downs may increase the potential for turtle mortality (4).

Consider effects of livestock grazing on runoff, infiltration, wetland vegetation and nesting success.

Adding artificial nesting structures that are appropriate for the region can increase utilization of these areas.

Locating this practice adjacent to existing wetlands and other water bodies will provide connectivity to these cover types.

The improved habitat that results from the installation of this practice may lead to increased crop depredation by wildlife on adjacent cropland.

Consider adjacent wetlands or water bodies that contribute to wetland system complexity and diversity, decrease habitat fragmentation, and maximize use of the site by wetland-associated wildlife.

PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

Document how habitat needs will be provided for the desired kinds of wildlife:

- required depth of water during the different seasons;
- types and sizes of structures required;
- desired native plant species and the means of establishing and maintaining them.

Specific information may be provided using appropriate job sheets or written documentation in the conservation plan.

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

A plan for operation and maintenance at a minimum should include monitoring and management of structural and vegetative measures.

Haying and livestock grazing plans, if haying or livestock grazing is used as a needed wildlife management tool, will be developed to allow the establishment, development and management of wetland and associated upland vegetation for the intended wetland and/or wildlife purpose.

Biological control of undesirable plant species and pests (e.g., using predator or parasitic

species) shall be implemented where available and feasible.

Added water depth and duration may be utilized as a method to control unwanted vegetation (e.g., reed canary grass).

REFERENCES

Hall, C.D. and F.J. Cuthbert. 2000. Impact of a controlled wetland drawdown on Blanding's Turtles in Minnesota. *Chelonian Conservation Biology*. Vol. 3, No. 4, pp. 643-649.

Helmers, D.L. 1992. Shorebird management manual. Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network, Manomet, MA 58 pp.

Payne, Neil F. 1992. Techniques for wildlife habitat management of wetlands. McGraw-Hill, Inc. 549 pp.

Smith, Loren M. and Roger L. Pederson. 1989. Habitat management for migrating and wintering waterfowl in North America. Texas Tech University Press, 574 pp.