

**NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE  
CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD  
WETLAND CREATION**

(Ac.)  
CODE 658

**DEFINITION**

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

**PURPOSE**

To create wetland functions and values.

**CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES**

This practice applies to sites where no natural wetland occurred historically and contain soils that are not hydric.<sup>(1,2,3)</sup>

This practice does not apply to:

- a constructed wetland (656) intended to treat point and non-point sources of water pollution;
- wetland enhancement (659) intended to rehabilitate a degraded wetland where specific functions and/or values are enhanced beyond original conditions; or
- wetland restoration (657) intended to rehabilitate a degraded wetland where the soils, hydrology, vegetative community, and biological habitat are returned to approximate original wetland conditions.

**CRITERIA**

**General Criteria Applicable to All Purposes**

The purpose, goals and objectives of the wetland creation shall be clearly defined, including the soils, hydrology and vegetation criteria that are to be met and are appropriate for the site and the project purposes.

The soil, hydrology and vegetative characteristics existing on the site and the contributing watershed shall be documented before the wetland is created.

Where known nutrient and pesticide contamination exists, the species selected will be tolerant of these conditions.

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

Sites containing hazardous material shall be cleaned prior to the installation of this practice. Soil testing shall be used to determine appropriate actions to clean sites suspected of containing hazardous wastes.

Water rights shall be assured prior to creation.

Disturbance to ground nesting species shall be minimized.

Invasive species, federal/state listed noxious plant species, and nuisance species (e.g., those whose presence or overpopulation jeopardize the effectiveness of the practice) shall be controlled on the site. The establishment and/or use of non-native plant species shall be discouraged, and where possible, controlled.

**Criteria for Soils**

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

Loosening of compacted soils, addition of organic matter, or other soil preparation activities, shall be accomplished where necessary to establish desired vegetation.

**Criteria for Hydrology**

The site shall be designed to create hydrologic conditions (including the timing of inflow and outflow, duration, and frequency) that provide the desired wetland functions.

Wetland micro- and macro-topography shall be created to achieve hydrologic diversity and enhance the desired effect.

The work associated with the wetland shall not adversely affect adjacent properties or other water

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users unless agreed to by signed written letter, easement or permit.

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

Existing drainage systems will be utilized, removed or modified as needed to achieve the intended purpose.

### **Criteria for Vegetation**

Establish hydrophytic vegetation typical for the wetland type(s) being established.

Preference shall be given to native wetland plants with localized genetic material.

Where natural colonization of selected species will realistically dominate within 5 years, sites may be left to revegetate naturally. If a site has not become dominated by the targeted species within 5 years, active forms of revegetation may be required.

Adequate substrate material and site preparation necessary for proper establishment of the selected plant species shall be included in the design.

Where planting and/or seeding is necessary, the minimum number of native species to be established shall be based upon the types of hydrological zones present (planned) 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 percentage of pure live seed to be tested within 6 months of planting.

### **CONSIDERATIONS**

On sites where woody vegetation will dominate, consider adding 1 or 2 dead snags, tree stumps, or logs per acre, where appropriate, to provide structure and cover for wildlife and a carbon source for food chain support.

The potential for occurrence of threatened or endangered species shall be evaluated for each site proposed for wetland creation.

Consider existing wetland and floodplain functions and/or values that may be adversely impacted.

Consider effect that wetland creation will have on disease vectors such as mosquitoes.

Consider effect of volumes and rates of runoff, infiltration, evaporation and transpiration on the water budget.

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

Consider the effect of water control structures on the ability of fish and other aquatic species to move in and out of the wetland.

Consider timing of water control to mimic the natural hydrological regime of a natural wetland in the area, further enhancing the habitat for aquatic species.

Consider linking wetlands by corridors of vegetation or habitat wherever appropriate to enhance the wetland's use and colonization by the native flora and fauna.

Consider establishing vegetative buffers on surrounding uplands to reduce sediment and soluble and sediment-attached substance carried by runoff and/or wind.

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 for invasion by unwanted species.

Consider micro-topography, hydrology and hydroperiod when determining which species of vegetation to plant.

Where visual quality would be impacted by structures (e.g., outlet structures, dikes, etc.), consider using low profile structures, natural screening, and or colors that minimize the impact.

Consider controlling water levels to prevent oxidation of organic soils and inundated organic matter and materials.

Consider the effects that location, installation and management may have on subsurface cultural resources.

### **PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS**

Specifications for this practice shall be prepared for each site. Specifications shall be recorded using approved specifications sheets, job sheets, narrative statements in the conservation plan, or other

documentation. Requirements for the operation and maintenance of the practice shall be incorporated into site specifications. Plans and specifications should be reviewed by staff with appropriate training in design and implementation of wetland restoration.

#### **OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE**

The following actions shall be carried out to insure that this practice functions as intended throughout its expected life. These actions include normal repetitive activities in the application and use of the practice (operation), and repair and upkeep of the practice (maintenance):

Any use of fertilizers, mechanical treatments, prescribed burning, pesticides and other chemicals to assure the wetland enhancement function shall not compromise the intended purpose.

Control of undesirable plant species and pests using biological means (e.g., use of predator or parasitic species), or by manipulation of water levels shall be implemented where available and feasible.

Timing and level setting of water control structures is required for the establishment of desired hydrologic conditions, for management of vegetation and for optimum wildlife and fish use.

An inspection schedule shall be established for embankments and structures for damage assessment.

Management actions shall maintain vegetation and control unwanted vegetation.

Haying and grazing will be used as appropriate to manage vegetation.

The control of water depth and duration may be utilized to control unwanted vegetation.

#### **REFERENCES**

Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended, Section 7, p 19 – 28.

Executive Order 13112, Invasive Species, February 3, 1999. Federal Register: vol.64, no.25. Feb. 8, 1999.

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Kingsbury, Bruce & Joanne Gibson, 2002. Habitat Management Guidelines for Amphibians and Reptiles of the Midwest. Partners in Amphibian & Reptile Conservation, Ft Wayne IN, 57 pp.

Maschhoff, Justin T & James H. Dooley, 2001. Functional Requirements and Design Parameters for Restocking Coarse Woody Features in Restored Wetlands, ASAE Meeting Presentation, Paper No: 012059.

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<http://msa.ars.usda.gov/ms/oxford/nsl/projects/restoration/RestorationManual.html>.

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