United States Department of Agriculture

Natural Resources Conservation Service

CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD

WETLAND WILDLIFE HABITAT MANAGEMENT

CODE 644

(ac)

DEFINITION

Retaining, developing or managing wetland habitat for wetland wildlife.

PURPOSE

This practice is used to accomplish one or more of the following purposes–

- 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 NRCS Conservation Practice Standard (CPS) Wetland Restoration (Code 657), enhanced NRCS CPS Wetland Enhancement (Code 659), and created NRCS CPS Wetland Creation (Code 658).

CRITERIA

General Criteria Applicable to All Purposes

A habitat evaluation or appraisal, approved by the NRCS state office, shall be used to identify habitat- limiting factors in the planning area.

Application of this practice shall remove or reduce limiting factor(s) in their order of significance, as indicated by results of the habitat evaluation.

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 planning 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.

NRCS reviews and periodically updates conservation practice standards. To obtain the current version of this standard, contact your Natural Resources Conservation Service State office or visit the Field Office Technical Guide online by going to the NRCS website at https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/ and type FOTG in the search field.

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Native plants will be used wherever possible.

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

Invasive plant species and federally/state listed noxious and nuisance species shall be controlled on the site.

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.

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.

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

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