

Pollinator Habitat Plan

Practice Activity Code No. 146

1. Definition

A pollinator habitat plan is a site-specific conservation plan developed for a client that addresses the improvement, restoration, enhancement, expansion of flower-rich habitat that supports native and/or managed pollinators.

The pollinator habitat plan will:

- a) Comply with all federal, state, tribal, and local laws, regulations, and permit requirements.
- b) Meet the client's objectives.

2. Pollinator Habitat Plan Technical Criteria

This section establishes the minimum criteria to be addressed in the development of Pollinator Habitat Enhancement Plans.

A. General Criteria

1. An Environmental Evaluation (EE) (CPA 52) is to be prepared for all activity plans to demonstrate NRCS compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act, National Historic Preservation Act, Endangered Species Act, Environmental Justice, Air Quality, and other designated environmental concerns and environmental laws. The environmental effects from the activity plans on environmental resource concerns should be clearly documented on the EE (CPA-52 form). The following is abbreviated guidance for preparation of the EE:
 - a. Planners and TSPs should follow the EE guidance delineated in the National Environmental Compliance Handbook.
 - b. The EE describes the existing conditions for all applicable resource concerns.
 - c. The EE will assess the resources potentially impacted by the no action, proposed action and any reasonable alternatives.
 - d. Guide sheets will accompany the EE, as needed, to provide information on how to assess and deal with special environmental concerns.
 - e. The findings section of the EE is to identify whether NRCS has determined based on the analysis of the EE: (1) that a site specific environmental assessment (EA) or an environmental impact statement (EIS) should be prepared based on the significance of potential impacts, or (2) the EE can be tiered to a state, regional, or national programmatic EA or EIS because the proposed effects have been sufficiently analyzed in a state, regional, national programmatic EA or EIS.
 - f. TSP and planners are required to complete NRCS' Level I Environmental Compliance training prior to the preparation of any EE CPA 52.
2. A Pollinator Habitat Plan shall be developed by certified Technical Service Providers (TSPs). In accordance with Section 1240 (A), the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) program provides funding support through contracts with eligible producers to obtain services of certified TSPs for development of Pollinator Habitat Plans. The specific TSP

criteria required for Pollinator Habitat Plan development is located on the TSP registry (TechReg) web site at: <http://techreg.usda.gov/>

B. Background and site information

1. Landowner information – name, address, operation, size
2. Location and plan map of parcel

C. Identify Client Objectives such as:

1. Improve pollination service provided by wild (unmanaged) bees by:
 - a. Increasing floral diversity and ensuring continuous and diverse bloom,
 - b. Increasing undisturbed habitat/ground (including the creation of alkali or other ground-nesting bee beds),
 - c. Increasing nesting opportunities for tunnel-nesting bees, and
 - d. Providing pollinator refugia.
2. Improve pollen diversity and nectar availability for managed bees kept on-site.
3. Increase diversity and availability of butterfly host plants.
4. Increase abundance of beneficial insects important for pest management.
5. Improve cost efficiency (e.g. removal of marginal crop land from production and/or improvement of produce quality from enhanced pollination).
6. Maintain or improve wildlife habitat.
7. Maintain or improve water quality.
8. Prevent or reduce erosion.
9. Beautify the landscape.
10. Provide pollinator populations with refuge from pesticides.
11. Change or adjust pesticide use to reduce hazards for native pollinator populations.

D. Existing Conditions

1. Create the conservation plan map including field boundaries, streams, surface waters, wetlands, fences, and land uses. (See the National Planning Procedures Handbook for requirements of the Conservation Plan Map)
2. Acquire a soils map (Web Soil Survey is one source) and appropriate soil descriptions and interpretations for the land use, plant community, and resource concerns.
3. Identify the number of acres available.
4. Use an appropriate State or NRCS/approved habitat assessment, evaluation, or Habitat Suitability Index model and the Ecological Site Description (where available) to define the existing conditions for wildlife.

5. Document the existing management practices and activities on cropped and non-cropped portions of the property.

E. Planning Considerations for Desired Future Conditions/Goals

1. Consider a composition of 9-12 species of native flowering plants, three of which are in bloom at any one time during the growing season for the specific geographical location. Note: if planting is designed to support adjacent insect-pollinated agriculture, then:
 - a) Minimize bloom competition with insect-pollinated crops, and
 - b) Take care to avoid plants that may serve as crop pest or disease hosts.
2. Minimize weed competition, with inclusion, where appropriate, of beneficial “weeds” (e.g., milkweed as Monarch butterfly host plants).
3. Consider availability of areas of undisturbed pollinator habitat:
 - a) Areas appropriate for ground-nesting bees that are not tilled.
 - b) Overgrown bunch grasses for bumble bee nest sites
 - c) Host plants for butterflies
 - d) Tree cavities, standing dead trees, exfoliating bark, pithy or hollow stems such as elderberry and *rubus* spp. (e.g., in riparian or adjacent land) for wood-nesting bees
4. Adequate clean water source(s) are available for honey bees

F. Pollinator Habitat Planning Documentation

1. Conservation plan map –scale, north arrow, planned and existing boundaries, fields, land use, appropriate map symbols, and, where available, the identification of ecological sites by field.
2. Soils map – legend, appropriate interpretations, and, where available, the ecological site descriptions
3. Resource Concerns addressed by the conservation plan
4. Contingency plans for harsh winter conditions, drought, fire, flooding, and other extraordinary events
5. Conservation plan (record of decisions) (*Utilizing Customer Service Toolkit – Plug-In or MsWord Document*) to address the resource needs for the “Pollinator Habitat Plan”. The record of decisions shall include the planned practice, schedule for implementation, and site-specific specifications to apply the conservation practice. The site-specific specifications for individual practices can be documented on available NRCS Jobsheets or included in the plan in a narrative form where jobsheets are not available. Planned engineering practices shall include the conservation practice, schedule of implementation, and be identified on the plan map. The plan may include, but is not limited to, the conservation practices listed below:

“*” Indicates the most appropriate practices

- Alley Cropping 311
- Channel Bank Vegetation 322
- Conservation Cover 327
- Conservation Crop Rotation 328
- Constructed Wetland 656,
- Contour Buffer Strips 332
- Cover Crop 340 *
- Critical Area Planting 342 *
- Early Successional Habitat Development/Management 647 *
- Field Border 386 *
- Filter Strip 393
- Grassed Waterway 412
- Hedgerow Planting 422 *
- Herbaceous Wind Barriers 603
- Multi-Story Cropping 379
- Pasture and Hay Planting 512
- Pest Management 595 *
- Prescribed Burning 338
- Prescribed Grazing 528
- Range Planting 550 *
- Residue and Tillage Management, No-Till/Strip Till/Direct Seed 329 *
- Restoration and Management of Rare and Declining Habitats 643 *
- Riparian Forest Buffer 391 *
- Riparian Herbaceous Cover 390 *
- Silvopasture Establishment 381
- Stream Habitat Improvement and Management 395 *
- Streambank and Shoreline Protection 580
- Stripcropping 585
- Tree/Shrub Establishment 612 *
- Upland Wildlife Habitat Management 645 *
- Vegetative Barriers 601 *

- Wetland Enhancement 659 *
- Wetland Restoration 657
- Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management 644
- Windbreak/Shelterbelt Establishment 380 *
- Windbreak/Shelterbelt Renovation 650 *

3. Deliverables for the Client – a hardcopy of the plan that includes:

- Cover page – name, address, phone of client and TSP; Total Acres of the Plan, signature blocks for the TSP, producer, and a signature block for the NRCS acceptance.
- Soils map and appropriate soil descriptions
- Resource assessment results (wind and water erosion, habitat assessments, soil fertility, soil quality, and others that may be needed)
- For management practices. The planned practices and the site-specific specifications, on how each practice will be applied, pollinator monitoring; when the practice will be applied, and the extent (acres or number) that will be applied.
- For engineering/structural practices. The planned practice, when it will be applied, and the extent and location on the conservation plan map.

4. Deliverables for NRCS Field Office:

- Complete Hardcopy and Electronic copy of the client's plan (MsWord copy)
- Digital Conservation Plan Map with fields, features, and structural practices located
- Digital Soils Map
- Completed CPA 52 and appropriate worksheets