

Landowner _____

WETLAND ENHANCEMENT INFORMATION**WHAT IS WETLAND ENHANCEMENT?**

The rehabilitation or re-establishment of a degraded wetland and/or modification of a wetland to add features not present on the site under natural conditions. Ideally, successful enhancement of the wetland will provide functions and values beyond what naturally occurred on the site for specific uses or purposes.

**WHERE DOES THIS PRACTICE APPLY?**

This practice applies to any wetland where the objective is specifically to enhance selected wetland functions and values by improvements or alterations in the hydrology, vegetation or topography of the wetland.

HOW DOES IT HELP THE LAND AND WILDLIFE?

Long regarded as wastelands, wetlands are now recognized as important features in the landscape that provide numerous benefits to people, and fish and wildlife.

Enhancing wetlands to improve functions and values for selected beneficial purposes can improve wildlife use and diversity, improve water quality, and improve aesthetic qualities. Unless we reverse the tide of wetland loss (about 60,000 acres each year nationally) by restoring degraded wetlands and maximizing benefits by enhancing the functions and values the quality our waters will continue to be threatened, and a part of our natural heritage will be lost. Sixty-seven percent of Oklahoma's original wetlands have been lost. Many of the wetlands that remain today continue to be degraded and can be improved through enhancement.



Wetlands are some of the most biologically productive natural ecosystems in the world, comparable to tropical rain forests and coral reefs in their productivity and the diversity of species they support. Abundant vegetation and shallow water provide diverse habitats for fish and wildlife. Often called "nurseries of life," wetlands provide habitat for thousands of species of both aquatic and terrestrial plants and animals.

TO APPLY THIS PRACTICE

All enhancement projects require planning, implementation, monitoring, and management. Many projects require a team with expertise in ecology, hydrology, soils, engineering, and environmental planning. Details for implementing this practice and providing habitat for wildlife are recorded in the Oklahoma NRCS Wetland Enhancement (659) Standard, which can be found in Section IV of the NRCS Field Office Technical Guide. Planning considerations should include the following:

- The landowner will need to obtain all necessary local, state, and Federal permits before restoration begins.
- Determine the enhancement goals and objectives of targeted natural wetland functions for the wetland type and site location.
- Consider existing natural features when planning and incorporating enhanced hydrologic, vegetative, and topographic features on the wetland landscape.
- Select plant species and varieties best adapted to the climate and the soils in the field being established to permanent vegetative cover.
- Consider establishing vegetative buffers on associated uplands to reduce the movement of sediment, and provide nesting cover. Minimum buffer width for wildlife is 100'.
- Consider the long-term use, objectives, and wildlife species to benefit in selection of the vegetative community to be established.
- Consider linking wetlands by corridors wherever possible to enhance the wetlands use and colonization by flora and fauna.
- Proper management of the wetland enhancement features is essential to achieve and maintain the full potential of the site for the desired habitat type. Refer to *Oklahoma NRCS Practice 644 - Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management*

MAINTAINING WETLAND ENHANCEMENTS

Document the operation and maintenance requirements in a plan to ensure that the practice is functioning as intended. Operation and maintenance items that should be addressed in the plan include:

- Appropriate management and monitoring of vegetative cover both within the wetland basin and the surrounding upland
- Monitoring of hydrologic enhancements (i.e., islands, swales, dikes, and control structures)
- Control of sediment delivery to the wetland
- Management of weed infestations and nuisance wildlife species
- Compatible uses (i.e., haying, grazing, burning, water control)



FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION OR ASSISTANCE:

- Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation
- OSU Extension Wildlife Specialist
- Conservation District

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