

**NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE
CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD**

WETLAND WILDLIFE HABITAT MANAGEMENT

(Ac.)

CODE 644

DEFINITION

Retaining, developing or managing wetland habitat for wetland wildlife.

identify the types, amount and distribution of habitat elements and the management actions necessary to achieve the management objectives.

PURPOSE

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

Equipment travel, grazing, haying, habitat management/maintenance practices, and other disturbance activities shall be restricted during critical periods such as nesting and brood rearing seasons. In Mississippi, this critical period is from April 1 to October 1. Exceptions can be allowed to maintain the health of the plant or ecological community being managed for the benefit of wildlife (e.g., mechanical or other means to control noxious vegetation during establishment or restoration of desirable vegetation or use of prescribed fire to mimic natural seasonal occurrence of fire). Exceptions must be approved by an NRCS biologist.

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).

Native plants will be used wherever possible.

CRITERIA

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

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

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

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

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.

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

Identify wildlife species management goals and objectives. For the desired species,

Conservation practice standards are reviewed periodically, and updated if needed. To obtain the current version of this standard contact your Natural Resources Conservation Service [State Office](#), or visit the [electronic Field Office Technical Guide](#).

**NRCS, Mississippi
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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.

Biological control of undesirable plant species and pests (e.g., using predator or parasitic species) may be the least damaging alternative for pest control.

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

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. 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.

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

Plans and specifications shall be transmitted to clients using NRCS approved specifications sheets, job sheets, technical notes, or customized narrative statements included in the conservation plan.

Written specifications, schedules and maps shall be prepared for each planning area and each habitat type.

Specifications shall:

- Identify the amounts and kinds habitat elements, locations and management actions necessary to achieve the client's management objectives.
- Describe the appropriate method, timing and intensity of management needed to produce the desired habitat conditions and sustain them over time, such as
 - 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.

NRCS shall ensure that plans and specifications for this practice are reviewed and approved by an NRCS biologist and other staff with appropriate training in design and implementation of wetland restoration. Approval by state wildlife agency or other

biologist can occur when directed by NRCS State biologist.

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

The following actions shall be carried out to ensure that this practice functions as intended throughout its expected life:

- Evaluate habitat conditions on a regular basis in order to adapt the conservation plan and schedule of implementation.
- A plan for operation and maintenance at a minimum should include monitoring and management of structural and vegetative measures.

REFERENCES

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