

**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.

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 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 and values 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.

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.

Any use of fertilizers, mechanical treatments, prescribed burning, pesticides and other chemicals to assure the wetland enhancement

function shall not compromise the intended purpose.

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 and values.

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 and values.

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 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 vegetative communities present 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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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

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.

Establish an inspection schedule for embankments and structures for damage assessment.

The depth of accumulated sediment should be measured and the accumulations removed when the planned project objectives are jeopardized.

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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