Fish and Wildlife Habitat Plan Criteria

Practice/Activity Code (142) (No.)

1. Definition

A fish and wildlife habitat plan is a site-specific plan developed for a client who is ready to plan and implement decisions with consideration for fish and wildlife habitat and other biological resources.

A Fish and Wildlife Habitat Plan:

- Meets Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) quality criteria for fish and wildlife habitat and other identified resource concerns;
- Complies with federal, state, tribal and local laws, regulations and permit requirements;
- Addresses the client's objectives.

2. Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Plan Criteria

This section establishes the minimum criteria to be addressed in the development of a

Fish and Wildlife Habitat Plan

A. General Criteria

A Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Plan shall be developed by a certified technical service provider. 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 Technical Service Providers (TSPs) for development an Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Plan. The specific criteria required for each type of certification for TSP is located on the TSP registry (TechReg) web site at: http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/technical/tsp

B. Fish and Wildlife Plan Criteria

- A fish and wildlife activity conservation plan will address NRCS quality criteria for fish and wildlife and soil erosion, water quality, or other identified resource concerns.
- The plan will comply with Federal, State, Tribal, and local laws, regulations, and permit requirements.
- Satisfy the participant's objectives in regard to fish and wildlife resources.

C. Background and Site Information

- Landowner information – name, address, operation, size
- Location and plan map of parcel
- Documentation of existing practices/history
- Resource inventory
- Fish and wildlife resource concerns

D. Client Objectives

- Manage working lands for fish and wildlife resources
- Increase populations of selected species or groups
- Maintain populations of selected species or groups
- Improve habitat for aquatic, wetland, and/or terrestrial species

E. Document Existing Conditions

- Conservation plan map – boundaries, fields, scale, streams, surface waters, wetlands, fences, land uses, etc.
- Soils map – legend, interpretations for fish and wildlife resources
- Client's decisions – conservation practices needed to achieve objectives
- Habitat assessment, evaluations, or Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) models
- Current management activities
- Carrying capacity for selected species/resources

F. Desired Future Conditions/Goals

- Improve or maintain fish and wildlife population levels
- Restore fish and wildlife species or habitats

G. Assessing/Monitoring of Fish and Wildlife Populations

- Evaluation methods and approach
- Assessment design

H. Conservation Practices and/or Activities and Support Documents

- Fish and wildlife-related Conservation Practice Standards - The National Handbook of Conservation Practices lists more than 170 practices. Virtually every conservation practice impacts fish and wildlife resources in some manner. The practices listed in Attachment 1 are specifically related to fish and wildlife resources. These practices will, when properly implemented and/or managed, positively affect biological resources. Attachment 2 relates conservation practices to groupings of biological resources.
- Habitat assessment guides (State specific). Habitat evaluations and Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) models for many fish and wildlife species are available to guide the planner in formulating alternatives for the land owner/participant. The alternative(s) selected are implemented through one or more conservation practices that provide or improve needed habitat elements. The practices, when implemented, should achieve the participant's objectives, solve identified problems, and improve habitat conditions.
- Requirements from State-specific Field Office Technical Guide

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 (habitat assessment, etc.)
- Complete Hardcopy of the client's plan (MsWord copy) with the planned conservation practices and their respective practice site-specific specifications in a NRCS approved jobsheet, or separate practice plan for the following practices:

Code	Practice Name
643	Restoration and Management of Declining Habitats
644	Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management
645	Upland Wildlife Habitat Management

- For other practices they shall be documented in the plan for the planned amount, the fields where the practice is to be applied, and the planned year of application.

4. **Deliverables for NRCS Field Office:**

- Complete Hardcopy and Electronic copy of the client's plan (MsWord copy) and other appropriate digital supporting files.
- Digital Conservation Plan Map with fields, features, and structural practices located.
- Digital Soils Map.

5. **References**

1. National Planning Procedures Handbook
2. Field Office Technical Guide
3. National Biology Handbook
4. National Biology Manual
5. National Forestry Manual
6. National Forestry Handbook
7. National Environmental Compliance Handbook
8. TechReg Technical Service Provider Registry

Attachment 1 - Typical Conservation Practices/Fish and Wildlife Resources

National Conservation Practice Standards Specific to Fish and Wildlife Resources
Aquaculture Ponds (397)—A water impoundment constructed and managed for commercial aquaculture production. To provide suitable aquatic environment for producing, growing, and harvesting commercial aquaculture products.
Constructed Wetland (656)—A wetland constructed for the primary purpose of water quality improvement; i.e., treatment of wastewater, sewage, surface runoff, milk-house wastewater, silage leachate, and mine drainage. Practice treats wastewater by the biological and mechanical activities of the constructed wetland.
Early Successional Habitat Development/Management (647)—Manage early plant succession to benefit desired wildlife or natural communities. Increase plant community diversity, provide wildlife habitat for early successional species and provide habitat for declining species.
Field Border (386)—A strip of perennial grass or shrubs established at or around the edge of a field. Field borders provide productive habitat for wildlife that favor early successional habitats on agricultural landscapes.
Fish Passage (396)—Eliminating or mitigating the effects of natural or artificial barriers, such as dams, culverts, or cross-channel structures to fish and other aquatic organisms. Allows for the unimpeded movement of aquatic organisms past stream barriers.
Fishpond Management (399)—Developing or improving impounded water to produce fish and other aquatic organisms for domestic use or recreation. Provides a suitable aquatic environment for producing, growing, and harvesting fish or other aquatic organisms.
Restoration and Management of Declining Habitats (643)—Restoring and conserving rare or declining native vegetated communities and associated wildlife species to restore and manage habitats degraded by human activity, increase native plant community diversity, or manage unique or declining native habitats.
Riparian Herbaceous Cover (390)—Consists of grasses, grass-like plants, and forbs at the fringe of the water along watercourses. Provides habitat for aquatic and terrestrial organisms, improves and protects water quality, stabilizes the channel bed and streambanks, establishes corridors to provide landscape linkages among existing habitats, and fosters management of existing riparian herbaceous habitat to improve or maintain desired plant communities.
Shallow Water Management for Wildlife (646)—Managing shallow water on agricultural lands and moist soil areas for wildlife habitat. Areas provide open water areas to facilitate waterfowl resting and feeding, and habitat for amphibians and reptiles that serve as important prey species for other wildlife.
Stream Habitat Improvement and Management (395)—Create, restore, maintain, or enhance physical, chemical, and biological functions of a stream system to provide desired quality and quantity of water, fish, and wildlife habitat, channel morphology and stability, and aesthetics and recreation opportunities.
Upland Wildlife Habitat Management (645)—Creating, restoring, maintaining, or enhancing areas for food, cover, and water for upland wildlife and species that use upland habitat for part of their life cycle. Provide all of the habitat elements in the proper amounts and distribution, and manage the species to achieve a viable wildlife population within the species home range.

Attachment 1 continued

National Conservation Practice Standards Specific to Fish and Wildlife Resources
Wetland Creation (658)—A wetland created on a site location that historically was not a wetland or was a wetland but with a different hydrology, vegetation type, or function than naturally occurred on the site. Create wetlands that have wetland hydrology, hydrophytic plant communities, hydric soil conditions, and wetland functions and/or values.
Wetland Enhancement (659)—The modification or rehabilitation of an existing or degraded wetland where specific function and/or values are improved for the purpose of meeting specific project objectives. For example, managing site hydrology for waterfowl or amphibian use, or managing plant community composition for native wetland hay production.
Wetland Restoration (657)—A rehabilitation of a degraded wetland where soils, hydrology, vegetative community, and biological habitat are returned to the original condition to the extent practicable. To restore wetland conditions and functions that occurred on the disturbed wetland site prior to modification to the extent practicable.
Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management (644)—Retaining, developing, or managing habitat for wetland wildlife. To maintain, develop, or improve habitat for waterfowl, furbearers, or other wetland-associated wildlife.
Wildlife Watering Facility (648)—Constructing, improving, or modifying watering facilities or places for wildlife to obtain drinking water.

Attachment 2 - Conservation Practices and Affected Biological Resources

Biological Resource	Relevant Practices
Aquatic Invertebrates—crayfish, snails, stoneflies, mayflies, riffle beetles	Stream Habitat Improvement and Management , Riparian Forest Buffer, Wetland Restoration
Terrestrial Invertebrates—earthworms, nematodes, dung beetles	Conservation Cover, Forest Stand Improvement, Prescribed Grazing
Pollinators—bees, butterflies, moths, birds, bats	Alley Cropping, Conservation Crop Rotation, Tree/Shrub Establishment, Early Successional Habitat Development/Management
Fish	Nutrient Management, Irrigation Water Management, Riparian Forest Buffer, Stream Habitat Improvement and Management, Wetland Restoration, Fish Passage
Amphibians	Pond, Stream Habitat Improvement and Management, Wetland Restoration
Reptiles	Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management, Wetland Restoration, Restoration and Management of Declining Habitats
Birds	Hedgerow Planting, Early Successional Habitat Development/Management, Prescribed Burning, Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management, Shallow Water Management for Wildlife, Prescribed Grazing, Irrigation Water Management, Restoration and Management of Declining Habitats, Wetland Restoration, Field Border, Residue Management, No-Till and Strip Till, Windbreak/Shelterbelt Establishment, Riparian Buffer, Filter Strip, Forest Harvest Management,
Mammals	Brush Management, Prescribed Grazing, Wildlife Watering Facility, Fence, Forest Stand Improvement, Riparian Forest Buffer, Tree/Shrub Establishment, Conservation Cover, Stream Habitat Improvement and Management, Windbreak/Shelterbelt Establishment; Early Successional Habitat Development and Management, Prescribed Grazing, Structure for Water Control, Mine Shaft & Audit Closing, Forest Harvest