

ILLINOIS WILDLIFE HABITAT EVALUATION

Use this evaluation when planning a Resource Management System for general assessment of wildlife habitat which supports common species in agricultural landscapes. If a field or planning unit is to be intensively managed for one species, or to evaluate habitat for species that requires large acreages of one habitat type, or to specifically benefit a threatened or endangered species, use a species based wildlife habitat appraisal. This tool evaluates habitat at the tract level. It does not evaluate the percent or mixture of habitat types that are needed for a desired purpose at the landscape or watershed scale.

Evaluate existing conditions, or if appropriate, alternative conditions to be expected after planned management. Management may include conservation practices that will raise the general habitat quality of the area, conversion of one habitat type to another, change in grazing pressure, timber management, etc.

PROCEDURE 1) Identify all areas in the planning unit as cropland, woodland, grassland or wetland. If a field contains areas of more than one habitat type (e.g. woody fence row along cropland), evaluate each area within the field according to the criteria appropriate for the habitat type being assessed.

2) If the planning unit has only one field in a habitat type, or all fields of a habitat type are similar, select one field at random to represent that habitat type. If the planning unit has fields of the same habitat type that vary in quality, inventory each field and compute a weighted average score (see weighted average tables below).

3) Complete the inventory on the reverse side in the field and compute the score for each habitat type. Interpolate between levels as needed. If values for all questions for a habitat type are at least 5, the habitat score is the sum of the value for each question in that habitat type divided by the highest possible score for that habitat type. If the value for any question in a habitat type is less than 5, the habitat score is the lowest value achieved divided by 10.

4) Record the habitat scores for each habitat evaluated in the summary table below for existing conditions. Compute Habitat Units by multiplying the habitat score by acres of that habitat in the evaluation area. If the score for any habitat type is low, plan conservation practices that will raise the score for that habitat type. Repeat evaluation assuming the planned alternative is installed and record results in planned condition summary table.

QUALITY CRITERIA

In order to meet Field Office Technical Guide Resource Quality Criteria for animal/wildlife, the score for any habitat type comprising more than 25% of the total acreage under consideration must have a habitat score of at least 0.5. In general a score of 0.3 or below indicates poor habitat, above 0.3 to 0.5 is fair habitat, above 0.5 to 0.7 is good, and above 0.7 is excellent habitat.

SCORES

Client _____ Tract _____ Date _____

EXISTING CONDITION

Weighted Average For _____					Habitat Type
Field No.	Field Acres	Habitat Score	Acres X Score		Total Acres X Score ----- Total Acres = Weighted Av.
		X	=		
		X	=		
		X	=		
		X	=		
Total		Divided into		=	

PLANNED CONDITION

Weighted Average For _____					Habitat Type
Field No.	Field Acres	Habitat Score	Acres X Score		Total Acres X Score ----- Total Acres = Weighted Av.
		X	=		
		X	=		
		X	=		
		X	=		
Total		Divided into		=	

Summary of Habitat Types				
Habitat Type	Habitat Acres	Habitat Score	Acres X Score =	Habitat Units
Cropland		X	=	
Grassland		X	=	
Woodland		X	=	
Wetland		X	=	

Summary of Habitat Types				
Habitat Type	Habitat Acres	Habitat Score	Acres X Score =	Habitat Units
Cropland		X	=	
Grassland		X	=	
Woodland		X	=	
Wetland		X	=	

CROPLAND Field No. _____ Acres _____

- ____ **Maximum distance from 95% of the field to another habitat type** with a score of 0.5 or above. (Woodland >16' wide and >1% of area, or grassland or wetland >16' wide and >2% of area)
 - 0 - >2640'
 - 3 - 1320' to 2640' (5 points in pheasant range)
 - 5 - 660' to 1320' (8 points in pheasant range)
 - 8 - 330' to 660'
 - 10 - <330'
- ____ **Crop rotation and plant cover**
 - 5 - Continuous row crop or continuous small grain; or grassland with score <5 on disturbances and ≥ 5 on diversity and ≥ 5 on successional stage, under Grassland & Savanna.
 - 7 - Row crop/small grain or row crop/grass-legume rotation; or 0.5 to 2.5% of field in winter food plots; or 2.5 to 10% perennial grassy cover undisturbed in nesting season; or 2.5 to 10% of cropland field flooded during waterfowl migration
 - 9 - Row crop/small grain/grass-legume rotation; or >2.5% of field in winter food plots; or >10% perennial grassy cover undisturbed in nesting season; or >10% of cropland field flooded during waterfowl migration
- ____ **Tillage & Residue** (Must meet tillage or residue after planting requirements after each crop in the rotation on 90% of the cropland)
 - 0 - Residue <30% or <20% after low residue crops (e.g. soybeans)
 - 5 - No fall/winter tillage, (no tillage from harvest to March 15) or residue 30-50%, or 20-50% after low residue crop. or food plot, grassy cover, or flooded cropland as in level 7 for "Crop rotation and plant cover" section above.
 - 7 - Residue >50% and not grazed and stalks not chopped or removed
 - 9 - No-till and not grazed and stalks not chopped or removed
- ____ **Total.** _____ **Habitat score (Total/28 if all components ≥ 5)**

GRASSLAND & SAVANNA Field No. _____ Acres _____

- May include pasture and hayland. Evaluate areas of shrubs in the field as shrubland under the woodland section. Grassland that scores <5 on disturbance may be evaluated (and planned) as cropland.
- ____ **Maximum distance from 95% of the field to escape and winter cover >16' wide, and >1% of the field for woody cover or >2% of field for grass** (stiff grasses or forbs that will still be standing at least 18 inches tall after winter, or dense woody cover).
 - 0 - >2640'
 - 3 - 1320' to 2640' (5 points in pheasant range)
 - 5 - 660' to 1320' (7 points in pheasant range)
 - 8 - <660'
 - ____ **Grazing, haying, burning, mowing, tillage, or other disturbances**
 - 0 - Disturbed during nesting season; or grazing more intensive than NRCS Prescribed Grazing Standard 528A would allow.
 - 3 - Undisturbed in nesting season, and > 50% disturbed annually; or grazing within specifications given in Standard 528A.
 - 5 - Undisturbed in nesting season and > 50% undisturbed each year; or grazing with foliage height maintained above 8" on >33% of area
 - 7 - Grazing with foliage height maintained above 10" on >50% of area
 - 10 - Meets 5 or 7; and excessive litter build-up controlled
 - ____ **Successional stage**
 - 0 - Barren >20% or woody plant invasion not controlled for the desired habitat type (grassland or savanna or grassland/shrubland mixture)
 - 5 - Perennial grassland >70%; or Annual grassland >70%; or Barren 11-20%
 - 8 - Perennial 20-70%, Annual 20-70%, Barren 0-10%
 - ____ **Plant species diversity (herbaceous plants)**
 - 0 - More than 50% of area covered by undesirable species.
 - 5 - Less than 50% of area covered by undesirable species
 - 7 - Same as 5 with 2-4 species with >5% canopy each
 - 8 - Same as 5 with >4 species with >5% canopy each
 - ____ **Total.** _____ **Habitat score (Total/34 if all components ≥ 5)**

WOODLAND/FORESTLAND Field No. _____ Acres _____

- ____ **Grazing, mowing or other disturbances.**
 - 0 - Grazed; mowed or plan to remove logs, vines, shrubs, or groundcover throughout area
 - 5 - Not grazed/mowed; and logs undisturbed on >50% of area, and vines, shrubs, and groundcover undisturbed except for vines on crop trees or area managed as shrubland; or newly established tree planting
 - 8 - Not grazed/mowed and logs undisturbed on at least 90% of area, and vines, shrubs, and groundcover undisturbed except for vines on wildlife crop trees; or green tree management
- ____ **Plant species diversity** (Desirable trees, shrubs, or woody vines)
 - 0 - 1 species at >90% canopy cover, or conifer stand >1 acre OR greater than 50% of area covered by undesirable species.
 - 3 - 2-4 species with >2.5% canopy cover each
 - 5 - 5-6 species with >2.5% canopy cover each
 - 8 - 7-8 species with >2.5% canopy cover each
 - 10 - >8 species with >2.5% canopy cover each
- ____ **Mast producing tree and shrub density** (Both hard and soft mast)
 - 0 - 0-2 individual mast producers per acre
 - 3 - 1 mast producer with >5% canopy cover
 - 5 - 2-3 mast producers with >5% canopy cover each
 - 8 - 4-5 mast producers with >5% canopy cover each
 - 10 - >5 mast producers with >5% canopy cover each
- ____ **Snag and Den Tree density**
 - 0 - 0-2 per acre total
 - 3 - 3-6 per acre total
 - 5 - 2/ac <10" dbh, 4/acre 10"-20", and 1/ac >20"; or area managed as shrubland; or area newly established tree planting;
 - 8 - 3/ac <10" dbh, 6/acre 10"-20", and 1/ac >20"
 - 10 - snag and den tree densities exceed levels in 7 above
- ____ **Total.** _____ **Habitat score (Total/38 if all components ≥ 5)**

WETLAND Field No. _____ Acres _____

- ____ **Water management**
 - 0 - Water quality or water level manipulations which damage wildlife or habitat
 - 5 - Water quality and quantity acceptable for wildlife and habitat (<10 or >90% permanent open water with remainder herbaceous or woody cover)
 - 6 - 10 to 33%, or 67 to 90% permanent open water
 - 8 - Moist soil or green tree management; or stream corridor with natural hydrology and vegetative buffer strips.
 - 10 - 34 to 66% permanent open water with remainder herbaceous or woody vegetation
- For wetland with only open water, score using water management criteria. Otherwise, evaluate using criteria for cropland, woodland, or grassland as appropriate and combine with water management criteria.
- | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Cropped wetland (Total/38) | Wooded wetland (Total/48) |
| Grassy wetland (Total/44) | Open water only (Total/10) |
- ____ **Total.** _____ **Habitat score (as above if all components ≥ 5)**

CONTINUATION WORKSHEET FOR ILLINOIS WILDLIFE HABITAT EVALUATION

(Continuation from page 1, use only if needed)

Client: _____ Tract _____

EXISTING CONDITION

Cropland Habitat Type					
Field No.	Field Acres	Habitat Score	Acres X Score	Total Acres X Score	
		X	=		Total Acres ----- = Cropland Weighted Av.
		X	=		
		X	=		
		X	=		
Total		Divided into		=	

Grassland Habitat Type					
Field No.	Field Acres	Habitat Score	Acres X Score	Total Acres X Score	
		X	=		Total Acres ----- = Grassland Weighted Av.
		X	=		
		X	=		
		X	=		
Total		Divided into		=	

Woodland Habitat Type					
Field No.	Field Acres	Habitat Score	Acres X Score	Total Acres X Score	
		X	=		Total Acres ----- = Woodland Weighted Av.
		X	=		
		X	=		
		X	=		
Total		Divided into		=	

Wetland Habitat Type					
Field No.	Field Acres	Habitat Score	Acres X Score	Total Acres X Score	
		X	=		Total Acres ----- = Wetland Weighted Av.
		X	=		
		X	=		
		X	=		
Total		Divided into		=	

Summary of Habitat Types				
Habitat Type	Habitat Acres	Habitat Score	Acres X Score = Habitat Units	
Cropland		X	=	
Grassland		X	=	
Woodland		X	=	
Wetland		X	=	

PLANNED CONDITION

Cropland Habitat Type					
Field No.	Field Acres	Habitat Score	Acres X Score	Total Acres X Score	
		X	=		Total Acres ----- = Cropland Weighted Av.
		X	=		
		X	=		
		X	=		
Total		Divided into		=	

Grassland Habitat Type					
Field No.	Field Acres	Habitat Score	Acres X Score	Total Acres X Score	
		X	=		Total Acres ----- = Grassland Weighted Av.
		X	=		
		X	=		
		X	=		
Total		Divided into		=	

Woodland Habitat Type					
Field No.	Field Acres	Habitat Score	Acres X Score	Total Acres X Score	
		X	=		Total Acres ----- = Woodland Weighted Av.
		X	=		
		X	=		
		X	=		
Total		Divided into		=	

Wetland Habitat Type					
Field No.	Field Acres	Habitat Score	Acres X Score	Total Acres X Score	
		X	=		Total Acres ----- = Wetland Weighted Av.
		X	=		
		X	=		
		X	=		
Total		Divided into		=	

Summary of Habitat Types				
Habitat Type	Habitat Acres	Habitat Score	Acres X Score = Habitat Units	
Cropland		X	=	
Grassland		X	=	
Woodland		X	=	
Wetland		X	=	