

USDA  
NATURAL RESOURCES  
CONSERVATION SERVICE  
MARYLAND  
CONSERVATION  
PRACTICE STANDARD  
  
FISHPOND MANAGEMENT  
  
CODE 399  
(Reported by No.)

**CONSIDERATIONS**

The following items must be considered when managing a fishpond:

1. Purpose of management, including the fish species present or desired, and the amount of fishing currently conducted or desired;
2. Pond size, depth, and age;
3. Surrounding landscape and its relationship to the pond, especially as it relates to delivery of nutrients, sediments, and other contaminants into the pond;
4. Site conditions such as soils, available water sources, water quality and quantity, and existing vegetation;
5. The presence of undesirable plants and animals in the pond;
6. The potentially negative effects that fish predators such as mink, otters, herons, mergansers, kingfishers, ospreys, and eagles may have on managing the site to support large populations of fish;
7. Regulatory requirements for activities such as herbicide treatment of aquatic weeds, and excavation of accumulated sediment;
8. Other constraints such as recurring costs, availability of equipment, access to the site, social effects, and visual aspects such as compatibility with the natural landscape.

Refer to the Maryland Fishpond Management Handbook for additional considerations.

**DEFINITION**

Managing impounded water to support fish and other aquatic organisms.

**PURPOSE**

Manage fishponds for one or more of the following purposes:

1. To provide a favorable water habitat to sustain fish and other aquatic organisms;
2. To maintain the desired species composition;
3. To maintain the desired population levels.

**CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE  
APPLIES**

This management practice may be applied in ponds, lakes, and reservoirs where fish and other aquatic species are desired for domestic or recreational use.

This practice does not apply to managing ponds as commercial aquaculture facilities. Refer to the national conservation practice standard for Commercial Fishponds, Code 397.

Conservation practice standards are reviewed periodically, and updated if needed. To obtain the current version of this standard, contact the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

**CRITERIA**

Fishpond management techniques shall be selected to accomplish the intended purpose of the practice, given the conditions of the site and the objectives of the land user.

Fishponds shall be designed according to the Maryland conservation practice standard for Pond, Code 378.

Species selected for stocking shall be suited to the water temperatures and other water quality criteria that can be met in the pond. Only species that are legal for stocking in Maryland shall be used.

To the extent feasible, plant and animal pest species shall be controlled to maintain the intended purpose of the pond. Preference shall be given to controlling undesirable plants by non-herbicide methods, such as by using non-toxic dyes, physically removing the plants, reducing nutrient loading, or other natural controls. All required permits and approvals shall be obtained before controlling plant or animal pests.

Livestock access shall be controlled as necessary to protect the quality of the water in, and flowing into, the pond.

*Note: Specific cost-sharing programs or other funding sources may impose management criteria in addition to, or more restrictive than, those specified in this standard.*

*Federal, state, and local regulations may significantly limit management activities in, or adjacent to, ponds, wetlands and other aquatic areas. Laws pertaining to protection of wetlands and water bodies, erosion and sediment control, use of herbicides, and introduction of exotic species may be applicable. Permits or approvals from federal, state, or local government agencies may be needed before any work is performed. Contact the county Soil Conservation District office for more information.*

### **SPECIFICATIONS**

Plans and specifications for fishpond management shall be prepared in accordance with the previously listed criteria. Plans and specifications shall contain sufficient detail to ensure successful implementation of this practice. Documentation shall be in accordance with the section "Supporting Data and Documentation" in this standard.

Based on the physical and biological conditions of the pond, specify management actions that will best meet the land user's objectives. Management recommendations may concern only one aspect of fishpond management, such as weed control, or may involve a comprehensive plan that includes stocking rates, harvesting rates, weed control, and other activities.

Refer to the Maryland Fishpond Management Guide for specifications concerning the following topics:

1. Pond size and depth;
2. Stocking combinations and harvesting rates;
3. Inventorying fish populations;
4. Reducing or eliminating fish populations;
5. Management of water quality;
6. Controlling aquatic plants and other pond problems.

The land user's decisions shall be recorded in a management plan. This plan can be written directly into the conservation plan, or incorporated into the conservation plan by referring to a job sheet or to a separate fishpond management plan (e.g., a plan developed by a Maryland Department of Natural Resources Fisheries Biologist, or other professional biologist).

### **OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE**

An operation and maintenance (O&M) plan shall be prepared for each fishpond management site. Appropriate Job Sheet(s) may be used to serve as the management plan as well as supporting documentation, and shall be provided to the land user. At a minimum, the following components shall be addressed in the O&M plan, as applicable:

#### **Fishpond Stocking**

Describe the species that were selected for stocking, stocking rates, sizes of fish to be stocked, and the month and year when each species will be stocked.

#### **Depopulating Overstocked Ponds**

Describe the methods to be used to assess the fish population (e.g., through observations, seining, or catch records), species and sizes to be reduced in number, methods to be used to reduce populations, and whether any permits are needed.

#### **Removing Undesirable Fish or Other Animals**

Describe the species to be removed, methods of removal, and whether any permits are needed.

#### **Maintaining Water Quality**

Describe the minimum water quality requirements (e.g., levels of dissolved oxygen, temperature, pH, alkalinity, turbidity) needed to support the desired species. For fertilization or liming, describe the reason why fertilizer or lime is needed, the type of fertilizer or lime to be used, and the rate and timing of application.

#### **Control of Aquatic Weeds**

Describe the species to be controlled, and control methods. If chemicals are needed, include the chemical name, rate of application, precautions, and permits needed.

#### **Frequency of Inspections**

At a minimum, require annual inspections of the pond and its structural components.

### **SUPPORTING DATA AND DOCUMENTATION**

The following is a list of the minimum data and documentation to be recorded in the case file:

1. Field location of the pond and acres, and assistance notes. Also note the location of the pond on the conservation plan map;
2. Management plan or completed copy of the appropriate Job Sheet(s), if used.

### **REFERENCES**

1. Natural Resources Conservation Service, Conservation Practice Standard for Commercial Fishponds (Code 397).
2. Natural Resources Conservation Service, Conservation Practice Standard for Pond (Code 378).
3. Natural Resources Conservation Service, Maryland Fishpond Management Handbook.