

MAINE INSTRUCTION 450-382 – WILDLIFE HABITAT EVALUATIONS WHEN USING NRCS REVISED LAND USES

A. General

National Bulletin 190-13-13 <http://directives.sc.egov.usda.gov/viewerFS.aspx?hid=34275> issued instructions on updating Section III of the Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG) with the revised *Resource Concerns & Planning Criteria for Conservation Planning*, which became effective on October 1, 2013. An announcement was made regarding the revised land uses, land use definitions, and land use modifiers in Circular #180-14-1, Title 180, Subpart D from the National Planning Procedures Handbook <http://directives.sc.egov.usda.gov/34366.wba> .

“Wildlife” is no longer a designated land use. However, during the planning process an operator can choose wildlife as a land use modifier if they desire to actively manage a land use or a portion in a manner beneficial to an identified fish or wildlife resource.

B. When Wildlife is not a Modifier for a Land Use.

A fish and wildlife habitat inventory or habitat assessment will not be needed for the land unit.

C. When Wildlife is a Modifier for a Land Use.

An appropriate habitat assessment will need to be completed for the target species or habitat being assessed. Habitat evaluation tools available include Maine NRCS General or Species-specific Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Guides (WHEG), Maine NRCS-revised Xerces Pollinator Habitat Assessment (PHA) Form and Guide, and the Maine NRCS Stream Visual Assessment Protocol (SVAP2). The Habitat evaluation tools are located in FOTG under Section IV -Tools.

i. When Fish and/or Wildlife is the Primary Objective for a Land Unit.

- Quality Criteria for the planned condition will equal or be greater than (0.70 or 70% of habitat potential *unless otherwise noted in instructions for use of a habitat evaluation guide.*

ii. When Fish and/or Wildlife is the Secondary Objective for a Land Unit.

- Quality Criteria for the planned condition will equal or be greater than (0.50 or 50% of habitat potential; *unless otherwise noted in instructions for use of a habitat evaluation guide.*

If a habitat evaluation guide or assessment procedure is not available for the species or habitat under consideration, expert opinion of a qualified biologist documenting a resource concern and a recommended management action to improve habitat may be used to justify a planned alternative.

If you have questions or concerns on the applicability, and acceptability of other habitat assessment tools prior to their use, contact Jeff Norment, State Biologist at 207-990-9571 or by email jeff.norment@me.usda.gov.