

**NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE  
CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD  
MARYLAND**

**STRUCTURES FOR WILDLIFE**

(No.)

**CODE 649**

**DEFINITION**

A structure installed to replace or modify a missing or deficient wildlife habitat component.

provided within the desired time period with implementation of a vegetation management strategy.

**PURPOSE**

To provide structures, in proper amounts, locations and seasons to:

- Enhance or sustain non-domesticated wildlife; or
- Modify existing structures that pose a hazard to wildlife.

Use the following criteria to design, install or modify structures for wildlife.

- Select the location of structures to meet the needs of the targeted species and not subject individuals to increased risks of injury or mortality.
- Select materials that are durable and safe for wildlife. Avoid caustic, dangerous, debilitating, and/or irritating materials, such as pressure and creosote treated wood. If the structure requires protection from sunlight exposure, utilize ultraviolet resistant materials and/or coatings made with non-toxic substances.
- Construct habitat structures to withstand normal environmental conditions and meet the needs of the targeted wildlife for the target period of time.
- If identified as a wildlife structure requiring monitoring and management, the structure will be located and constructed to allow the capability for access.

**CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES**

This practice applies to all lands where planting or managing vegetation fails to meet the short-term needs of the species or guild under consideration. And in addition, where a State-approved wildlife habitat assessment identifies the need to:

- Provide loafing, escape, nesting, rearing, roosting, perching and/or basking habitat, Examples are nesting islands, nesting boxes, roosting boxes, rock piles, perching structures and brush piles.
- Modify existing structures to minimize the risks of injury or mortality to wildlife. Examples include retrofitting fences to be wildlife-friendly, and installing escape ramps in watering facilities.

Do not use this practice for structures intended for the control of nuisance animal species, or the benefit of captive, feral, or domesticated animals.

**Criteria Applicable to Brush Piles**

- Locate brush piles in uplands when possible. If the area being managed for wildlife management is predominately hydric soils, locate brush piles in areas that do not have standing water. Do not construct brush piles in natural wetlands.
- The size of the brush pile depends on the target species and use. Escape cover brush piles shall be at least 10 feet in diameter and 4 feet in height. Brush piles created as headquarters shall be at least 15 feet in diameter and 6 feet in height.

**CRITERIA**

**General Criteria Applicable to all Purposes**

Construct and install wildlife structures when the State-approved habitat appraisal method identifies limiting habitat component(s) that cannot be

- The logs in the bottom two layers of a wood log brush pile shall be at least 6 inches in diameter.

### CONSIDERATIONS

Consider the following, prior to implementation of this standard and implement mitigation measures as appropriate.

- Potential negative impacts to target species and non-target species through an increase in predation, disease transmission, nest parasitism or other means.
- Modification of existing onsite and offsite, barriers, or other conservation structures that may inhibit safe daily and seasonal movement of wildlife.
- The establishment of native vegetation species, age, density and structure to supplement and/or eventually replace installed habitat structures.
- Risks associated with the use of structures by non-target or nuisance species. Locate brush piles away from homes and buildings to avoid problems with nuisance wildlife.
- Modifications to structures to inhibit access to the structure by predators.
- Select appropriate color, orientation and exposure to support thermal regulation.
- Brush piles are flammable and should be located away from homes and buildings.

### PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

Develop plans and specifications for wildlife structures within the criteria of this standard. Within the plan, describe the biological and physical requirements for applying the practice.

Specify the number, location, spacing, grade, quantities, dimensions, materials and timing of installation of new or modification of existing structures.

Develop specifications for construction and installation of habitat structures by following State technical notes, design guides, or cited literature. See references below.

### OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

Provide an operation and maintenance plan that is customary and reasonable for the wildlife structures being installed or modified. Provided the timing, scope and intensity of operation and maintenance, with consideration of the needs of the target and associated species. As a minimum, the O&M will include a schedule (timing, frequency, duration) to:

- Monitor condition and/or usage of structures.
- Implement adaptive management by relocating, modifying or repairing structures as needed during the season with the least disturbance to target species.
- Conduct needed maintenance of structures such as removal of old nesting materials, nests of non-target species, undesirable debris, or abandoned structures.
- Install, modify and/or monitor during the season of year or time of day to minimize disturbance to wildlife.
- Remove all structures if they are determined (i.e. upon abandonment) as being potentially detrimental to the target and other species.

### REFERENCES

University of Maryland Extension. 2002. Wildlife Management: Brush Piles. Fact Sheet 599. College Park, M.D.

USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service and Wildlife Habitat Council. 2008. Artificial Nesting Structures. Fish and Wildlife Habitat Management Leaflet No 20 (revised) Washington, D.C.