NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD

FISH AND WILDLIFE STRUCTURE

(No.)

CODE 734

DEFINITION

A structure designed and installed specifically for fish or wildlife.

PURPOSE

To improve overall habitat conditions for fish or wildlife species. This practice may be applied as part of a fish or wildlife habitat management plan to serve one or more of the following functions:

- Provide structure for loafing, escape, nesting, rearing, roosting, perching, or basking.
- Provide an escape, avoidance, or exclusionary feature from otherwise life-threatening conditions.
- Provide alternative cover when natural cover is not readily available.
- Isolate native species populations from non-natives.
- Improve or restore habitat connectivity.

CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES

This practice applies to all land uses where the land manager has identified an objective to conserve fish or wildlife.

CRITERIA

Structures shall be designed and installed to meet the targeted species biology and life history needs.

Structures will be designed according to the applicable Biology Technical Notes or other design references approved by the NRCS state office.

Plastic and fiberglass structures shall be made of ultraviolet resistant materials and may be coated with non-toxic substances for additional protection from deterioration due to sunlight exposure.

Structures shall be built to withstand expected environmental conditions at the site to maximize structural lifespan, stability, and habitat benefits.

CONSIDERATIONS

Give consideration to effects the location of the structure will have on targeted and non-targeted species.

Consider the need to prevent increased predation on both targeted and non-targeted fish and wildlife species as a result of installation of structures under this practice.

Consider combining this practice with vegetative practices to establish natural habitat features in the long term.

Types of fish and wildlife structures to consider include:

- Artificial nest boxes or platforms for species such as cavity-nesting birds, bats, pollinators, and waterfowl
- Artificial cover such as brush piles, rock piles, buried concrete pipe, engineered log jams
- Wood structures in or along stream banks for fish cover
- Natural cover manipulation, such as girdling trees to encourage snag development

- Measures to facilitate passage including elk jumps, escape ramps, road crossings
- Measures to inhibit passage including predator guards, non-native fish barriers, beaver dam exclusion features

PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

Plans and specifications for installing fish and wildlife structures shall be in keeping with this standard and shall describe the biological and physical requirements for applying the practice.

The plan shall specify the location, quantities, dimensions, materials, and timing of installation for each structure.

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

Operation and maintenance provisions shall be provided to and reviewed with the land manager. The provisions shall be site specific and include but not be limited to the following:

- Structures will be inspected at least semi-annually and after major storms
- Necessary maintenance, including removal of debris, shall be performed

REFERENCES

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