

CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD WETLAND CREATION

(Ac.)

CODE 658

DEFINITION

The creation of a wetland on a site location that was historically non-wetland.

PURPOSE

To establish wetland hydrology, vegetation, and wildlife habitat functions on soils capable of supporting those functions.

CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES

This practice applies only to sites where hydric soils do not exist and the objective is to establish specific wetland functions.

For embankment projects, this practice applies only to areas where the predominant slope is four percent or less.

This practice does not apply to:

- The treatment of point and non-point sources of water pollution (Constructed Wetland – PA656).
- The rehabilitation of a degraded wetland or the reestablishment of a former wetland so that soils, hydrology, vegetative community, and habitat are a close approximation of the original natural condition and boundary that existed prior to the modification. (Wetland Restoration – PA657).
- The rehabilitation of a degraded wetland, the reestablishment of a former wetland, or the modification of an existing wetland, where specific wetland functions are augmented beyond the original natural conditions; possibly at the expense of other functions. (Wetland Enhancement – PA659).
- The management of fish and wildlife habitat created under Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management – PA644.

CRITERIA

General Criteria Applicable to All Purposes

The purpose, goals, and objectives of the creation shall be clearly defined in the creation plan, including soils, hydrology, vegetation and fish and wildlife habitat criteria that are to be met and are appropriate for the site and the project objectives.

The soils, hydrology and vegetative conditions existing on the site, the adjacent landscape, and the contributing watershed shall be documented in the planning process.

The nutrient and pesticide tolerance of the plant and animal species likely to occur shall be considered where known nutrient and pesticide contamination exists. Sites suspected of containing hazardous material shall be tested to identify appropriate remedial measures. If remedial measures are not possible or practicable, the practice shall not be planned.

Water rights, if applicable, shall be assured prior to creation.

Upon completion, the site shall meet the appropriate wetland criteria and provide wetland functions as defined in the project's objectives.

Invasive species, federal/state listed noxious plant species, and nuisance species (e.g., those whose presence or overpopulation jeopardize the practice) shall be controlled on the site. The establishment and/or use of non-native plant species shall be discouraged.

Criteria for Soils

Created wetlands shall be located in landscape positions and soil types capable of supporting the planned wetland functions.

Changes to soil hydrodynamic and biogeochemical properties such as permeability, porosity, pH, or soil organic carbon levels shall be made as needed to meet the planned objectives.

Criteria for Hydrology

General - The hydroperiod, hydrodynamics, and dominant water source shall meet the project objectives. The creation plan shall document the adequacy of available water sources based on groundwater investigation, stream gage data, water budgeting, or other appropriate means.

The work associated with the wetland shall not adversely affect adjacent properties or other water users unless agreed to by signed written letter, easement or permit.

Timing and level setting of water control structures required for the establishment and maintenance of vegetation, soil, and wildlife and fish habitat functions shall be determined.

Other structural practices, macrotopography and/or microtopography may be used to meet the planned objectives.

Macrotopographic features, including ditch plugs installed in lieu of re-filling surface drainage ditches, shall meet the requirements of other practice standards to which they may apply due to purpose, size, water storage capacity, hazard class, or other parameters. If no other practice standard applies, they shall meet the requirements for Dike – PA356 unless there is no potential for damage to the feature or other areas on or off site due to erosion, breaching, or overtopping.

Water control structures that may impede the movement of target aquatic species or species of concern shall meet the criteria in Fish Passage – PA396.

Water depths for at least ninety percent of the total area below the design normal water elevation shall be six feet or less.

Embankments – Embankments may be used to impound water and provide wetland hydrology. Refer to the criteria for embankments in the Pennsylvania Conservation Practice Standard for Pond, PA378. For embankment projects, water depths for at least sixty percent of the total area below the designed normal water elevation will be three feet or less. The overall bottom slope from the six foot water depth to zero will be convex or flat, but not concave.

Existing drainage systems will be utilized, removed or modified as needed to achieve the intended purpose.

Surface Drain Plugs - In areas where open ditches were constructed to provide drainage, wet conditions may be created by constructing surface drain plugs, using a pipe riser or other structures within the ditch to control the water level, or by filling a surface drain to the original ground line. Refer to the criteria for embankments when fill will be placed on the ditch banks.

All fill shall be similar to adjacent soil materials and be compacted to achieve the density of the adjacent materials. Crown the fill a minimum of one foot above the top of the lower existing channel bank to account for settling.

The minimum length of surface drain plugs shall be $(6H + 4)$ feet. "Minimum length" refers to the length as measured along the top of the plug. "H" is measured from the settled top of the embankment to the low point along the centerline of the embankment (fill).

Subsurface Drain Plugs - In areas where subsurface drains were used to lower the water table, remove or plug the drain, or replace the perforated drain with a non-perforated drain to allow the high water table conditions to return.

The minimum length of drain to be removed or plugged shall be as follows:

Length of Drain	Average Hydraulic Conductivity of Soil
50 feet	<0.6 inches/hour
100 feet	0.6 to 2.0 inches/hour
150 feet	>2.0 inches/hour

All envelope filter material or other flow enhancing material shall also be removed for this length. The trench used to alter the drain shall be filled and compacted to achieve a density equal to adjacent natural soil material.

When subsurface drains also function as outlets for other drained areas where drainage is still desired, appropriate measures must be incorporated to keep the upstream drainage systems functional. A non-perforated pipe shall replace the perforated pipe through the wetland area to be created, and shall extend

beyond the wetland in all directions at least the minimum length previously specified for length of drain to be removed or plugged. Drains may also be re-routed around the wetland at the same minimum distances from the wetland, or where topography permits, setting a water control structure at a level that does not affect upstream drainage.

A water control structure may be placed on the inlet of an existing drain. The water control structure shall be attached to a non-perforated conduit that extends at least the minimum length previously specified for length of drain to be removed. The connections of the water control structure and the non-perforated pipe shall be watertight.

Shallow Excavation - A wetland may be created by excavating below the existing ground surface to create a shallow basin that will hold surface water and/or intercept groundwater. The basin shall permit storage of water at a depth, frequency, and duration to support the desired plant community and provide other wetland functions.

Criteria for Vegetation

Hydrophytic vegetation planned to meet the selected wetland functions shall be compatible with the planned soil and hydrologic conditions. Preference shall be given to native wetland plants with localized genetic material.

Where natural colonization of acceptable species can realistically be expected to occur within five years, sites may be left to revegetate naturally. If not, the appropriate species will be established by seeding or planting.

Adequate substrate material and site preparation necessary for proper establishment of the selected plant species shall be included in the plan.

Where planting and/or seeding is necessary, the minimum number of native species to be established shall be based upon the types of vegetative communities present and the vegetation type planned. To achieve habitat diversity and minimize the adverse effects of climate, disease, and other limiting factors, several species adapted to the site will be established. Seeding rates shall be based upon the percentage of pure live seed and

labeled with a current seed tag from a registered seed laboratory identifying the germination rate, purity analysis, and other seed statistics.

CONSIDERATIONS

Hydrology Considerations

Consider the general hydrologic effects of the restoration, including impacts on downstream stream hydrographs, volumes of surface runoff, and groundwater resources due to changes of water use and movement created by the restoration.

Consider the impacts of water level management, including:

- Increased predation due to concentrating aquatic organisms, including herptivores, in small pool areas during drawdowns.
- Increased predation of amphibians due to high water levels that can sustain predators.
- Decreased ability of aquatic organisms to move within the wetland and from the wetland area to adjacent habitats, including anadromous fish and herptivores, as water levels are decreased.
- Increases in water temperature on-site, and in off-site receiving waters.
- Changes in the quantity and direction of movement of subsurface flows due to increases or decreases in water depth.
- The effect changes in hydrologic regime have on soil bio-geochemical properties; including oxidation/reduction, maintenance of organic soils, and salinity increase or decrease on adjacent areas.
- The potential for water control structures, dikes, and macrotopographic to negatively impact aquatic organism passage.

NOTE: State permits must be obtained to lower pools of impoundments for activities regulated by *other* state permits, or for any impoundment larger than one surface acre. Activities requiring drawdown may include construction, maintenance or biological manipulation.

Vegetation Considerations

Consider:

- The relative effects of planting density on wildlife habitat versus production rates in woody plantings.
- The potential for vegetative buffers to increase function by trapping sediment, cycling nutrients, and removing pesticides.
- The selection of vegetation for the protection of structural measures that is appropriate for wetland function.
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- The potential for invasive or noxious plant species to establish on bare soils after construction and before the planned plant community is established.

Soil Considerations

Consider changes of physical soil properties, including:

- Increasing or decreasing saturated hydraulic conductivity by mechanical compaction or tillage, as appropriate.
- Incorporating soil amendments.
- The effect of construction equipment on soil density, infiltration, and structure.

Consider changes in soil bio-geochemical properties, including increasing soil organic carbon by incorporating compost, and increasing or decreasing soil pH with lime, gypsum, or other compounds.

Wildlife Habitat Considerations

Consider:

- The addition of coarse woody debris on sites to be restored to woody plant communities for an initial carbon source.
- The potential to restore habitat capable of supporting wildlife with the ability to control disease vectors such as mosquitoes.
- The potential to establish fish and wildlife corridors linking the site to adjacent landscapes, streams and waterbodies and

to increase the sites colonization by native flora.

- The need to provide barriers to passage for unwanted or predatory wildlife species.

PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

Plans and specifications for this practice shall be prepared for each site. Plans and specifications shall be recorded using approved specifications sheets, job sheets, or other documentation. The plans and specifications for structural features will include, at a minimum, a plan view, quantities, and sufficient profiles and cross-sections to define the location, line, and grade for stakeout and checkout. Plans and specifications shall be reviewed and approved by staff with appropriate job approval authority.

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

A separate Operation and Maintenance Plan will be prepared for sites that have structural features. The plan will include specific actions for the normal and repetitive operation of installed structural items, especially water control structures, if included in the project. The plan will also include the maintenance actions necessary to assure that constructed items are maintained as constructed for the life of the project. It will include the inspection schedule, a list of items to inspect, a checklist of potential damages to look for, recommended repairs, and procedures for documentation.

Management and monitoring activities needed to ensure the continued success of the wetland functions may be included in the above plan, or in a separate Management and Monitoring Plan. In addition to the monitoring schedule, this plan may include the following:

- The timing and methods for the use of fertilizers, pesticides, prescribed burning, or mechanical treatments
- Circumstances when the use of biological control of undesirable plant species and pests (e.g. using predator or parasitic species) is appropriate, and the approved methods.

- Actions which specifically address any expected problems from invasive or noxious species
- The circumstances which require the removal of accumulated sediment.
- Conditions which indicate the need to use haying or grazing as a management tool, including timing and methods.

REFERENCES

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