

**NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE**  
**CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD**  
**WETLAND WILDLIFE HABITAT MANAGEMENT**

(Ac.)

CODE 644

**DEFINITION**

Retaining, developing, or managing wetland habitat for wetland wildlife.

**PURPOSE**

To maintain, develop, or improve wetland habitat for waterfowl, shorebirds, fur-bearers, or other wetland dependent or associated flora and fauna.

**CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES**

On or adjacent to wetlands, rivers, lakes, and other waterbodies where wetland associated wildlife habitat can be managed. This practice applies to natural wetlands and/or water bodies as well as wetlands that may have been previously Conservation Practice Standards (CPS) Wetland Restoration (657), Wetland Enhancement (659), and Wetland Creation (658).

**CRITERIA**

A habitat evaluation or appraisal, approved by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) state office, shall be used to identify habitat-limiting factors in the planning area. In South Dakota (SD), this evaluation will be performed using the minimum wetland habitat requirements to attain a Wildlife Habitat Quality Rating of at least 0.5 as outlined in the SD-CPA-19, Wildlife Habitat Quality Rating Worksheet. Additional documentation may be used to support habitat determinations such as wetland/upland complex evaluations.

Application of this practice shall remove or reduce limiting factor(s) in their order of significance, as indicated by results of the habitat evaluation.

Application of this practice alone, or in combination with other supporting and facilitating practices, shall result in a conservation system that will enable the planning area to meet or exceed the minimum national or state quality criteria for wildlife habitat established in Section III of the SD Technical Guide (SDTG), which is documented using the SD-CPA-19, Wildlife Habitat Quality Rating Worksheet.

Identify wildlife species management goals and objectives. For the desired species, identify the types, amount, and distribution of habitat elements and the management actions necessary to achieve the management objectives.

Native plants will be used wherever possible.

Sites containing hazardous waste will be cleaned prior to the installation of this practice.

Invasive plant species and federally/state listed noxious and nuisance species shall be controlled on the site.

**CONSIDERATIONS**

Consider effects management will have on disease vectors such as mosquitoes.

Consider effects on downstream flows or aquifers that would affect other water uses or users.

Consider effects on fish and wildlife habitats that would be associated with the practice.

Establishing vegetative buffers on surrounding uplands can reduce the delivery of sediment and soluble and sediment-attached contaminants carried by runoff and/or wind.

The nutrient and pesticide tolerance of the species planned should be considered where

Conservation practice standards are reviewed periodically, and updated if needed. To obtain the current version of this standard, contact your Natural Resources Conservation Service [State Office](#), or visit the [electronic Field Office Technical Guide](#).

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known nutrient and pesticide contamination exists.

Consider effects on temperature of water resources to prevent undesired effects on aquatic and wildlife communities.

Soil disturbance associated with the installation of this practice may increase the potential of invasion by unwanted species.

Adding dead snags, tree trunks, or logs can provide structure and cover for wildlife and serve as a carbon source for food chain support.

For discharge wetlands, consider underground upslope water and/or groundwater source availability.

When determining which species to plant, consider microtopography and different hydrology levels.

Consider effects of management actions on compliance with state and federal hunting regulation (e.g., baiting).

Water level drawdowns may increase the potential for turtle mortality.

Consider effects of livestock grazing on runoff, infiltration, wetland vegetation, and nesting success.

Adding artificial nesting structures that are appropriate for the region can increase utilization of these areas.

Locating this practice adjacent to existing wetlands and other waterbodies will provide connectivity to these cover types.

The improved habitat that results from the installation of this practice may lead to increased crop depredation by wildlife on adjacent cropland.

Consider adjacent wetlands or waterbodies that contribute to wetland system complexity and diversity, decrease habitat fragmentation, and maximize use of the site by wetland-associated wildlife.

## **PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS**

Document how habitat needs will be provided for the desired kinds of wildlife:

- required depth of water during the different seasons;
- types and sizes of structures required;
- desired native plant species and the means of establishing and maintaining them.

Specific information may be provided using appropriate job sheets or written documentation in the conservation plan.

## **OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE**

A plan for operation and maintenance at a minimum should include monitoring and management of structural and vegetative measures.

Haying and livestock grazing plans, if haying or livestock grazing is used as a needed wildlife management tool, will be developed to allow the establishment, development and management of wetland and associated upland vegetation for the intended wetland and/or wildlife purpose.

Biological control of undesirable plant species and pests (e.g., using predator or parasitic species) shall be implemented where available and feasible.

Added water depth and duration may be utilized as a method to control unwanted vegetation (e.g., reed canary grass).

## **REFERENCES**

Hall, C.D. and F.J. Cuthbert. 2000. Impact of a Controlled Wetland Drawdown on Blanding's Turtles in Minnesota. *Chelonian Conservation Biology*. Vol. 3, No. 4, pp. 643-649.

Helmets, D.L. 1992. *Shorebird Management Manual*. Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network, Manomet, MA, 58 pp.

Payne, Neil F. 1992. *Techniques for Wildlife Habitat Management of Wetlands*. McGraw-Hill, Inc., 549 pp.

Smith, Loren M. and Roger L. Pederson. 1989. *Habitat Management for Migrating and Wintering Waterfowl in North America*. Texas Tech University Press, 574 pp.