

Wildlife Conservation Practices

for a Sustainable System



Helping People Help the Land
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As a landowner or farm operator you face many decisions when managing the resources on your land. When you evaluate your land use options, consider implementing some of the wildlife-friendly conservation practices listed below into your habitat area.

NRCS staff and your local soil and water conservation district (SWCD) can assist you in making the right choices to protect your resources and improve your wildlife habitat.

Wildlife Practice	Description	Management	Recommended
Field Border			
	<p>A strip of perennial vegetation, primarily introduced or native grasses, along one or more edges of a field that provides loafing, brood and winter cover adjacent to food sources, and often provides travel lanes connecting fields to other wildlife habitat areas.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect from livestock during nesting season to maximize wildlife benefits. • Mow to control weeds and shrub development. • Shape and reseed areas damaged by storms, animals, chemicals, tillage or equipment traffic. 	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Filter Strip			
	<p>A strip of dense herbaceous vegetation adjacent to streams, ponds or other water bodies to reduce pollutants in surface water flows. They improve water quality for fish and other aquatic life and provide travel lanes and cover for terrestrial wildlife.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Control undesired weeds. • Prescribed burning, with approved burn plan. • Prevent concentrated flows through the filter strip. • Apply supplemental nutrients as needed. 	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Riparian Forest Buffer			
	<p>An area between a field and a stream, lake or other water body established to trees and/or shrubs to improve water quality for aquatic life, provide wildlife habitat and travel corridors for wildlife species that use woody stream corridors.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trees in the buffer area need to be periodically maintained and harvested. • As the buffer matures, tree harvesting is important for plant health and buffer function. 	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

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Stream Habitat Improvement and Management			
	<p>Establishment of features that improve water quality, provide in-stream habitat, increase diversity and stabilize stream banks to provide better physical and biological conditions for desirable aquatic wildlife species.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A management plan shall be developed that provides for periodic stream inspections. • Promptly repair stream bank or streambed instability. • In-stream structural measures shall be evaluated annually. 	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Fish Pond Management			
	<p>Methods for improving water quality, habitat conditions, and food resources for desirable fish species in ponds and to reduce competition from undesirable plants and animals.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exclude livestock to maintain water quality. • Stock fish as recommended in the plan. • Control aquatic weeds by using mechanical or chemical controls, as recommended. • Draw pond water down to control population. 	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Hedgerow Planting			
	<p>Establishing a border of trees and shrubs within or along the sides of a field that serves as a living fence and provides travel corridors, winter, nesting, and loafing cover for wildlife and increased plant diversity on the landscape.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inspect site periodically and restore as needed to maintain the stated purpose. • Control invasive species and noxious weeds. 	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Windbreak/Shelterbelt (Establishment/Renovation)			
	<p>Establishment of linear or block plantings of trees and/or shrubs to provide shelter from wind, control snow deposition, and visual or noise screens, placed around farmsteads and feedlots. These provide excellent wildlife viewing opportunities and important winter, breeding and brood rearing habitat.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Control competing vegetation. • Protect planting from livestock and wildlife, as needed. • Replace dead trees as necessary. • Supplemental water may be needed for establishment. • Protect plantings from fire with firebreaks. • Inspect at least every six months. 	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

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Wetland Restoration			
	<p>The rehabilitation of a degraded wetland area back to the original wetland conditions. Wetlands provide important wildlife habitat for more species of wildlife than all habitats in Iowa.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A plan will be prepared for each wetland site that includes: timing and level setting of water control structures, inspecting dikes and structures, sediment accumulation, vegetation management, and acceptable uses. 	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Conservation Cover			
	<p>Establishing and maintaining permanent vegetative cover of either introduced or native grasses, legumes and forbs for nesting cover, winter cover, brood cover, and food for wildlife.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mow, burn, clip or use approved chemicals to maintain planned vegetative community. • Maintain levels of plant nutrients as necessary. 	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Early Successional Habitat Management for Grasslands			
	<p>Setting back succession of herbaceous cover, primarily the grass component when it becomes too dense, to increase the diversity of the stand by adding more forbs and legumes that provide food and cover for many wildlife species.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Light disking to promote new growth. • Prescribed grazing • Prescribed burning • Carefully plan for and apply herbicides as necessary. • Do not disturb cover during primary nesting season. • Interseed legumes or forbs to enhance diversity. 	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Residue and Tillage Management (No-till/Strip-till/Direct Seeding)			
	<p>Involves the management and distribution of crop and other plant residues in fields to provide cover and to increase food availability. It also provides nesting and loafing cover for wildlife.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce cropland tillage to increase the amount and height of stubble needed to provide adequate food and cover for game and non-game wildlife. 	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

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Prescribed Burning			
	<p>The use of planned, controlled burning to manage grassland and forestland by suppressing unwanted plant species and stimulating desired plant species to provide better habitat conditions for wildlife.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A burn plan is required to carry out the practice. • Sufficient fire suppression equipment and personnel shall be available to prevent a wildfire or other incident. • Monitor burn site and adjacent areas until ash, debris and other consumed materials are at pre-burn temperatures. 	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No</p>
Prescribed Grazing			
	<p>Use of a planned system to determine the number, duration, and location of livestock grazing to provide both forage and wildlife benefits on pastureland.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring data and grazing records used on a regular basis ensure objectives are met. • All facilitating and accelerating practices, such as Pest Management and Pasture and Hay Planting, must be maintained in good working order. 	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No</p>
Wildlife Habitat Assessment			
	<p>An evaluation tool used to measure if existing farm conditions on cropland, grasslands and forestlands are suitable for general wildlife habitat needs. It also is used to identify which conditions can be improved to provide better wildlife habitat conditions. A minimal acceptable score is 0.5.</p>	<p>Your Present Score Is:</p> <p>_____</p>	

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