

## Missouri Cropland Community WHAG Model Instructions

**Planned conditions should be based on when the contract expires or what you expect the site to look like 10 years from the initial evaluation.**

**Fields may be grouped by like management and vegetative composition. Do not group fields to create a “weighted” average. A field converted to a more wildlife friendly vegetation/management than other fields evaluated should be assessed separately and not included with the other fields.**

### **Cropland:**

(1) Wildlife Friendly Field Border - minimum width (not average width) of 30 feet.

- For existing borders/filter strips, to qualify as wildlife friendly 60% of the canopy will be dominated by herbaceous species having a good or excellent wildlife rating (see Table 2, 327 Conservation Cover Std.). Natural regeneration with no seeding would qualify as wildlife friendly. Existing borders containing more than 40% herbaceous species rated poor, more than 10% undesirable species (Sericea lespedeza, Reed canarygrass, Musk thistle, Canada thistle, spotted knapweed or teasel), dominated by herbaceous species rated fair, or dominated by tree canopy coverage will score zero points.
- New borders will be seeded according to guidelines under “Permanent Vegetative Cover (grasses, legumes, forbs) Development” in 645 – Upland Wildlife Habitat Management standard. No species rated poor will be included in any new seeding.
- Consider the timing of haying/mowing operations when scoring this category. For example, a border comprised of a wildlife-friendly mix around the entire field will score zero points if it is all mowed April 1 through July 15.
- A border/filter less than 30 feet scores zero points.

(2) Crop Field Management:

- Base estimates on minimum expected crop residue remaining prior to planting. For example, if crop residue is at its lowest immediately before planting at 40%, score 5 points even if no fall tillage was performed. Residue is important in the spring and summer as well as over winter.
- In general, any use or disturbance of the residues should result in a lower score. For example, a field with fall tillage (disked with residues reduced to 40%) would score 5 points. That same field with residues reduced to 20% or burned in the fall would score 3 points—recognizing the decline in habitat quality.

(3) Food Value:

- Food plot or unharvested grain strips must be a minimum of 30' in width. Fields in excess of 80 acres will require the food plot/unharvested grain to be left in two

or more separated locations. For example, a 100 acre field wouldn't get credit if the unharvested grain is concentrated in one corner.

- Food plots or unharvested grain will remain through the winter until March 31<sup>st</sup> of the following year (February 28<sup>th</sup> in the Bootheel).
- Leave food plots/unharvested grain next to quality cover. Quality cover is defined as wildlife friendly field borders described above or quality shrubby cover as defined in the new quail WHAG.
- No prorating is allowed. To score 4 points, the landowner would be required to leave a minimum of 0.5 acres unharvested grain in a 50 acre crop field (0.25 for each 1 - 40 acres).

(4) Crop Rotation:

- To score 4 points, rotations will include at least three different crops, with at least 1 year of small grains/winter cover crop/meadow out of 4. Small grain is defined as oats, wheat, rye or barley.
- A soybeans-wheat rotation will score 2 points.
- To score 2 points, rotations including cotton must include a winter cover every year cotton is used. Rotations using cotton without a winter cover crop scores zero.

(5) (a) Field Size

- For the first part of this question, measure to any woody cover, including single tree lines, grazed timber, etc. You may use the openland category on sites where we know of prairie chickens or other T&E grassland birds, otherwise use edge.

(b) Shrubby Cover Points

- Measure the amount of the field within 660' of dense shrubby cover. Dense woody cover is defined as ungrazed shrubby cover, 3'-12' tall dense shrub thickets, edge-feathering or downed tree structures. The minimum size that qualifies is 30' by 50'.
- When completing this form in the office, confirm with producer the presence of dense woody/shrubby cover. To score points, shrubby cover must be ungrazed and lack dense grassy understory. Areas must be at least 30' in width and 1500 square feet to count. Look for presence in woody draws or fencelines in excess of 30' in width or ungrazed woodland. Count areas where you have personal knowledge that dense woody/shrubby cover is present. When working with producers, photos representing dense shrubby cover may help identify and distinguish acceptable areas. Shrubby cover not under the control of the landowner should not be counted (such as in right-a-ways, on neighbors....). Field verification is highly recommended. Shrubby cover will not count unless landowner can document or field office personal knowledge exists.
- Shrubby cover must be free of sod-forming grasses in order to be counted for this category (e.g. a dense dogwood thicket surrounded by tall fescue would not be considered useable shrubby cover).