

IOWA WILDLIFE HABITAT INCENTIVE PROGRAM PLAN

The objective of the Wildlife Habitat Incentive Plan (WHIP) in Iowa is to provide eligible participants financial and technical assistance to implement conservation plans that create, restore, and enhance wildlife habitat.

Iowa's WHIP priorities place emphasis on wildlife and fisheries habitat of national and state significance by providing assistance in the following categories:

Forestland	15%
Grassland Habitat	30%
Riverine Habitat	20%
Wildlife Management	35%

The wildlife and fisheries habitat of national and state significance are listed in the plan under "Threatened and Endangered Species" section.

WHIP GUIDANCE FOR FORESTLAND HABITAT RESOURCE

1. The objective of the forestland habitat resource is to improve wildlife habitat conditions in existing forestland, not to plant new forestland tracts. Improving forestland for wildlife habitat can include tree planting, nut planting, and release of volunteer re-growth, etc., within existing forestland. The WHIP practices should be tailored to wildlife species, forestland habitat conditions, and forestland priority areas.
2. Targeted forestland wildlife species are:
 - a. Ruffed Grouse
 - b. Wild Turkey
 - c. Forestland wildlife species of federal and state concern
 - d. White-Tail Deer
3. Habitat priority considerations for forestlands for these species are:
 - a. Forestland species composition - specifically hard mast producing trees such as oaks, hickories, and walnut.
 - b. Tree density
 - c. Understory conditions
 - d. Fragmentation and size of forestland tract
 - e. Invasive species control
4. Priority Areas: Priority will be given to areas with higher percentages of forest cover. For the location of the priority areas, see the WHIP Forestland Resource Priority Area Map used with the application ranking criteria.

WHIP GUIDANCE FOR GRASSLAND HABITAT RESOURCE

1. The objective for grassland habitat resource is to improve wildlife habitat conditions in existing grassland stands and create new grassland habitat for the targeted species. The WHIP practices should be tailored to the wildlife species, grassland conditions, and grassland priority areas.
2. Targeted grassland wildlife species are:
 - a. Grassland federal and state threatened and endangered and species of concern
 - b. Migratory neotropical birds and raptors that nest in the state
 - c. Resident grassland birds including Bobwhite Quail, Prairie Chicken, Sharptail Grouse, and Ring-Necked Pheasant
3. Habitat priority considerations for grasslands for these species are:
 - a. Low diversity of plant species within existing grassland stands
 - b. Control of invasive species
 - c. Enhancement of native grass stands to achieve desired diversity vegetative structure
 - d. Size of stands
 - e. Fragmentation of grassland communities
4. Priority areas consist of targeted remnants and other grasslands that protect, enhance, and increase grassland for the targeted wildlife species in number 2 above. For the location of the priority areas, see the WHIP Grassland Priority Area Map used with the application ranking criteria.

WHIP GUIDANCE FOR RIVERINE HABITAT RESOURCE

1. The objective of the riverine habitat resource is to improve aquatic habitat for selected fish species primarily through enhancement to in-stream habitat and areas between the normal high flow banks of the streams. This resource category does not include ponds or lakes. Practices should be tailored to wildlife species, riverine condition, and riverine priority areas.
2. Targeted in-stream and riparian wildlife species are:
 - a. Topeka Shiner
 - b. Brook, Brown, and Rainbow trout
 - c. Smallmouth Bass
3. Habitat priority stream considerations for these species are:
 - a. Topeka Shiner areas are for existing oxbows and off-stream channels that can be reconnected to streams with known or potential populations of the shiner.
 - b. In-stream riffles, bank hides, or other overhead cover items recommended by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) fisheries biologists for trout streams.
 - c. Rock riprap for bank stabilization that provides habitat for trout streams and other Class B high quality waters.
4. Priority Areas
 - a. Second and third order stream tributaries to the Raccoon and Rock Rivers.
 - b. Trout streams are those cold water stream segments identified by IDNR as sustaining a self-reproducing trout population.
 - c. Trout streams managed by IDNR that sustain a trout population by stocking of catchable or stock and grow streams maintained by stocking fingerling trout.

For the location of the priority areas, see the WHIP Riverine Priority Area Map used with the application ranking criteria.

WHIP GUIDANCE FOR WILDLIFE HABITAT MANAGEMENT RESOURCE

1. The objective of the Wildlife Habitat Management Category is to provide landowners with incentives to carry out traditional and proven wildlife habitat management techniques. The purpose of this category is to enhance, restore, or otherwise improve wildlife habitat to ensure that all the life cycle stages of the targeted wildlife species are provided for within the home range of the selected wildlife species. This will require examining the habitat on site and off site with the goal of ensuring the threshold habitat needs are achieved. This may require providing a missing habitat life cycle component, not necessarily to provide more of an existing component.
2. The target species for this category may include any game or non-game species of wildlife. This practice recognizes that traditional wildlife management practices will benefit many species of wildlife, both hunted, and non-hunted species. The practices proposed for this category must be consistent in improving habitat for the species of concern.
3. Habitat Priorities. Iowa is recognized as a state where intensive agriculture has dramatically altered the natural ecosystems. Some species of wildlife are dependent upon agriculture for food or successional disturbance, while other species are more dependent upon grasslands or forest. The general habitat categories that are most important to Iowa's wildlife depend upon the particular wildlife species to be benefited by the particular practice. The habitat priority categories are:
 - a. Shelterbelts - establishing 8-16 row shelterbelts to provide winter cover.
 - b. Upland Wildlife Habitat - establishing or improving upland herbaceous habitat to provide nesting cover, winter cover, and food for wildlife species using this cover type for part or all of their life cycle.
 - c. Woodland Wildlife Habitat - reforestation and tree and shrub plantings to improve habitat for wildlife species that utilizes woody habitat for all or part of their life cycle requirements.
 - d. Wetland Wildlife Habitat - Restoration of degraded wetland habitat to provide wetland cover for wildlife species that utilize this habitat type on sites that are not otherwise eligible for any other USDA programs.
4. Geographic Priority Areas. The resulting success or failure of implementing habitat practices is greatly influenced by the geographic location that the practice is applied in the state. Therefore, geographic priority areas have been established for each of the four habitat priorities. For the location of each priority area listed in 3 above. See the corresponding map used with the application ranking criteria.

THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES

One objective of WHIP is to improve habitat in order to benefit both federal and state listed threatened and endangered species. The following notes and cautions are to be considered when developing wildlife and fisheries habitat.

Before final approval of WHIP projects for federally listed endangered species (i.e. projects where restoration or management is specifically targeting a listed species, points were taken for threatened and endangered species in the ranking, etc.), Section 7 consultation and concurrence with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) must be obtained. The NRCS field office staff should contact Jody Millar, the FWS Endangered Species Coordinator at the FWS Rock Island Field Office (309-793-5800), early in the project planning stages to initiate the Section 7 process and avoid any violations of the Endangered Species Act.

When working on projects where a state listed threatened and endangered species may be involved the same process of consultation should take place. The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) Area Wildlife Biologist, Local District Wildlife or Fisheries Biologist, or the State Preserves Staff can offer review and concurrence to satisfy this consultation requirement.

Federal threatened and endangered species can be found on the USFWS website at:

http://www.fws.gov/midwest/endangered/lists/iowa_cty.html

State Listed Species can be found on the IDNR website at:

<https://programs.iowadnr.gov/naturalareasinventory/pages/Query.aspx>

Use the Iowa Department of Natural Resources' Natural Areas Inventory to provide documentation. Known species record must fall within the provided radius/distance for each taxonomic group.

Small mammals – ½ mile
Bats and other mammals – 1 mile
Birds – 2 miles
Herps – ½ mile
Fish – 5 miles up and down stream
Butterflies – 1 mile
Mussels - 5 miles up and down stream

The Iowa WHIP Plan was developed by a sub committee of the State Technical Committee. This group was composed of representatives from the following organizations:

The Nature Conservancy
Pheasants Forever
Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation
Conservation Districts of Iowa
Iowa Department of Natural Resources
Iowa State University Extension
United States Fish and Wildlife Service
Natural Resources Conservation Service
Trout Unlimited
National Wild Turkey Federation

Additional WHIP Implementation Criteria:

WHIP funds will not be authorized for repair work to existing projects.

Cost share on fencing will be approved only in conjunction with establishing other practices through WHIP that improve wildlife habitat and for the purpose of excluding domestic livestock or in association with permitted grazing systems.

WHIP is limited to a maximum of \$30,000.00 of federal financial assistance per contract. A special request must be submitted to the State Conservationist for approval of any contract exceeding this amount.

Special Projects - Special projects are funded through the Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative (CCPI). CCPI Request For Proposals (RFP) application periods will be advertised in the media and posted on the NRCS web site.