

Early Successional Habitat Workshop – April 20, 2009

Agency: U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Program Name: Partners for Fish and Wildlife Programs

Program Website: <http://www.fws.gov/partners/>

Nearest agency office:

Michigan

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At the heart of the Service's mission are the conservation and management of the Federal

Trust Species: migratory birds; threatened and endangered species; inter-jurisdictional fish; certain marine mammals; and species of international concern.

The Partners Program can assist with projects in all habitat types which conserve or restore native vegetation, hydrology, and soils associated with imperiled ecosystems

(longleaf pine, bottomland hardwoods, tropical forests, native prairies, marshes, rivers and streams) or otherwise provide an important habitat requisite for a rare, declining or protected species.

National priority ranking factors for the Partners Program are used to assign funding priority status to proposed projects that meet these conditions:

- Improve habitat for Federal Trust Species, including migratory birds; threatened and endangered species; inter-jurisdictional fish; marine mammals; and, other declining species.
- Complement activities on National Wildlife Refuge System lands, or contribute to the resolution of problems on refuges that are caused by off-refuge practices.
- Address species and habitat priorities that have been identified through Service planning teams (with our partners), or in collaboration with state fish and wildlife agencies.
- Reduce habitat fragmentation or serve as buffers for other important Federal or state conservation lands.
- Result in self-sustaining systems that are not dependent on artificial structures.

If other considerations are generally equal, then priority is directed to those projects that link private lands to important Federal lands (such as Refuges), have cooperative agreements of longer duration, multiple partners, cost sharing, and the greatest cost effectiveness. The overall goal of Partners Program projects is to return a site to the ecological condition that likely existed prior to loss or degradation.

Up to 100-percent funding for habitat restoration projects is available through the Service and its partners. Landowners agree to maintain the restored habitats for no less than 10 years, but otherwise retain full control of their lands.

Agency: Natural Resources Conservation Service



Program Name: WHIP Program

Program Website: www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/whip/

Nearest agency office:

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Summary

The Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) is a voluntary program designed to provide technical and financial assistance to landowners for the establishment and improvement of fish and wildlife habitat. Ranking criteria are used to select the applicants with a conservation plan that will create, enhance or protect wildlife habitat by types of wildlife habitat.

WHIP activities are carried out according to a site specific wildlife conservation plan developed in conjunction with the producer. All wildlife practices are installed according to NRCS technical standards. Producers may elect to use an approved technical service provider for technical assistance.

WHIP offers contracts with a minimum term of 5 years and a maximum term of 10 years. Cost share for individual practices will vary, but they will not exceed 75 percent. Eligibility for WHIP is subject to the adjusted gross income provision of the 2008 Farm Bill.

Facts

The Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) is a voluntary program that encourages creation of high quality wildlife habitats that support wildlife populations of National, State, Tribal, and local significance. Through WHIP, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) provides technical and financial assistance to landowners and others to develop upland, wetland, riparian, and aquatic habitat areas on their property. WHIP is reauthorized in the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (Farm Bill). Through WHIP, NRCS works with private landowners and operators; conservation districts; and Federal, State, and Tribal agencies to develop wildlife habitat on their property. Funding for WHIP comes from the Commodity Credit Corporation.

Benefits

Since WHIP began in 1998, nearly 14,700 participants have enrolled more than 2.3 million acres into the program. Most efforts have concentrated on improving upland wildlife habitat, such as native prairie, but there is an increasing emphasis on improving riparian and aquatic areas. The 2002 Farm Bill greatly expands the available tools for improving wildlife habitat conditions across the Nation. Species that have benefited from WHIP activities include the grasshopper sparrow, bobwhite quail, swift fox, short-eared owl, Karner-blue butterfly, gopher tortoise, Louisiana black bear, Eastern collared lizards, Bachman's sparrow, ovenbird, acorn woodpecker, greater sage grouse, and salmon.

Agency: Natural Resources Conservation Service
Program Name: EQIP Program
Program Website: <http://www.mi.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/eqip.html>
Nearest agency office:



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Summary

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is a voluntary conservation program administered by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). It supports production agriculture and environmental quality as compatible goals. Through EQIP, farmers and ranchers may receive financial and technical assistance to implement structural and land management conservation practices on eligible agricultural land.

Eligible producers are individuals engaged in livestock or crop production. Eligible land includes cropland, rangeland, pasture, and private non-industrial forestland. State priorities are developed annually from input from local workgroups based on county resource assessments and individual plans to address those local needs. A State Technical Committee comprised of representation from these local work groups, Tribal groups, commodity groups, and conservation partners advise NRCS on the implementation of EQIP. EQIP activities are carried out according to a site specific conservation plan developed in conjunction with the producer. All conservation practices are installed according to NRCS technical standards. Producers may elect to use an approved technical service provider for technical assistance.

EQIP offers contracts with a minimum term of one year after the implementation of the last scheduled practice and a maximum term of ten years. Total cost share and incentive payments are limited to \$300,000 per individual over a six-year period, regardless of the number of farms or contracts. Eligibility for EQIP is subject to the Adjusted Gross Income provision of the 2008 Farm Bill and highly erodible land and wetland conversion provisions.

The Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative is a voluntary conservation initiative that enables the use of certain conservation programs with resources of eligible partners to provide financial and technical assistance to owners and operators of agricultural and nonindustrial private forest lands. Under CCPI, the Natural Resources Conservation Service enters into partnership agreements with eligible entities that want to enhance conservation outcomes on agricultural and nonindustrial private forest lands.

During fiscal year 2009, NRCS will make Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) funds and when approved and available, Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) benefits to owners and operators of agricultural and nonindustrial private forest lands who participate in approved CCPI projects.

As authorized by Congress, this is not a grant program to eligible partners. This is a program whereby approved eligible partners will enter into multi-year agreements with NRCS to help enhance conservation outcomes on agricultural lands and private nonindustrial private forest lands. The intent of CCPI is for the Federal government to leverage investment in natural resources conservation along with services and resources of non-Federal partners.

Agency: United States Department of Agriculture – Natural Resource Conservation Service

Program Name: Wetland Reserve Program

Program Website: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/wrp/states/mi.html>

Nearest Agency Office:

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Summary:

Michigan's Wetland Reserve Program began in 1995 with the enrollment of our first 180 acre parcel of land in Jackson County. The focus of WRP in Michigan is to provide a wide diversity of high quality wetland, and associated upland as habitat for migratory birds and wildlife. A diversity of wetland types such as emergent marshes, shrub-scrub, and wet prairies, to name a few, is the key to the WRP success in Michigan. The importance of the need for high quality, diverse wetland habitat is born out in the fact that fully 50 percent of Michigan's threatened or endangered species require healthy, fully functional wetlands to complete their life cycle.

Currently, Michigan has over 125 easements and over 16,000 acres enrolled in WRP. The vast majority of our landowners are interested in WRP because of a strongly held land stewardship ethic. They feel that enrolling land in WRP, restoring the wetlands, and associated uplands, and protecting these areas with an easement is the right thing to do for themselves, their family, the community, and future generations. A small percentage of our clients enroll land in WRP because they can retire marginal cropland and receive financial payments for taking low production cropland out of production.

Program Benefits

The family farm benefits in many ways. Time previously spent pulling a farm implement out of a wet field can now be spent cropping fields with high productivity. The WRP payment made in exchange for an easement may provide a family with a much needed "new start". The local community benefits from cleaner surface and groundwater. The severity and duration of floods are reduced. Sediment transport in local streams is reduced and recreational experiences in local lakes are enhanced.

Agency: United States Department of Agriculture – Natural Resource Conservation Service

Program Name: Conservation Stewardship Program

Program Website: http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/new_csp/csp.html

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Summary

Through CSP, NRCS will provide financial and technical assistance to eligible producers to conserve and enhance soil, water, air, and related natural resources on their land. Eligible lands include cropland, grassland, prairie land, improved pastureland, rangeland, nonindustrial private forest lands, agricultural land under the jurisdiction of an Indian tribe, and other private agricultural land (including cropped woodland, marshes, and agricultural land used for the production of livestock) on which resource concerns related to agricultural production could be addressed. Participation in the program is voluntary.

CSP encourages land stewards to improve their conservation performance by installing and adopting additional activities, and improving, maintaining, and managing existing activities on agricultural land and nonindustrial private forest land. The NRCS will make CSP available nationwide on a continuous application basis.

The State Conservationist, in consultation with the State Technical Committee and local work groups, will focus program impacts on natural resources that are of specific concern for a State, or specific geographic areas within the State. Applications will be evaluated relative to other applications addressing similar priority resource concerns to facilitate a competitive ranking process among applicants within a State who face similar resource challenges.

The entire agricultural operation must be enrolled and must include all agricultural land under the effective control of the applicant for the term of the proposed contract that is operated substantially separate from other operations. CSP participants could receive payments for: (1) installing and adopting additional activities, and improving, maintaining, and managing existing activities; (2) the adoption of resource-conserving crop rotations; and (3) on-farm research and demonstration activities, or pilot testing.

For an Overview of Federal Cost-share Programs in Michigan go to:
<http://www.mi.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/>

Agency: United States Department of Agriculture - Farm Services Agency

Program Name: Conservation Reserve Program

Program Website: <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/webapp?area=home&subject=copr&topic=crp>

Nearest Agency Office:

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Overview

The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) is a voluntary program for agricultural landowners. Through CRP, you can receive annual rental payments and cost-share assistance to establish long-term, resource conserving covers on eligible farmland.

The Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) makes annual rental payments based on the agriculture rental value of the land, and it provides cost-share assistance for up to 50 percent of the participant's costs in establishing approved conservation practices. Participants enroll in CRP contracts for 10 to 15 years.

Benefits

CRP protects millions of acres of American topsoil from erosion and is designed to safeguard the Nation's natural resources. By reducing water runoff and sedimentation, CRP protects groundwater and helps improve the condition of lakes, rivers, ponds, and streams. Acreage enrolled in the CRP is planted to resource-conserving vegetative covers, making the program a major contributor to increased wildlife populations in many parts of the country.

Eligible Land

To be eligible for placement in CRP, land must be either:

- Cropland (including field margins) that is planted or considered planted to an agricultural commodity 4 of the previous 6 crop years from 1996 to 2001, and which is physically and legally capable of being planted in a normal manner to an agricultural commodity; or
- Certain marginal pastureland that is suitable for use as a riparian buffer or for similar water quality purposes.

CRP Payments

FSA provides CRP participants with annual rental payments, including certain incentive payments, and cost-share assistance:

Rental Payments - FSA provides annual rental payments to participants. FSA bases rental rates on the relative productivity of the soils within each county and the average dry land cash rent or cash-rent equivalent.

Maintenance Incentive Payments - CRP annual rental payments may include an additional amount up to \$4 per acre per year as an incentive to perform certain maintenance obligations.

Cost-share Assistance - FSA provides cost-share assistance to participants who establish approved cover on eligible cropland.

For More Information

For more information on CRP, contact your local FSA office.

Agency: Michigan Department of Natural Resources

Program Name: Forest Legacy Program

Program Website: http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,1607,7-153-30301_30505_34240-99280--_00.html

Nearest agency office:

Name of Contact: Kerry Wieber

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MANAGEMENT

MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

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Summary

It is a partnership with USDA Forest Service with the goal to prevent privately owned and environmentally significant forest lands from being converted to non-forest uses. It protects the volunteered lands through conservation easements. These agreements restrict the development of the property, and require sustainable forestry practices within the lands boundaries. Michigan's Forest Legacy Program **requires** that the rights of public access be conveyed to the State on all land or interests in land that is acquired with Forest Legacy Program Funding. Only private forest landowners who already have a multiple resource management plan. The federal government may fund up to 75% of program costs, with at least 25% coming from private, state or local sources. In addition to gains associated with the sale or donation of property rights, many landowners may also benefit from reduced taxes associated with limits placed on land use.

Agency: Michigan Department of Natural Resources

Program Name: Questions and Answers about Clearcutting

Program Website: http://www.michigan.gov/documents/IC4270_48581_7.pdf

Nearest agency office where there's a person who administers this program:

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Summary

What this program does is educate the landowner that clear cutting is not a horrible forest management practice when done correctly and can benefit certain animal wildlife species such as ruffed grouse and white tailed deer. Clear cutting is best done when trying to regenerate tree species such as aspen that cannot tolerate shade.

Agency: Michigan Department of Natural Resources

Program Name: Commercial Forestry + Qualified Forest Program

Program Website: http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,1607,7-153-30301_30505_32291---,00.html
(just Google "Michigan Commercial Forestry Program")

Nearest agency office where there's a person who administers this program:

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Landowners do not pay ad valorem general property taxes. Instead, the landowners pay a specific tax of \$1.20 per acre annually. The State of Michigan pays an additional \$1.20 per acre on behalf of the landowner to the county annually.

There are various restrictions on what the land can be used for:

General Information

- Listed land must be devoted to commercial forest management.

Listed land cannot be used for agriculture, mineral extraction, grazing, industry, developed recreation, residences, resorts, commercial purposes, or developmental purposes.

- Land managed for Christmas trees is not eligible.
- The public is limited to foot access for the specific purposes of fishing, hunting and trapping, and in those instances where the land also has an approved sustainable forest conservation easement, foot access for other recreational use.

Good Handout on Program:

http://www.michigan.gov/documents/dnr/IC4171_CommercialForestSummary_185969_7.pdf

Frequent Question Handout:

http://www.michigan.gov/documents/dnr/FAQs_229549_7.pdf