

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE
CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD
WILDLIFE WATERING FACILITY

(No.)

Code 648

DEFINITION

Develop, improve, or modify watering places and systems for wildlife.

PURPOSES

- Provide adequate drinking water during critical periods for wildlife.
- Create or expand suitable habitat for wildlife.
- Improve water quality and accessibility for wildlife.

CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES

In areas where a lack of adequate water has been identified as the limiting habitat component.

In areas where new, additional, or improved watering places are needed to increase the range, distribution, improve the habitat of, or attract wildlife by meeting their water requirements.

CRITERIA

General Criteria Applicable to all Purposes

Facilities shall be designed and installed in compliance with all federal, state, local laws and regulations.

Domestic livestock shall be excluded from the facility unless specified in an approved grazing plan. See Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG) Standards (528A) Prescribe Grazing or (472) Use Exclusion.

The facility must provide permanent, accessible, dependable and suitable quality water during dry months of normal rainfall.

Wildlife watering facilities shall be spaced no closer than one-quarter mile from one another or to a dependable quality water supply.

Management measures shall be provided to control invasive species.

Disturbed areas shall be vegetated according to a revegetation plan. Use NRCS FOTG Standard (645) Upland Wildlife Habitat Management unless the area is subject to frequent overflows or spillway protection is needed, then NRCS FOTG Standard (342) Critical Area Planting will be used.

To maximize wildlife use, watering facilities shall either be placed in the woods or as close to a field edge as possible.

Design shall include appropriate safety features to minimize the hazards of the facility.

Embankments Ponds and Dugouts

Depth of water in the pond or dugout shall not exceed 5 feet.

Conservation practice standards are reviewed periodically, and updated if needed. To obtain the current version of this standard, contact the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

The design of the watering facility shall provide for a minimum surface area of 625 square feet and shall not exceed 2500 square feet.

Side slopes shall be flat enough to maintain stability, but they shall be no steeper than 2 horizontal to 1 vertical (2:1). At least one slope shall be at least 4:1 or flatter to allow wildlife to enter and leave easily.

Surface runoff basins with small earth embankments intended to store more than 3 feet of water against the embankment shall be designed according to NRCS FOTG Standard (378) Pond.

The pond or dugout shall maintain a depth of at least 2 feet of water during the driest part of the year.

Springs and Seeps

Improvements involving intermittent springs and seeps will contain storage of a minimum of 50 gallons of water. Use NRCS FOTG Standards (574) Spring Development, (614) Watering Facility and (516) Pipeline as appropriate.

The reliability and quantity of its flow will be checked before development of a spring or seep to serve as a wildlife watering facility.

Intermittent springs will be developed only if adequate checks show that water is available for the intended periods of use.

When using tanks or troughs, place ramps, ladders, or floats in the facility to provide a means of escape for birds, bats, and other small mammals.

CONSIDERATIONS

Consider the possible effects of predation, hunting, etc on target species and the ecosystem.

Consider using native plants materials of local genotypes to achieve the desired purpose.

Consider the accessibility of the site for installation and maintenance.

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Consider any effects upon natural springs/wetlands and associated unique flora and fauna.

This practice may be used to promote the conservation of declining species, including threatened and endangered species.

Consider the aesthetics of the installation.

Consider planting and maintaining vegetation that provides shade and protective cover over or near the watering facility.

Consider use of these areas by reptiles and amphibians. When doing so, increase one side slope of 6:1 or flatter.

Stacked logs and/or rock piles may be located near the water's edge to provide critical habitat for local reptile and amphibian species. See NRCS Conservation Practice Job Sheet (645) Wildlife Brush Piles for more information.

Consider the effects on downstream flows or groundwater that could affect other water users or associated aquatic sites.

PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

Plans and specifications for this practice shall be prepared for each site. Plans and specifications shall be recorded using approved specification sheets, job sheets, technical notes, or narrative documentation in the conservation plan or other acceptable documentation to describe the requirements for applying the practice to achieve its intended use.

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

The purpose of operation, maintenance, and management is to insure that the practice functions as intended for the life of the practice.

Facilities shall be checked annually to insure proper function. Repair and maintain as needed.

Inspect the area adjacent to the facility to make sure the area is well protected with desirable vegetation and not subject to erosion or sediment deposition. Correct as needed.

Facilities not designed to withstand or operate during freezing weather will be winterized prior to winter conditions.

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Indiana NRCS FOTG, April 2003