

Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) Ranking Instructions – FY2011 Northern Plains Migratory Bird Habitat Initiative (NPMBHI)

A WHIP application will be ranked and compete within the NPMBHI Funding Pool when it addresses the resource concerns targeted by this Initiative proposal to accelerate implementation of conservation practices to protect migratory bird habitat on working land in the Northern Plains region utilizing the ND Statewide funding pool. An applicant may only provide one Fiscal Year (FY) 2011 WHIP application per operating unit per funding pool.

Note: ONLY financially assisted conservation practices will be considered during the application ranking.

Screening Tool:

Prior to ranking, the application will be “screened” for funding priority. This Screening Tool will set priorities for NPMBHI opportunities for FY11. Check the question that applies to the application. The Priority will be determined and entered into the ProTracts application screen. Maps are called “BreedingDuckPairs.mxd” and located in F:\geodata\project_data\ncrs\PrairiePotHoleRegion\. Select only one of the following:

“**High**” **priority:** Land has more than 25 breeding duck pairs per square mile or is in the Red River Watershed **AND** resides in a county with greater than 60,000 acres of preventive plant.

“**Medium**” **priority:** Land either has 25 breeding pairs or greater **OR** resides in a county with greater than 60,000 acres of preventive plant.

“**Low**” **priority:** Land does not support 25 breeding pairs per square mile **AND** does not reside in a county with greater than 60,000 acres of preventive plant.

Efficiency Score:

The Efficiency Score considers the benefits of the cost efficiency of the conservation practice during the evaluation of the applications for funding. This score is generated in the inner-workings or conservation databases and is generated automatically. The Efficiency Score takes values from the CPPE (Conservation Practice Physical Effects) and cost information from the Practice Average Cost Tables in SmartTech. The score evaluates the effect of the financially assisted conservation practice in solving resource concerns.

National Priorities Addressed:

1. Healthy Plant & Animal Communities – Wildlife Habitat Conservation – Will the proposed project assist the applicant to:

a. *Retain wildlife and plant benefits on land exiting the Conservation Reserve Program?* Points shall be awarded if the WHIP application includes new practices on land that has expired from CRP within the last 2 years and has not already been converted to cropland. 382 Fence, 378 Pond, 511 Forage Harvest Management, 512 Forage and Biomass Planting(interseeding and mechanical disturbance), 516 Pipeline, 528 Prescribed Grazing, 642 Water Well, 614 Watering Facility, 644 Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management, 645 Upland Wildlife Habitat Management, 647 Early Successional Habitat Development/Management, 658 Wetland Creation, 659 Wetland Enhancement, 657 Wetland Restoration.

b. *Address and support one of the following priorities:*

- *Sage Grouse* points will be awarded for contracts located in the sage grouse core area of North Dakota (see map located in ND SharePoint WHIP Habitat Maps) for the following practices: 382 Fence (wildlife friendly fence scenario only), 390 Riparian Herbaceous Cover, 512 Forage and Biomass Planting, 516 Pipeline, 528 Prescribed Grazing, 550 Range

Planting, 643 Restoration and Management of Declining Habitats, 645 Upland Wildlife Habitat Management, and 500 Obstruction Removal (invasive species, power lines, fences, etc.)

- *Lesser Prairie Chicken* NA in ND
- *Longleaf Pine Forests* NA in ND
- *New England – New York Forestry* NA in ND

c. Benefit federally listed threatened and endangered, at-risk, candidate, fish or wildlife species of concern? Applicable to practices that directly benefit nationally listed threatened, endangered, and candidate species. Species include sage grouse, piping plover, western prairie fringed orchard, whooping crane, Dakota skipper, and pallid sturgeon. 338 Prescribed Burning, 382 Fence, 378 Pond, 390 Riparian Herbaceous Cover, 391 Riparian Forest Management, 511 Forage Harvest Management, 512 Forage and Biomass Planting, 516 Pipeline, 528 Prescribed Grazing, 550 Range Planting, 642 Water Well, 614 Watering Facility, 643 Restoration and Management of Declining Habitats, 644 Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management, 645 Upland Wildlife Habitat Management, 647 Early Successional Habitat Development/Management, 658 Wetland Creation, 659 Wetland Enhancement, 657 Wetland Restoration

d. Benefit prioritized native habitat critical to a fish or wildlife species? Applicable only to critical habitat listed by FWS for piping plover (see maps in ND SharePoint WHIP Habitat Maps) see practices listed above in 1c.

e. Increase, improve or establish pollinator habitat? Points are awarded if any of the following financially assisted practices are applied: 386 (Pollinator Scenarios), 390 (Pollinator Scenarios), 550, 643 (Pollinator Scenarios).

f. Eradicate or control prioritized noxious or invasive species? All state listed noxious weeds; woody species invasion on tame and native grassland or forestland (Russian olive, Siberian elm, eastern red cedar, Rocky Mountain juniper, buckthorn). Points will be awarded when the WHIP application includes practices that will benefit pest management or invasive species management.

g. Benefit declining or important aquatic wildlife species prioritized in the State WHIP Plan? NA in ND

h. Implement conservation practices which benefit prioritized fish or wildlife species in forested areas? Points will be awarded for contracts statewide for installing the following practices on forestland including riparian forests: 338 Prescribed Burning, 391 Riparian Forest Management, 643 Restoration and Management of Declining Habitats, 666 Forest Stand Improvement

i. Establish habitat on pivot corners and irregular areas on agricultural land? Points will be awarded statewide for the following practices: 512 Forage and Biomass Planting, 516 Pipeline, 528 Prescribed Grazing, 550 Range Planting, 644 Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management, 645 Upland Wildlife Habitat Management, 647 Early Successional Habitat Development/Management, 658 Wetland Creation, 659 Wetland Enhancement, 657 Wetland Restoration

j. Provide self-sustaining habitat for prioritized fish and wildlife while reducing net carbon emissions or boosting carbon storage (e.g., warm season perennial grasses, trees or shrubs)? Points will be awarded statewide for the following practices: 382 Fence, 378 Pond, 390 Riparian Herbaceous Cover, 391 Riparian Forest Management, 511 Forage Harvest Management, 512 Forage and Biomass Planting, 516 Pipeline, 528 Prescribed Grazing, 550 Range Planting, 642 Water Well, 614 Watering Facility, 643 Restoration and Management of Declining Habitats, 644 Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management, 645 Upland Wildlife Habitat Management, 647 Early Successional Habitat Development/Management, 658 Wetland Creation, 659 Wetland Enhancement, 657 Wetland Restoration

k. Benefit migration and other movement corridors for prioritized wildlife? Points will be awarded for the following practices 390 Riparian Herbaceous Cover, 391 Riparian Forest Buffer, and 396 Fish Passage

2. Business Lines – Conservation Implementation – Additional Ranking Considerations – Will the applicant in the proposed project:

- a. *Complete habitat development within the first two years of the agreement?* Points will be awarded when the applicant chooses to schedule all financially assisted practices within 24 months of estimated date of contract obligation.

State Issues Addressed:

Choose only one of the following questions: either 1, 2, or 3.

1. *Does the application include a complex of three or more wetland types?*

Use the NWI maps to identify the different wetland types in the offer, PEMA, PEMC, or PEMF, etc.

2. *Does the application include a complex of two wetland types?*

Use the NWI maps to identify the different wetland types in the offer, PEMA, PEMC, or PEMF, etc.

3. *Does the application have less than two wetland types?*

Use the NWI maps to identify the different wetland types in the offer, PEMA, PEMC, or PEMF, etc.

Choose only one of the following questions: either 4, 5, 6, or 7.

4. *Does the land in the application support greater than 60 duck pairs per square mile?*

Using the Upland Accessibility by Breeding Duck Pairs in the Prairie Pothole Region Map (Thunderstorm Map) identify if the area will support more than 60 duck pairs which are indicated with either the red, yellow or dark green colors. Maps are located on SharePoint on the Programs site in the Northern Plains Migratory Bird Habitat Initiative folder.

5. *Does the land in the application support between 40-60 duck pairs per square mile?*

Using the Upland Accessibility by Breeding Duck Pairs in the Prairie Pothole Region Map (Thunderstorm Map) identify if the area will support between 40-60 duck pairs which is indicated with the light green color. Maps are located on SharePoint on the Programs site in the Northern Plains Migratory Bird Habitat Initiative folder.

6. *Does the land in the application support between 20-39 duck pairs per square mile?*

Using the Upland Accessibility by Breeding Duck Pairs in the Prairie Pothole Region Map (Thunderstorm Map) identify if the area will support between 20-39 duck pairs which is indicated with the gray color. Maps are located on SharePoint on the Programs site in the Northern Plains Migratory Bird Habitat Initiative folder.

7. *Does the land in the application support less than 20 duck pairs per square mile?*

Using the Upland Accessibility by Breeding Duck Pairs in the Prairie Pothole Region Map (Thunderstorm Map) identify if the area will support less than 20 duck pairs which are indicated with either the light blue or dark blue colors. Maps are located on SharePoint on the Programs site in the Northern Plains Migratory Bird Habitat Initiative folder.

Choose only one of the following questions, either 8 or 9

8. *Does the application support Resource Objective A: Restoring wetlands/grassland qualities to farmed wetlands?*

This would include restoring the wetland hydrology and the cropland being converted to grassland and/or herbaceous cover habitat. Core practices are 644 and 645 and in addition facilitative practices could include 647, 550, 327 or 472.

9. *Does the application support Resource Objective B: Managing wetlands to enhance wildlife and water quality?*

For this question to be answered yes means there would not be any wetland hydrologic restoration. Core practices are 644 and 645 and in addition facilitative practices could include 511, 528, 340, 500 or 472.

Choose only one of the following questions: either 10, 11, 12, or 13.

10. *Does the application provide for greater than 160 acres of connectivity between wetlands in the wetland complex?*

Do not include the acreage of the wetland in determining the acres of connectivity. Only the upland acreage would be used.

11. *Does the application provide for 80-159 acres of connectivity between wetlands in the wetland complex?*

Do not include the acreage of the wetland in determining the acres of connectivity. Only the upland acreage would be used.

12. *Does the application provide for 40-79 acres of connectivity between wetlands in the wetland complex?*

Do not include the acreage of the wetland in determining the acres of connectivity. Only the upland acreage would be used.

13. *Does the application provide less than 40 acres of connectivity between wetlands in the wetland complex?*

Do not include the acreage of the wetland in determining the acres of connectivity. Only the upland acreage would be used.

14. *Does contract include conversion of cropland to grassland to ensure longevity of implemented practices (5 years or greater)?*

The main goal of program is to convert cropland to grassland cover. This question will only receive points when a landuse change from cropland to grassland occurs. Practices installed in the contract would have a minimum life span of at least 5 years.

15. *Does the application acreage include grassland established under an expired CRP contract?*

Points would be awarded if any of the offered acreage includes grassland which had previously been seeded to grass under the Conservation Reserve Program. Expired CRP grassland that has been broke and is now being farmed would not qualify.

Local Issues Addressed:

1. *Does the application provide agricultural working land opportunities to an area that continually experiences wet conditions?*

This would include land that previously was either left idle after the area dried up during the summer/fall or generally was not used for any crop or livestock production after the area dried out.