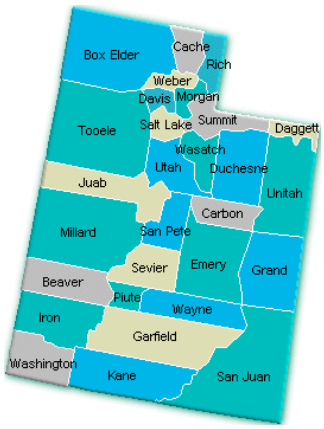
Wildlife—Individual Screening Criteria, Ranking Tool Questions and Instructions



USDA-NRCS—Salt Lake City, Utah

2007-Environmental Quality Incentives Program

Note to all users: The official Application and Evaluation Ranking Tools are located in Protracts.

Screening for the EQIP-Wildlife Fund Pool

A Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy (CWCS) for Utah was developed by the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (UDWR) and their partners to satisfy requirements of the State Wildlife Grant program. The CWCS is located at the following website: **http://www.wildlife.utah.gov/cwcs/utah_cwcs_strategy.pdf**

The CWCS provides a wealth of information on the abundance, distribution, current knowledge, conservation and priority status of Utah's fish and wildlife. NRCS strives to use its programs to assist in a coordinated effort to help implement Utah's CWCS within the context of NRCS national priorities, local priorities and program objectives and capabilities.

In order to be eligible for either the Wildlife Individual or the Wildlife RFP fund pool, a proposed project must benefit at least one CWCS Tier I, Tier II, or Tier III species from the list in Chapter 5 (Table 5.1), pages 52-57.

If the proposed project does not meet this criterion, it is not eligible for either of these fund pools.

Wildlife Habitat Management Incentive Payment Business Rules

This year, NRCS is offering incentive payments of $5.00/acre/year for EQIP applicants willing to adopt certain wildlife management practices, as follows:

1. Cooperators may choose specific management activities from the "**Eligible Management Practices and Activities**" (see sidebars on pages 2-3).
2. Cooperators must agree to apply the management activity as specified in the respective **Management Activity Task Sheet** and facilitating practice specifications prior to contract obligation. A copy of the Management Activity Task Sheet for the activity selected must be given to the cooperator with a copy also placed in the 6-part folder.
3. Payment will be made **only on those acres where the management action is applied**, not to all the acres under contract.
4. Incentive payments for each practice code **cannot exceed $3000/year** and each practice code cannot be scheduled for more than 3 years in the EQIP contract.
5. Incentive payments **cannot be made on management practices that the cooperator has already adopted** on the planned land units (i.e., a change in management is required).
6. **Activities that are required for compliance with the HEL and WC provisions are not eligible for an incentive payment.**
7. By federal rule, no incentive payments are allowed in WHIP contracts.

The following Business Rules will be used to rank applications for the Wildlife Individual and the Wildlife RFP ranking tools. Obtain assistance from an NRCS or Partner biologist to answer the ranking tool questions. Any documentation required to claim points will be made on the UT-CPA-52 or in the Tech Notes.

References:

- **Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy (CWCS)**
- **Utah Fish and Wildlife Plan**
- **http://www.ut.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/**
- **http://efotg.nrcs.usda.gov/**
- **CPM 440—Part 512 CPC Manual**
- **CPM 440-Part 515 EQIP Manual**
- **National Planning Procedures Handbook**
- **UT Bulletin 300-07-04**
- **Area and Partner Biologists**

Eligible Management Practices and Activities
(See Task Sheets, pp. 5-12)

Upland Wildlife Habitat Management (645)

Activity 1 – Improve wildlife food and cover by leaving tall stubble over winter on crop, pasture, or hayland.

Activity 2 – Reduce habitat fragmentation and improve cover by planting permanent vegetation for wildlife on crop, pasture, or hayland. (***One-time payment only***)

Activity 3 – Provide cover for ground-nesting birds on range, pasture, or hayland.

Activity 4 – Improve value of brush management for wildlife in sagebrush communities. (***One-time payment only***)

Activity 5 – Develop a management plan and Safe Harbor Agreement for Utah Prairie Dogs on range, pasture, or hayland (Beaver, Garfield, Iron, Piute, Sevier, and Wayne Counties only). (***One-time payment only***)

National At-Risk species Resource Concerns

- Plant Condition; Threatened and Endangered Plant Species
- Plant Condition; T&E Plant Species: Declining Species, Species of Concern
- Fish and Wildlife; Threatened and Endangered Fish and Wildlife Species
- Fish and Wildlife; T&E Species: Declining Species, Species of Concern

NATIONAL Priority Issues

In order to answer yes to the National issues/priority questions you must have adequate documentation that the practice(s) will conserve the priority issue. This documentation can be in the form of a list of Threatened and Endangered species that will be impacted by the practices on the UT-CPA-52 or in the Tech Notes. See the species of concern list. Talk with your Area or partner biologist for more information on these species.

Question 1: Will the treatment you intend to implement using EQIP result in considerable reductions of non-point source pollution, such as nutrients, sediment, pesticides, excess salinity in impaired watersheds consistent with TMDL's where available as well as the reduction of groundwater contamination or point source such as contamination from confined animal feeding operations?

- To claim these points, the proposed project must be expected to meet quality criteria for all applicable NRCS Water Quality criteria.

Question 2: Will the treatment you intend to implement using EQIP result in the conservation of a considerable amount of ground or surface water resources?

- To claim these points, the proposed project must be expected to meet quality criteria for all applicable NRCS Water Quantity criteria.

Question 3: Will the treatment you intend to implement using EQIP result in a considerable reduction of emissions, such as particulate matter, nitrogen oxides (NOx), volatile organic compounds, and ozone precursors and depleters that contribute to air quality impairment violations of National Ambient Air Quality Standards?

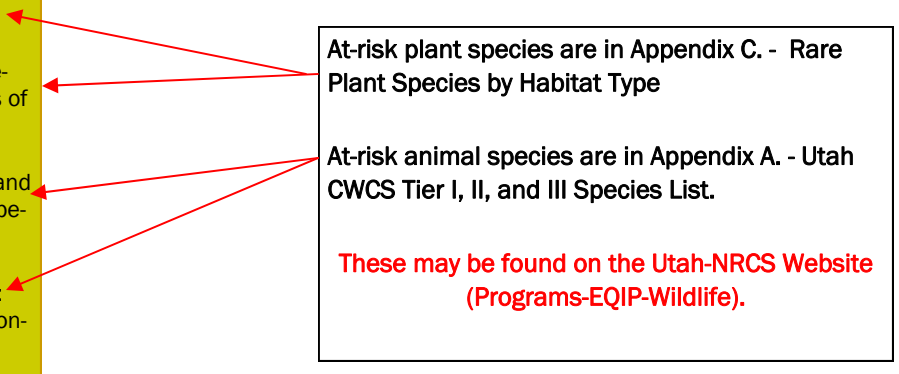
- To claim these points, the proposed project must include one or more of the conservation practices on page 5.

Question 4: Will the treatment you intend to implement using EQIP result in a considerable reduction in soil erosion and sedimentation from unacceptable levels on agricultural land?

- To claim these points, soil erosion must go from above T to below T as a result of the proposed project OR Quality criteria for Soil Condition; Rangeland Site Stability must be met as a result of implementing the proposed project.

Question 5: Will the treatment you intend to implement using EQIP result in a considerable increase in the promotion of at-risk species habitat conservation?

- To claim these points, the project must be expected to meet quality criteria for one or more of the four national at-risk species resource concerns. (see list, left sidebar).



Eligible Management Practices and Activities, continued.

Shallow Water Management for Wildlife (646)

Activity 6 – Inundate land and manage shallow water to provide habitat for wildlife (applicable on any land use).

Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management (644)

Activity 7 – Manage wetlands to provide habitat for wildlife (applicable on any land use).

Restoration & Management of Declining Habitats (643)

Activity 8 – Develop and implement a conservation plan to restore a priority habitat type from the Utah Wildlife Action Plan (applicable on any land use).

Notes:

State Priority Issues

Questions 1-3: Answer yes to only ONE of the following: (See Page 4 for Table)

1. Will the project benefit 3 or more targeted habitat types?
2. Will the project benefit exactly 2 targeted habitat types?
3. Will the project benefit only 1 targeted habitat type?

Questions 4-6: Answer yes to only ONE of the following: (See Page 4 for Table)

4. Will the project benefit at least one Priority 1 species?
5. Will the project benefit at least one Priority 2, but no Priority 1 species?
6. Will the project benefit at least one Priority 3, but no Priority 1 or 2 species?

Question 7: Answer yes or no:

7. Does the plan address control of an invasive species identified by a state, county, or local government or by a local Cooperative Weed Management Area as being a noxious species?

Question 8: Answer yes or no:

8. Is this project in an area that is covered by an approved areawide plan as defined by the National Planning Procedures Handbook ?

Local Priority Issues

Question 1: Answer yes or no.

1. Has the project been approved by a local UPCD Regional Team?

Question 2: Answer yes or no.

2. Does the project address a specific component of an existing Endangered Species Recovery Plan, DWR Species Management Plan, CRMP or Areawide Resource Management Plan, or Sage Grouse Local Workgroup Plan?

Questions 3-4: Answer yes to only ONE.

3. Is the project within or contiguous with an area protected for wildlife?
4. Is the project within 1 mile of an area protected for wildlife?

Questions 5-7: Answer yes to only ONE.

5. Will partners contribute > 50% of the total project cost?
6. Will partners contribute 25-50% of the total project cost?
7. Will partners contribute 10-24% of the total project cost?

Question 8: Answer yes or no:

8. Will project have an experimental design studied by a university?

Question 9: Answer yes or no:

9. Will project have ecological monitoring conducted by a university, state or federal agency, or NGO?

Habitat/Priority Species Table

Habitat Type	Priority 1 Species	Priority 2 Species	Priority 3 Species
Lowland Riparian	Bald Eagle, Southwestern Willow Flycatcher, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Virgin Spinedace, Virgin River Chub	Arizona Toad, Lewis's Woodpecker, Allen's Big-eared Bat, Big Free-tailed Bat, Western Red Bat, Cornsnake, Western Threadsnake	Canyon Treefrog, Abert's Towhee, Bell's Vireo, Broad-tailed Hummingbird, Lucy's Warbler, Northern River Otter, Yuma Myotis, Cornsnake
Wetland	Columbia Spotted Frog, Least Chub, fat-whorled pondsnail, Kanab ambersnail	Western Toad, Short-eared Owl	Northern Leopard Frog, American Avocet, Black-necked Stilt
Mountain Riparian	Southwestern Willow Flycatcher, Bluehead Sucker, Bonneville Cutthroat Trout, Colorado River Cutthroat Trout	Western Toad, Leatherside Chub, Smooth Greensnake	Broad-tailed Hummingbird, Northern River Otter
Shrubsteppe	Gunnison Sage-grouse	Ferruginous Hawk, Greater Sage-grouse, Sharp-tailed Grouse, Pygmy Rabbit	Brewer's Sparrow, Sage Sparrow, Sage Thrasher, Mule Deer
Flowing Water (Lotic)	Bluehead Sucker, Bonneville Cutthroat Trout, Bonytail, Colorado Pikeminnow, Colorado River Cutthroat Trout, Flannelmouth Sucker, June Sucker, Humpback Chub, Razorback Sucker, Roundtail Chub, Virgin Spinedace, Virgin River Chub, Woundfin	Desert Sucker, Leatherside Chub	Canyon Treefrog
Wet Meadow	Columbia Spotted Frog	Bobolink, Smooth Greensnake	
Grassland	Utah Prairie-dog	Burrowing Owl, Grasshopper Sparrow, Long-billed Curlew, Sharp-tailed Grouse, Short-eared Owl, Gunnison's Prairie-dog, White-tailed Prairie-dog	Great Plains Toad

Conservation Practices—to claim points for National Priority Question #3, the proposed project must include one or more of the following practices:

Access Road (560)	Stream Habitat Improvement and Management (395)
Irrigation System, Surface and Subsurface (443)	Deep Tillage (324)
Alley Cropping (311)	Streambank and Shoreline Protection (580)
Irrigation Water Management (449)	Drainage Water Management (554)
Amendments for the Treatment of Agricultural Waste (591)	Stripcropping (585)
Mulching (484)	Feed Management (592)
Anaerobic Digester, Controlled Temperature (366)	Surface Roughening (609)
Nutrient Management (590)	Field Border (386)
Animal Mortality Facility (316)	Tree/Shrub Establishment (612)
Pasture and Hay Planting (512)	Filter Strip (393)
Anionic Polyacrylamide (PAM) Erosion Control (450)	Upland Wildlife Habitat Management (645)
Pest Management (595)	Firebreak (394)
Atmospheric Resource Quality Management (370)	Use Exclusion (472)
Prescribed Burning (338)	Forest Site Preparation (490)
Closure of Waste Impoundment (360)	Vegetative Barrier (601)
Prescribed Grazing (528)	Forest Stand Improvement (666)
Composting Facility (317)	Waste Facility Cover (367)
Pumping Plant (533)	Fuel Break (383)
Conservation Cover (327)	Waste Storage Facility (313)
Range Planting (550)	Grassed Waterway (412)
Conservation Crop Rotation (328)	Waste Treatment Lagoon (359)
Recreation Area Improvement (562)	Grazing Land Mechanical Treatment (548)
Constructed Wetland (656)	Waste Utilization (633)
Recreation Land Grading and Shaping (566)	Heavy Use Area Protection (561)
Contour Buffer Strips (332)	Wastewater Treatment Strip (635)
Recreation Trail and Walkway (568)	Hedgerow Planting (422)
Contour Farming (330)	Wetland Creation (658)
Residue Management, Seasonal (344)	Herbaceous Wind Barriers (603)
Contour Orchard and Other Fruit Area (331)	Wetland Enhancement (659)
Restoration and Management of Declining Habitats (643)	Irrigation Canal or Lateral (320)
Cover Crop (340)	Wetland Restoration (657)
Riparian Forest Buffer (391)	Irrigation Field Ditch (388)
Critical Area Planting (342)	Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management (644)
Riparian Herbaceous Cover (390)	Irrigation System, Microirrigation (441)
Cross Wind Ridges (589A)	Windbreak/Shelterbelt Establishment (380)
Rock Barrier (555)	Irrigation System, Sprinkler (442)
Cross Wind Trap Strips (589C)	Windbreak/Shelterbelt Renovation (650)

UPLAND WILDLIFE HABITAT MANAGEMENT — PRACTICE 645

Management Activity Task Sheet — Crop, Pasture, Hayland

Activity 1 - Improve wildlife food and cover by leaving tall stubble over winter on crop, pasture, or hayland. Applies only to pasture, hay (non-alfalfa), or cropland in small grains or grain corn.

This management activity will provide cover and food for resident birds and small mammals through the critical winter period. Cooperator agrees to leave harvested hay, pasture, or grain crop stubble standing at least 14" or taller over winter. Stubble will not be tilled, grazed, or harvested until after March 1 of the following year.

Complete a Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Guide (WHEG) assessment for the planned field(s). To be eligible for this incentive payment, the planned field(s) must achieve a score of $\geq$ 0.5 on the WHEG after implementation of this activity. Use the Utah Specification Sheet for Practice 645 to document current and planned habitat conditions. Use this sheet to specify which field(s) this activity will occur on and to certify each year the activity is applied.

	Tract & Field Number(s)	Type of Crop, Pasture, or Hay	Acres	Cooperator Certification (Sign & Date)	NRCS Certification (Sign & Date)
Year 1					
Year 2					
Year 3					

UPLAND WILDLIFE HABITAT MANAGEMENT

Management Activity Task Sheet

PRACTICE 645

Crop, Pasture, Hayland

Activity 2 - Reduce habitat fragmentation and improve cover by planting permanent vegetation for wildlife on crop, pasture, or hayland.

Shelterbelts, hedgerows, field borders, and center-pivot corners that support perennial woody or herbaceous vegetation provide much-needed escape cover for wildlife in intensively farmed areas. Managing for perennial vegetation along field borders and connecting patches of natural vegetation creates important wildlife movement corridors. Shrubs, grasses, and forbs native to the area provide the best food and cover benefits for local wildlife species and are encouraged.

Cooperator agrees to plant and manage portions of their crop, pasture, or hayland for permanent, undisturbed vegetation cover. Vegetation shall consist of shrubs, grasses, and/or forbs and shall connect patches of existing vegetation, where possible. Vegetation shall remain undisturbed by grazing, mowing, disking, etc. Spot spraying of noxious weeds will be allowed to comply with Utah State Law.

Complete a Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Guide (WHEG) assessment for the planned field(s). To be eligible for this incentive payment, the planned field(s) must achieve a score of $\geq$ 0.5 on the WHEG after implementation of this activity. Use the Utah Specification Sheet for Practice 645 to document current and planned habitat conditions. Utilize applicable vegetation practice standards and specification sheets to develop planting requirements (e.g., Tree & Shrub Establishment - 612, Windbreak/Shelterbelt Establishment - 380, Hedgerow Planting – 422, Field Border – 386, or Conservation Cover - 327).

Practice can be certified after the vegetative practice(s) have been applied and certified for payment. This will be a one-time incentive payment in addition to the payment for the vegetative practice(s).

UPLAND WILDLIFE HABITAT MANAGEMENT — PRACTICE 645

Management Activity Task Sheet — Range, Pasture, Hayland

Activity 3 – Provide cover for ground-nesting birds on range, pasture, or hayland.

Many ground-nesting birds are experiencing population declines. Agricultural activities that reduce or disturb cover during the nesting season are one cause of these declines. Providing undisturbed cover of sufficient height during the nesting season will improve hatching and juvenile recruitment success.

Cooperator agrees to maintain herbaceous (grass and/or forb) cover at least 6" tall undisturbed by grazing, mowing, cultivation, or spraying of pesticides (except to control noxious weeds as required by Utah State Law) from April 1 to July 15 on a minimum of one field, paddock, or grazing unit. Applicable on range, pasture, or hayland. Payment for this activity may be combined with payment for Use Exclusion (472) when Use Exclusion is planned to treat a different Resource Concern.

Complete a Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Guide (WHEG) or Habitat Model for Sage-Grouse or Sharp-tailed Grouse as appropriate for the planned field(s). To be eligible for this incentive payment, the planned field (s) must achieve a score of $\geq$ 0.5 on the WHEG or Habitat Model after implementation of this activity. Use the Utah Specification Sheet for Practice 645 to document current and planned habitat conditions. Use this sheet to specify on which field(s) this activity will occur and to certify the year and acres where the activity is applied.

	Tract & Field Number(s)	Acres	Cooperator Certification (Sign & Date)	NRCS Certification (Sign & Date)
Year 1				
Year 2				
Year 3				

UPLAND WILDLIFE HABITAT MANAGEMENT

Management Activity Task Sheet

PRACTICE 645

Rangeland

Activity 4 – Improve value of brush management for wildlife in sagebrush communities.

Brush Management (Practice 314) used to improve livestock forage in sagebrush communities often results in large, open areas dominated by grasses with little remaining shrub cover. Conducting brush management in a way that leaves brush cover in a mosaic pattern on the landscape mimics the natural disturbance patterns historically caused by fire and greatly increases the amount of land that remains useable by wildlife, such as sage-grouse. Many species of small mammals and songbirds, as well as big game like mule deer benefit from brush cover left in a mosaic pattern.

When Brush Management is planned to solve a resource concern, the cooperator agrees to follow the "*Additional Criteria for Improving or Maintaining Wildlife Habitat*" in Utah NRCS Practice Standard 314 and get the Brush Management specifications approved by the UDWR Regional Habitat Manager. **This is a one-time incentive payment made when the Brush Management has been completed. Payment applies to treated and adjacent untreated acres, however, untreated acres included in the payment may not exceed treated acres.**

Complete a Utah Habitat Model for Sage-Grouse, Mule Deer, or Sharp-tailed Grouse for the planned land unit(s). To be eligible for this incentive payment, the planned land unit(s) must achieve a score of $\geq$ 0.5 on the Utah Habitat Model for Sage-grouse, Mule Deer, or Sharp-tailed Grouse after implementation of this activity. Use the Utah Specification Sheet for Practice 645 to document current and planned habitat conditions. Utilize the Utah Specification Sheet for Practice 314 to document the brush management design.

UPLAND WILDLIFE HABITAT MANAGEMENT — PRACTICE 645

Management Activity Task Sheet — Range, Pasture, Hayland

Activity 5 – Develop a conservation plan and Safe Harbor Agreement for Utah Prairie Dogs on range, pasture, or hayland (Beaver, Garfield, Iron, Piute, Sevier, and Wayne Counties only).

Participant agrees to complete the following tasks:

1. Work with the Utah Prairie Dog Partnership Coordinator of the Panoramaland RC&D located in the Richfield Area Office of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to develop and implement a conservation plan benefiting Utah prairie dog.
2. Enter into a Safe Harbor Agreement with the US Fish and Wildlife Service.
3. Provide the NRCS official certifying payment a copy of the Section 10(a)(1)(A) incidental take permit when received from US Fish and Wildlife Service.

Cooperator Certification (Sign & Date)	NRCS Certification (Sign & Date)

SHALLOW WATER MANAGEMENT FOR WILDLIFE — PRACTICE 646

Management Activity Task Sheet — **Any Landuse**

Activity 6 – Inundate land and manage shallow water to provide habitat for wildlife.

Many species of waterfowl, shorebirds, amphibians and other wetland wildlife depend upon shallow water habitats (often less than 8" deep) to complete their life cycles. Inundating lands at shallow depths seasonally or year-round can help many species meet their food, cover, and water requirements. The acres to be inundated must meet the Conditions and Criteria in the 646 Practice Standard.

Cooperator agrees to provide at least two categories of water depths, for a minimum of 90 consecutive days each on minimum of 10 acres each from the list below:

- 1" (mud flat) - 4" for shorebirds
- 6-12" for dabbling ducks
- 12-18" for diving ducks, geese, swans and herons

Complete the Utah Habitat Model for Wetlands for the planned land unit(s). To be eligible for this incentive payment, the planned land unit(s) must achieve a score of $\geq$ 0.5 on the Utah Habitat Model for Wetlands after implementation of this activity. Use the Utah Specification Sheet for Practice 646 to document the shallow water management plan.

WETLAND WILDLIFE HABITAT MANAGEMENT — PRACTICE 644

Management Activity Task Sheet — Any Landuse

Activity 7 – Manage wetlands to provide habitat for wildlife.

Wetlands are disproportionately important to wildlife in Utah. However, many wetlands no longer provide optimal habitat for wetland wildlife because of alterations to the hydrology or vegetation. Intensive management is often needed to restore the functions and values for wetland wildlife.

Cooperator agrees to provide at least two categories of water depths for a minimum of 90 consecutive days each on a minimum of 10 acres each from the list below:

- 1" (mud flat) - 6" for shorebirds
- 6-12" for dabbling ducks
- 12-18" for diving ducks, geese, swans and herons
- Deep water > 3' for open water habitat and native amphibians

Cooperator also agrees to:

- Maintain between 25 – 75% of the wetland in open water.
- Manage food sources for migratory birds using properly timed irrigation and/or slow draw-downs over a 2 – 3 week period.
- Provide a vegetative buffer around the perimeter of the wetland. Buffer will be a minimum of 35 feet wide on each side and will have an area equal to not less than 20% of the wetland area. Buffer will be left undisturbed by grazing, mowing, disking, or spraying (except to control noxious weeds as required by Utah State Law) between April 1 and July 15.

Complete the Utah Habitat Model for Wetlands for the planned land unit(s). To be eligible for this incentive payment, the planned land unit(s) must achieve a score of $\geq$ 0.5 on the Utah Habitat Model for Wetlands after implementation of this activity. Use the Utah Specification Sheet for Practice 644 to document current and planned habitat conditions and water management plan.

RESTORATION/MANAGEMENT OF DECLINING HABITATS — PRACTICE 643

Management Activity Task Sheet — Any Landuse

Activity 8 – Develop and implement a conservation plan to restore a priority habitat type from the Utah Wildlife Action Plan.

An NRCS or NRCS/UDWR or UACD Partner Biologist will determine the potential to restore at least one of the following habitat types for at-risk species (see Utah Wildlife Action Plan for definition of habitat types):

- Lowland Riparian
- Wetlands
- Mountain Riparian
- Shrubsteppe
- Mountain Shrub
- Flowing Water (Lotic)
- Wet Meadows
- Grasslands
- Standing Water (Lentic)
- Aspen Forest

Biologist shall complete appropriate Habitat Model(s) OR prepare written narrative evaluation(s) that identify limiting factors and document baseline ("Before") and post-treatment ("Planned") habitat conditions. To be eligible for this incentive payment, the planned land unit(s) must achieve a score of > 0.5 on the Habitat Model(s), or provide > 50% of the habitat potential after implementation of this activity.

Biologist shall prepare or approve a conservation plan that includes narrative specifications for 643 and specification sheets for required facilitating practices (e.g., Channel Bank Vegetation (322), Tree and Shrub Establishment (612), Use Exclusion (472), etc.). Payments may also be received for the required facilitating practices. Practices 645, 644, or 395 shall also be planned as non-cost shared items, as appropriate, to ensure accurate reporting of NRCS Fish and Wildlife goals (cooperator cannot receive incentive payments for both 643 and 645/644/395 on the same land units).

Biologist shall evaluate the habitat conditions and document progress toward the "Planned" conditions annually before payment is certified.

	Habitat Type(s)	Acres	Cooperator Certification (Sign & Date)	Biologist Certification (Sign & Date)
Year 1				
Year 2				
Year 3				