

IOWA WILDLIFE WORKING LANDS HABITAT EVALUATION

I. This habitat evaluation will be used to decide if the quality criterion for wildlife is being met under either the current or planned future management for various land uses. It is used to document if wildlife component of an RMS plan is being met or to document if an area meets the Upland Wildlife Habitat Management Standard (645).

It is to be completed by NRCS staff or by partner agencies staff as part of developing a farm plan. It is not intended for landowner self certification for any USDA programs.

II. This evaluation system applies to the following land uses:

- A. Cropland
- B. Grasslands (Pasture, Permanent or Rotational Hayland, and Idle Grasslands)
- C. Woodland (Managed Timber Stands and Wildlife/Unmanaged Woodland)
- D. Riverine – Use SVAP to measure impacts to streams on producer's property

III. Deciding if quality criteria is met:

When wildlife is not a primary concern for planning, then the minimum Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) score is 0.50 to meet the quality criterion for wildlife for any land use(s) on a farm or fields within a tract.

Where wildlife is a primary concern for a farm or field(s) within a tract, then the minimum HSI is a 0.75.

See appendix for some general discussion of Wildlife needs that this appraisal is designed to address.

CROPLAND WILDLIFE EVALUATION:

PRODUCER: _____

DATE: _____

FARM #: _____ TRACT #: _____

Field #(s): _____

1. CROP RESIDUE:

(Choose one of A through G that reflects dominant condition of field(s) being evaluated – not average of operation)

	<u>Existing</u>	<u>Planned</u>
a. Food plots or non fall harvested grain that is \geq 2.5% of field acres are maintained within or adjacent to field(s)	15	15
b. Continuous No Till for all grain crops (no stalk chopping)	12	12
c. No Fall Tillage for all grain crops <u>OR</u> food plots or non fall harvested grain that is \geq 1% of field acres are maintained within or adjacent to field(s)	10	10
d. Continuous No Till for all grain crops (with stalk chopping) <u>OR</u> gleaning of fields by livestock	7	7
e. Over winter crop residues provide > 50% ground cover for all grain crops in the rotation	5	5
f. Over winter crop residues provide \geq 35% ground cover for all grain crops in the rotation	2	2
g. None of the above	0	0

2. Crop Rotation:

(Choose the one that reflects dominant condition of fields being evaluated)

a. Row crop-small grain-legume or meadow rotation (Either whole field rotations or strip cropping - Meadow not harvested after August 1)	10	10
b. Row crop-small grain-legume or meadow rotation (Either whole field rotations or strip cropping - Meadow harvested after July 1)	6	6
c. Row crop-small grain rotation <u>OR</u> row crop-small grain-legume <u>OR</u> meadow rotation harvested before July 1 <u>OR</u> continuous row crop with fall cover crop	4	4
d. Continuous corn	1	1
e. Continuous row crop	0	0

3. Proximity to Other Cover Types:

(Choose ONE, either Herbaceous or Woody category which best reflects the dominant condition of field(s) being evaluated. All distances are from field edges.)

<u>3A Herbaceous Cover:</u>	<u>Existing</u>	<u>Planned</u>
a. Herbaceous buffer (≥ 30 feet wide) or adjacent cover (> 10 acres) not mown from May 15 to August 1 around $> 50\%$ of field edges	20	20
b. Herbaceous buffers (≥ 30 feet wide) or adjacent cover (> 10 ac.) not mown from May 15 to August 1 around $> 35\%$ of field edges	15	15
c. More than 35% of field has adjacent herbaceous cover (> 10 acres) not mown prior to July 15	12	12
d. Field has adjacent herbaceous cover (> 5 acres) not mown from May 15 to August 1 OR is within 660 feet of herbaceous cover (> 10 acres) not mown prior to July 15	10	10
e. Field is within 660 feet of herbaceous cover (> 5 acres) or has buffer (> 30 feet wide) around $\geq 20\%$ of field not mown from May 15 to August 1	8	8
f. Field is within 1320 feet of herbaceous cover (> 10 acres) not mown prior to July 15 OR has buffer (> 30 feet wide) around $\geq 20\%$ of field not mown prior to July 1	6	6
g. Field is within 1320 feet of herbaceous cover (> 5 acres) not mown prior to July 1	4	4
h. Field has > 1 acres of un-mown herbaceous cover within the field or $> 25\%$ of the field is within 660 feet of this type of cover (> 2 acres)	2	2
i. None of the above	0	0
<u>3B Woody Cover:</u>		
a. More than 50% of field edges abuts <u>ungrazed</u> woodland (> 5 ac. woodland)	20	20
b. More than 50% of field is within 660 feet of <u>ungrazed</u> woodland (> 5 ac. woodland)	15	15
c. More than 25% of field edges abut <u>ungrazed</u> woodland (> 5 acres woodland)	12	12
d. Field is within 1320 feet of <u>ungrazed</u> woodland (> 5 acres woodland)	10	10
e. Field is within 660 feet of woodland (> 10 acres woodland)	8	8
f. Field is within 2640 feet of <u>ungrazed</u> woodland (> 5 acres woodland)	6	6
g. Field is within 2640 feet of woodland (> 5 acres woodland)	4	4
h. Field has > 1 acres of un-grazed woody cover within the field or $> 25\%$ of the field is within 660 feet of this type of cover (> 2 acres)	2	2
i. None of the above	0	0

Existing Planned

Total Points from 1- 3A or 1- 3B

HABITAT SUITABILITY INDEX:

Total Possible Points

45

45

HSI = Total Points Divided by 45

Bonus Points: Add 0.1 to HSI value if any of the following apply to the evaluated fields (max 0.1):

*Integrated Pest management

*Buffers or adjacent herbaceous cover is composed of > 5 native grasses and > 10 native forbs/legumes

*Woody Cover has $\geq 30\%$ of woodland composed of hard mast trees (oak, hickory, walnut, etc.) and has $\leq 10\%$ of area infested with invasive woody species such as buckthorn or multiflora rose

Final HSI

**If wildlife is secondary concern, then the
Minimum Wildlife HSI for Cropland HSI ≥ 0.5**

Meets Quality Criterion?

No

No

Yes

Yes

GRASSLAND HABITAT - Permanent Pastureland

PRODUCER: _____

DATE: _____

FARM #: _____ TRACT #: _____

Field #(s): _____

1. Composition of Stand:

(Choose one that reflects dominant condition of fields being evaluated. **NOTE: Species must be a substantial component of whole field stand, not just a few scattered plants to be counted below.**)

	<u>Existing</u>	<u>Planned</u>
a. Mixed native grasses and legumes (> 5 species total)	10	10
b. Mixed native and introduced grasses with legumes OR mixed introduced grasses and legumes (> 5 species total for either)	8	8
c. Mixed native grasses w/o legumes (> 3 species total) OR mixed introduced grasses with legumes (> 3 species)	5	5
d. Mixed introduced grasses w/o legumes (\geq 3 species)	3	3
e. Monoculture of one species of native or introduced grasses	1	1
f. None of the above OR Pasture is composed of mostly fescue or canarygrass (> 65% of stand)	0	0

2. Vegetative Height on May 1:

(Choose one that reflects dominant condition of fields being evaluated)

a. Predominant stand height is > 12 inches	10	10
b. Predominant stand height is 8 - 12 inches	7	7
c. Predominant stand height is 4 – 8 inches	4	4
d. Predominant stand height is < 4 inches	0	0

3. Stand Management:

(Choose one that reflects dominant condition of fields being evaluated)

a. Rotational grazing, light to moderate use (average forage height > 6" CSG or > 10" WSG during growing season)	10	10
b. Continuous grazing with light to moderate use (average forage height > 6" CSG or > 10" WSG during growing season)	7	7
c. Rotational grazing, moderate to heavy use (average forage height 3 – 6" CSG or 6-10" WSG during growing season)	4	4
d. Rotational grazing, heavy use (average forage height < 3" CSG or < 6" WSG during growing season)	2	2
e. Continuous grazing with heavy use (average forage height < 3" CSG or < 6" WSG during growing season)	0	0

Choose either 4A or 4B as appropriate. If have both pasture types need to do two sheets

4A. Field Size: (For Upland Pastures only)

(Choose one that reflects dominant condition of fields being evaluated)

	<u>Existing</u>	<u>Planned</u>
a. More than 80 acres	10	10
b. 40 to 80 acres	7	7
c. 20 to 40 acres	5	5
d. 10 to 20 acres	3	3
e. Less than 10 acres	1	1

4B. Field Configuration (Riparian Pastures only):

(Choose one that reflects dominant condition of fields being evaluated)

a. Average width of pasture > 300 feet	10	10
b. Average width of pasture > 200 - 300 feet	7	7
c. Average width of pasture > 100 to 200 feet	5	5
c. Average width of pasture > 50 to 100 feet	3	3
d. Average width of pasture < 50 feet	1	1

5. Water:

(Choose one that reflects dominant condition of fields being evaluated)

a. Livestock are watered without having direct water contact access to any ponds or streams as applicable to site	10	10
b. Livestock access to ponds or streams is through a single controlled access point to minimize water quality degradation from livestock waste and sediment	5	5
c. Livestock have free access to water bodies or streams	0	0

6. Proximity to Other Cover Types:

(Choose one that reflects dominant condition of fields being evaluated. Distances are from field edges)

a. Non fall tilled cropland, food plot (\geq 1acre) or ungrazed woodland (> 5acres) adjacent	10	10
b. Non fall tilled cropland, food plot (\geq 1acre) or ungrazed woodland (> 5acres) < 660 feet	7	7
c. Non fall tilled Cropland, food plot (\geq 1acre) or ungrazed woodland (> 5acres) < 1320 feet <u>OR</u> Cropland > 50% residue adjacent	5	5
d. Non fall tilled Cropland, food plot (\geq 1acre) or ungrazed woodland (> 5acres) < 2640 feet <u>OR</u> Cropland > 50% residue < 660 feet	2	2
e. None of the above	0	0

Existing Planned

Total Points from 1- 6

HABITAT SUITABILITY INDEX:

Total Possible Points

60

60

To get HSI Divide Total Points by 60

Bonus Points: Add 0.1 to HSI value if any of the following apply to the evaluated fields (max 0.1):

*Using Integrated Pest Management

*Following a Prescribed Grazing Plan that meets 528 Standard

Final HSI

**If wildlife is secondary concern, then the
Minimum Wildlife HSI for Pastureland HSI \geq 0.5**

Meets Quality Criterion?

No

No

Yes

Yes

GRASSLAND HABITAT - Hayland

(Permanent Hay or Condition of the Hay in a Rotational Cropping System)

PRODUCER: _____

DATE: _____

FARM #: _____ TRACT #: _____

Field #(s): _____

1. Composition of Stand:

(Choose one that reflects dominant condition of fields being evaluated)

(Note: species must be a substantial component of whole field stand, not just a few scattered plants to be counted below.)

	<u>Existing</u>	<u>Planned</u>
a. Hayland seeding mixture contains of grasses and legumes (> 5 species total)	10	10
b. Hayland seeding mixture contains of grasses and legumes (> 3 species total)	7	7
c. Hayland seeding mixture > 1 legume	4	4
d. Hayland seeding mixture > 1 grass	2	2
e. Hayland seeding mixture is a monoculture of grass or legume	1	1

2. Stand Management:

(Choose one that reflects dominant condition of fields being evaluated)

a. First hay cutting is before April 15 or after July 15 th	10	10
b. First hay cutting is between May 1 st and July 15 th but leave 20% of hayland acres un-mown until after August 1 st	8	8
c. First hay cutting on \geq 25% of hayland in field is after July 15 th	6	6
d. First hay cutting is between May 1 st and July 15 th but leave \geq 10% of hayland acres un-mown until after August 1 st	4	4
e. No hay cutting on \geq 25% of hayland in field after August 15 th	2	2
f. None of the above applies	0	0

3. Over Winter Stand Height:

(Choose one that reflects dominant condition of fields being evaluated)

a. September 30 th stand height > 6 inches on \geq 65% of hayland acres	10	10
b. September 30 th stand height > 6 inches on \geq 40 % of hayland acres <u>OR</u> September 30 th stand height 3 - 6 inches on \geq 65% of hayland	6	6
c. September 30 th stand height stand height 3 - 6 inches on \geq 40% of hayland	3	3
d. None of above apply	0	0

4. Field Configuration:

(Choose one that reflects dominant condition of fields being evaluated)

	<u>Existing</u>	<u>Planned</u>
a. Minimum width > 200 feet	10	10
b. Minimum width 100 - 200 feet	5	5
c. Minimum width < 100 feet	2	2

5. Proximity to Other Cover Types:

(Choose one that reflects dominant condition of fields being evaluated. Distances are from field edges)

a. More than 5 acres of non-fall tilled cropland, food plot (\geq 1acre), ungrazed woodland, or idle grassland adjacent	10	10
b. More than 5 acres of non-fall cropland, food plot (\geq 1acre), ungrazed woodland, or idle grassland within 660 feet	7	7
c. More than 5 acres of non-fall tilled cropland, food plot (\geq 1acre) or ungrazed woodland within 1320 feet <u>OR</u> Cropland > 50% residue adjacent	5	5
d. More than 5 acres of non-fall cropland, food plot (\geq 1acre) or ungrazed woodland within 2640 feet <u>OR</u> Cropland > 50% residue within 660 feet	2	2
e. None of the above	0	0

Total Points from 1- 6

HABITAT SUITABILITY INDEX:

Total Possible Points 40 40

To get HSI Divide Total Points by 40

Bonus Points: Add 0.1 to HSI value if using Integrated Pest management

Final HSI

If wildlife is secondary concern, then the Minimum Wildlife HSI for Hayland HSI \geq 0.5

Meets Quality Criterion?

No No
Yes Yes

WOODLAND WILDLIFE EVALUATION

(This includes woodland, savanna, wooded portions of pasture, draws, etc.)

PRODUCER: _____

DATE: _____

FARM #: _____ TRACT #: _____

Field #(s): _____

1. Woodland Composition – stand diversity:

(Choose one that reflects dominant condition of fields being evaluated.

To count, a species must be > 1% of trees in stand)

	<u>Existing</u>	<u>Planned</u>
a. Stand > 50% hard mast trees, > 3 hard mast species, and invasives such honey locust, buckthorn, multiflora rose, honey suckle, etc. are < 5% of stand	15	15
b. Stand > 35% hard mast trees, > 3 hard mast species, and invasives such honey locust, buckthorn, multiflora rose, honey suckle, etc. are < 5% of stand	12	12
c. Stand < 35% hard mast species but has \geq 3 hard mast species and invasives such honey locust, buckthorn, multiflora rose, honey suckle, etc. are < 10% of stand	10	10
d. Stand mixture of species, \geq 4 species present, at least 1 hard mast species and invasives such honey locust, buckthorn, multiflora rose, honey suckle, etc. are < 10% of stand	7	7
e. Stand has < 4 species, but at least 1 is a hard mast species, and invasive are <20% of stand	5	5
f. Stand has < 4 species, no hard mast and invasive are <20% of stand	3	3
g. Stand dominated by 1 species or invasives such honey locust, buckthorn, multiflora rose, honey suckle, etc. are < 20% of stand	1	1
h. Stand has > 20% invasive/undesirable species	0	0

2. Woodland Age Diversity:

(Choose one that reflects dominant condition of fields being evaluated – to count, the species must be > 5% of trees in stand)

a. Mixed age classes (all 4 classes: Saw timber, > 12" DBH; Pole, 6-11 DBH; Small Trees, 2-5" DBH; and Reproduction, < 2"DBH)	10	10
b. 2-3 age classes present	5	5
c. Woodland dominated by one age class	1	1

3. Woodland Management:

(Choose one that reflects dominant condition of fields being evaluated)

a. Woodland is ungrazed	20	20
b. Woodland periodically grazed as part of a NRCS approved grazing plan	5	5
c. Woodland has unmanaged livestock access	0	0

4. Understory Conditions:**(Choose one that reflects dominant condition of fields being evaluated)**

	<u>Existing</u>	<u>Planned</u>
a. Mostly shrubs, saplings, brush piles, downed trees, woody debris, and herbaceous plants	10	10
b. Few, scattered downed trees, woody debris, brush piles, saplings, and shrubs, mostly herbaceous cover	5	5
c. Mostly open ground with little cover	1	1
d. Dominated by invasive species	0	0

5. Snags or Den (cavity) Trees:**(Choose one that reflects dominant condition of fields being evaluated)**

a. Average is more than 5 trees per acre	5	5
b. Average is 2 - 5 trees per acre	3	3
c. Average is less than 2 trees per acre	0	0

6. Proximity to Other Cover Types:**(Choose one that reflects dominant condition of woodland being evaluated. Distances are from woodland edge)**

a. Non fall tilled cropland, food plot (≥ 1 acre) or ungrazed grassland (> 10 acres) adjacent	10	10
b. Non fall tilled cropland, food plot (≥ 1 acre) or ungrazed grassland (> 10 acres) < 660 feet	7	7
c. Non fall tilled Cropland, food plot (≥ 1 acre) or ungrazed grassland (> 10 acres) < 1320 feet OR Cropland $> 50\%$ residue adjacent	5	5
d. Non fall tilled Cropland, food plot (≥ 1 acre) or ungrazed grassland (> 10 acres) < 2640 feet OR Cropland $> 50\%$ residue < 660 feet	2	2
e. None of the above	0	0

Total Points from 1- 7

HABITAT SUITABILITY INDEX:

Total Possible Points 70 70

To get HSI Divide Total Points by 70

Final HSI

If wildlife is secondary concern, then the Minimum Wildlife HSI for Woodland HSI ≥ 0.5 **Meets Quality Criterion?**

No	No
Yes	Yes

**GRASSLAND HABITAT - Idle Grasslands
(CRP, odd areas, or other herbaceous dominated
areas not being used for production)**

PRODUCER: _____

DATE: _____

FARM #: _____ TRACT #: _____

Field #(s): _____

1. Composition of Stand:

(Choose one that reflects dominant condition of fields being evaluated

NOTE: species must be a substantial component of stand, not just a few scattered plants to be counted below.)

	<u>Existing</u>	<u>Planned</u>
a. Native species with ≥ 5 grasses and > 10 forbs/legumes	15	15
b. Native species with > 10 species and > 5 forbs/legumes	10	10
c. Mixed Introduced grasses (w/o fescue or reed canarygrass), > 5 total species with > 2 legumes	7	7
d. Mixed natives w/o forbs/legumes, ≥ 5 species	5	5
e. Mixed introduced grasses ≥ 5 total species with ≥ 2 forbs/legumes	5	5
f. Mixed grasses, > 2 species (not Reed Canarygrass or fescue)	3	3
g. Grassland is none of the above	1	1

2. Size of Stand:

(Choose one that reflects dominant condition of fields being evaluated)

a. More than 40 acres	10	10
b. 20 - 40 acres	7	7
c. 10 – 19 acres	5	5
d. 1 - 10 acres	3	3
e. less than 1 acre	0	0

3. Remnant Area:

(Choose one that reflects dominant condition of fields being evaluated)

a. Area is a native prairie remnant with a Federal or State T&E Species living on the site	10	10
b. Area is a native prairie remnant with a Species of Special Concern living on the site	7	7
c. Area is a native prairie remnant	5	5
d. None of the above	0	0

4. Proximity to Other Cover Types:

(Choose one that reflects dominant condition of fields being evaluated.

Distances are from field edges)

	<u>Existing</u>	<u>Planned</u>
a. Non fall tilled cropland, food plot (\geq 1acre) or ungrazed woodland (> 5acres) adjacent	10	10
b. Non fall tilled cropland, food plot (\geq 1acre) or ungrazed woodland (> 5acres) < 660 feet	7	7
c. Non fall tilled Cropland, food plot (\geq 1acre) or ungrazed woodland (> 5acres) < 1320 feet OR Cropland > 50% residue adjacent	5	5
d. Non fall tilled Cropland, food plot (\geq 1acre) or ungrazed woodland (> 5acres) < 2640 feet OR Cropland > 50% residue < 660 feet	2	2
e. None of the above	0	0

Total Points from 1- 3

HABITAT SUITABILITY INDEX:

Total Possible Points

45

45

To get HSI Divide Total Points by 45

Final HSI

**If wildlife is secondary concern, then the
Minimum Wildlife HSI for Idle Grassland HSI \geq 0.5**

Meets Quality Criterion?

No

No

Yes

Yes