

Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP)

Kansas State Plan



Kansas Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program Plan

Introduction

The Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) is a voluntary USDA Farm Bill program administered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to assist landowners and other participants who want to develop or enhance aquatic or terrestrial wildlife habitat on private land. Participants can receive both technical and financial assistance to improve or develop terrestrial or aquatic habitat on their land. Most land is eligible for WHIP, which provides the opportunity to improve wildlife habitat on land that may not be eligible for other programs. The program is flexible and allows participants to use almost any practice that will enable them to meet habitat objectives.

Objectives

General WHIP objectives are to restore, enhance, and manage plant communities and aquatic resources for the purpose of improving fish and wildlife resources through the development of a Wildlife Habitat Development Plan (WHDP).

Wildlife Priorities

The NRCS, with advice from the Kansas Technical Committee (KTC), identified the following priorities for the Kansas WHIP plan:

- Grassland birds with emphasis on bobwhite quail, ring-necked pheasant and prairie chicken (lesser and greater).
- Threatened and endangered (T&E) species and species in need of conservation (SINC).
- Natural communities to include prairies, wetlands and riparian areas.

These priorities are consistent with the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks' (KDWP) Strategic Plan. The KDWP has identified upland birds as a priority through their Upland Bird Initiative.

Partnership Involvement

Funding for WHIP and other conservation programs was greatly increased in the 2002 Farm Bill and will require additional wildlife technical assistance from partner agencies. Several wildlife groups and agencies have ongoing working relationships with NRCS and can assist with the increased technical assistance demands.

The KDWP has a cooperative agreement with NRCS whereby KDWP provides a biologist assigned to each of the five NRCS area office staffs to provide biological assistance to the field offices.

For the third year in a row, the NRCS and the KDWP entered into a contribution agreement for technical services. Through this contribution agreement, 23 KDWP biologists will be available to assist landowners in the development of WHDPs on their lands. The biologists will assist and guide landowners through the planning process as well as through the procedures involved in applying for, implementing and maintaining a WHIP contract.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) is involved in a three-way agreement with KDWP and NRCS to provide technical assistance through their Partners for Wildlife Program.

A contribution agreement also exists with the Kansas Forest Service (KFS) whereby the KFS provides technical assistance to NRCS primarily for forestry activities through their district foresters, some of which are located in the NRCS area offices.

Through a contribution agreement with the State Conservation Commission (SCC), NRCS provides a staff member to serve as a conservation buffer coordinator within the state. The Kansas Alliance for Wetlands and Streams (KAWS), through a cooperative agreement, also assists with program outreach efforts for riparian and aquatic habitat.

Private organizations such as Ducks Unlimited (DU), Pheasants Forever (PF), and Quail Unlimited (QU) have a large presence in the state. Through their local chapters, these groups work with private landowners and managers providing financial assistance for local wildlife habitat projects. The NRCS has national Memorandum of Understandings with DU, PF, and QU. PF is developing Habitat Crews across the Midwest to complete habitat projects resulting primarily from Farm Bill programs. National Wild Turkey Federation, Audubon of Kansas, Kansas Ornithological Society, Kansas Wildlife Federation, and The Nature Conservancy also have a presence in the state. Any other group that has a wildlife interest is invited to be a partner in WHIP.

Types of assistance provided by partners are shown in the following chart:

Partners	Technical Assistance	Financial Assistance	Education and Outreach
KDWP	X	X	X
FWS	X	X	X
SCC	X	X	X
KAWS			X
PF	X	X	X
QU	X	X	X
DU	X	X	X
KFS	X		X
TNC	X		X
AOK	X		X
KOS			X
KWF			X
KACD			X
WMI			X

KDWP	Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks	KFS	Kansas Forest Service
FWS	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	TNC	The Nature Conservancy
SCC	State Conservation Commission	AOK	Audubon of Kansas
KAWS	Kansas Alliance for Wetlands and Streams	KOS	Kansas Ornithological Society
PF	Pheasants Forever	KWF	Kansas Wildlife Federation
QU	Quail Unlimited	DU	Ducks Unlimited
KACD	Kansas Association of Conservation Districts	WMI	Wildlife Management Institute

Ranking Criteria

The WHIP ranking worksheet criteria was developed by the WHIP Sub-Committee of the KTC in conjunction with NRCS staff using ecological, economic and social factors as outlined in the Conservation Programs Manual, WHIP, Part 517. The criteria select projects that address resource priorities previously listed. In addition, upland bird habitat assessment worksheets were developed for bobwhite quail, ring-necked pheasant and lesser/greater prairie chicken.

Evaluation

Data on program participation along with the location, extent and type of habitat developed through WHIP will be collected and assembled in a performance and accountability report. This report will be forwarded to NRCS national headquarters and utilized internally.

There is information available to indicate which habitat components are needed for many wildlife species, especially for the targeted upland bird species. If these components are provided, we can assume that numbers of the targeted species will increase accordingly under normal conditions. The KDWP conducts wildlife population surveys, but it may be some time before much change resulting from WHIP habitat practices are noticed on statewide population trends. The exception may be critical habitat for T&E species.