

517.0 General

G. Technical Assistance

(1) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Responsibilities

(i) Area Offices

Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) responsibilities at the NRCS area office level will include the following:

- Inform and educate the public on the WHIP
- Provide training as requested and as needed
- Assistant state conservationists for field operations (ASTCs-FO) will notify both the district conservationist and the district biologists/technicians of application approvals
- ASTCs-FO will approve all WHIP contracts
- Provide technical references, manuals, and handbooks

(ii) U.S. Department of Agriculture Service Centers and/or Field Offices (FOs)

WHIP responsibilities at the NRCS FO level will include the following:

- Announce the WHIP
- Inform and educate the public on the WHIP
- Take WHIP applications
- Enter WHIP applications in Program Contracts System (ProTracts)
- Defer WHIP applications as needed
- Coordinate assistance of needed technical specialist(s) for conservation planning and/or practice application
- Identify and prioritize work assignments
- Provide technical coordination and guidance
- Approve conservation plans and/or Wildlife Habitat Development Plans (WHDP)
- Upload WHDP to ProTracts
- Review all WHIP applications prior to submission for approval of the contracting officer (ASTC-FO)
- Notify applicants by letter of application action

Title 440 – Conservation Programs Manual

Part 517 - Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program
Subpart A – General Information

517.0 General

G. Technical Assistance (Continued)

- Maintain and update WHIP contracts in ProTracts
- Investigate potential non-compliance
- Represent appealed determinations at appeal hearings
- Generate, certify, and approve payment applications in ProTracts
- Provide technical references, manuals, and handbooks

(iii) Other Federal Agencies or Units of State Government

Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks district biologists/technicians will:

- Inform and educate the public on the WHIP
- Take WHIP applications and forward to NRCS for ProTracts entry
- Evaluate WHIP applications and forward scores to NRCS for ProTracts entry
- Develop the WHDP using Customer Service Toolkit (CST) including the contract wizard
- Provide the complete WHIP/WHDP packet to the district conservationist (DC)
- Assist the participant in applying the WHDP
- Certify that practices are completed to NRCS standards and specifications
- Certify practice extent
- Assist participant with completion of payment applications
- Collect cost data associated with practice installation and provide to the DC
- Report practice application and progress in CST
- Complete annual status reviews

517.46 – Signing and Approving Contract Documents

D. NRCS Approving Official

(1) Funding Limitations

The Kansas Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) contract cost-share limitation is set at \$10,000. The state conservationist (STC) may waive this limit in instances where the participant's Wildlife Habitat Development Plan (WHDP) provides exceptional benefits to wildlife. A request for a STC waiver to exceed the payment limitation needs to be submitted by the district conservationist to the appropriate assistant state conservationist for field operations for review and concurrence or disapproval. The request needs to document the reasons the plan provides exceptional benefits.

Factors that will be considered to determine whether a plan provides exceptional benefits include the following:

(i) Whether the plan:

- removes livestock from a riparian area
- establishes native grass and/or shrub buffers
- converts cool-season grass to warm-season native grass
- establishes or enhances habitat for threatened and endangered species in need of conservation
- restores wetlands

(ii) Whether the application scores a minimum of 30 points on question 1 of the state's issues portion on the WHIP ranking worksheet.

The conservation practice code 378 - Pond, is limited to \$3,500 total WHIP financial assistance per contract.

- Practice codes 521B and 521C – Pond Seeding and Lining, will be included within the \$3,500 limit when scheduled as a component for 378.
- Practice code 472 - Use Exclusion, must be scheduled as a support practice in the WHDP around the pond if livestock will be utilizing surrounding land use.

(2) Maintaining and Filing the Agreement

The location of the official WHIP file folder will be located in the Natural Resources Conservation Service field office.