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Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Guides  
Biology Technical Note 27  
(Draft Revision)

These Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Guides (*TN27O-Openland.xls*, *TN27R-Rangeland.xls*, and *TN27F-Forestland.xls*) provide a relatively simple and objective means of determining the value of wildlife habitat. They can be used on land where wildlife is the primary management objective, or where wildlife is managed as a secondary objective. They can be used to evaluate habitat on conservation management units (CMU) for crop, hay/pasture, range, and forest. The guides are based on the following assumptions:

1. All land provides habitat for wildlife.
2. The quality of habitat is variable depending on the quality and quantity of food, water, cover and area.
3. Habitat variables can be measured and compared to optimum conditions.
4. Wildlife populations are proportional to the quality of habitat.

The guides can be used to determine if a CMU meets the minimum standard for wildlife. Conservation practices and management measures can be identified to meet the minimum resource management system standard, or to meet the habitat quality objective of the landowner.

The guides have been developed to consider the needs of all wildlife species using a particular land use/cover type. They were not developed to evaluate the habitat quality for any particular species. If a landowner is interested in improving or managing habitat for a particular species, a species-specific habitat model should be used.

Instructions:

1. Determine the landowner's objective with regard to overall conservation program, wildlife, specific practices to apply, etc. Is the land to be managed primarily for wildlife or cropland or both? Do they wish to increase wildlife populations or maintain present populations?
2. Based on the landowner's or your knowledge of the area, what wildlife species are present in the area? Are threatened or endangered species present, or other species that require special attention? You may have to refer to the literature or consult a biologist.
3. Delineate the CMU to be evaluated on an aerial photo or other suitable conservation planning map.
4. Scoring the habitat quality and quantity is best done in the field with the landowner. Enough of the CMU should be visited, referred to on the aerial photo and discussed with the landowner to accurately evaluate habitat conditions. Keep in mind that this is a guide. When you encounter situations not specifically covered, use your judgment to score the factor. There is nothing wrong with a score of "3" or "1.5". The guide can be completed while collecting other resource data, such as rangeland health indicators, woodland site index, or soil erosion information.
5. This guide may be used in one of two ways: 1) each land use in the CMU (crop, hay/pasture, range, forest) will be evaluated using the appropriate evaluation guide (Openland, Rangeland, or Forestland). The weighted average score must be 0.5 or greater; or 2) the dominant land use (crop, hay/pasture, range, forest) in the CMU will be evaluated using the appropriate evaluation guide (Openland, Rangeland, or Forestland). The wildlife habitat score must be 0.5 or greater.
6. Evaluate and score the presence of temporary water sources accessible to wildlife within the CMU. Within the CMU and at the landscape level evaluate and score permanent

- water (lakes, streams, springs, ponds) of sufficient quality and quantity that is accessible to wildlife.
7. When the total habitat value has been determined, review the scores to find those factors that need improvement. Develop alternatives for improving deficient factors.
  8. If a land use (cropland) is being converted to another land use (wetland) an evaluation of existing conditions using the appropriate guide (Openland) will be done to establish benchmark conditions. Future conditions will be predicted using the appropriate guide (Rangeland or Forestland) for wetland.

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