



Wetland Enhancement Fact Sheet

Applicable to Conservation Practice 659 Wetland Enhancement and 644 Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service - North Dakota

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What is a wetland enhancement? It is enhancing one or more wetland functions on a wetland site that has been degraded by human activities. The purpose is to modify the hydrologic condition, hydrophytic plant communities, and/or other biological habitat components of a wetland in favor of a specific wetland function or value.

How it helps: Wetland functions include water quality improvement, erosion control, water storage, ground water recharge, fish and wildlife habitat, aesthetics, and biological productivity. Enhancement of a targeted function should not reduce or impair the non-targeted wetland functions provided at the site. Establishing a perennial vegetation buffer around a wetland to trap sediment and maintain wetland water storage capacity is a prime example of a prairie pothole wetland enhancement. Other examples include managing site hydrology for waterfowl or amphibian use, or managing plant community composition to improve native wetland hay production.

To apply this practice: Successful wetland enhancement projects require planning, implementation, monitoring, and management. Most enhancement projects require a team with expertise in ecology, hydrology, soils, engineering, and environmental planning. Contact your local NRCS office to request the expertise for a site-specific plan.



A water control structure installed on a large drained semi-permanent wetland along the Red River in Walsh County

Planning considerations should include the following:

- Obtain all necessary local, State, and Federal permits before enhancement begins.
- The design will not back up water on neighboring land without an easement.
- Select plant species and varieties best adapted to the climate and the soils in the field being established to permanent vegetative cover.
- Consider establishing vegetative buffers on associated uplands to reduce the movement of sediment, and provide nesting cover. Minimum buffer width for wildlife is 100'.
- Consider linking wetlands by corridors wherever possible to enhance the wetland's use and colonization by flora and fauna.
- Proper management is essential to achieve and maintain the full potential of the site for the desired habitat type. Refer to *NRCS Practice 644 - Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management*.

Maintaining your enhanced wetland:

Document operation and maintenance requirements in a plan to ensure the practice is functioning as intended. Operation and maintenance items that should be addressed in the plan include:

- appropriate management and monitoring of vegetative cover both within the wetland basin and the surrounding upland
- monitoring of hydrologic conditions (i.e., operating and maintaining structures, sediment removal)
- control of sediment delivery to the wetland
- management of weed infestations
- compatible uses (i.e., haying, grazing, burning) including frequency, timing, extent



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Where to get help: For assistance in planning, designing and establishing wetland enhancements, or wetland restoration on your farm, contact your local NRCS or SCD office for a site-specific plan.