



**CONSERVATION ENHANCEMENT ACTIVITY**

**E554138X**

**CONSERVATION  
STEWARDSHIP  
PROGRAM**

Extend the periods of soil saturation or shallow ponding for wildlife.

**Conservation Practice 554: Drainage Water Management**

**APPLICABLE LAND USE: Crop (Annual & Mixed)**

**RESOURCE CONCERN ADDRESSED: Fish & Wildlife – Inadequate Vegetation**

**PRACTICE LIFE SPAN: 1 year**

**Enhancement Description**

Extending the periods of wetness (soil saturation or shallow water), in excess of those required under National Conservation Practice Standard (NCP) Drainage Water Management (554), to meet the additional considerations of wildlife.

**Criteria**

- All criteria for Drainage Water Management (554) must be met and existing drainage water management (DWM) plan and schedule must be modified to include wildlife habitat component.
- The management of gravity drained outlets shall be accomplished by adjusting the elevation of the drainage outlet. The management of pumped drainage outlets shall be accomplished by raising the on-off elevations for pump cycling.
- When operated in free drainage mode, water control structures shall not restrict the flow of the drainage system.
- Drainage discharges and water levels shall be managed in a manner that does not cause adverse impacts to other properties or drainage systems.



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- Release of water from control structures shall not allow flow velocities in surface drainage system components to exceed acceptable velocities prescribed by Surface Drainage, Main or Lateral (608). Release of water from flow control structures shall not allow flow velocities in subsurface drains to exceed velocities prescribed by Subsurface Drain (606).
- Identify a target wildlife species or suite of species. The NRCS Wetland Dependent Wildlife Assessment will be completed and used to outline target habitat conditions and recommendations on how to obtain those conditions.
- In consideration of seasonal habitat needs of target wildlife species (or suite of species) during the non-cropped season, modify the DWM plan and schedule to extend the depth, duration, frequency and/or timing of soil saturation or shallow ponding to levels at least 20% in excess of the current field specific DWM plan AND what is required to meet the purpose and criteria stated in Drainage Water Management (554).
- The typical DWM plan in rice production systems requires at least 60 days of ponding. The modified plan to enhance wildlife habitat must include an additional 20-30% ponding or saturation period, additional 12 to 18 days.
- Fields managed for this enhancement must be visited and evaluated as required by the modified DWM plan. Evaluation/adaptive management visits to the field must include evaluating conditions, removing any debris and adjustments to structure flows for desired habitat conditions. Depending on the habitat management requirements, visits may be weekly, biweekly, or targeted specifically during the period of additional ponding or saturation for wildlife. In addition to scheduled visits, a visit should be made following each significant rain event.

### **Documentation Requirements**

- Copy of drainage water management plan including wildlife habitat component, which quantifies increases in the flooding regime, such as increased time, depth, duration, and/or changes in timing resulting from implementation of this enhancement.
- Copy of wetland dependent wildlife assessment used to outline target habitat conditions and recommendations on how to obtain those conditions.



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- Identify field(s) on plan map where Drainage Water Management (554) is currently being applied. Identify all portions of those fields where this enhancement is planned and implemented.
- Evaluation/adaptive management visit notes and photo-documentation (dated and field number) must be used to show management over the period of time when the water regimes are extended.

