



**CONSERVATION ENHANCEMENT ACTIVITY**

**E646136Z1**

**CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM**

Close structures to capture and retain rainfall to improve food sources for waterfowl and other wading birds during winter

**Conservation Practice 646: Shallow Water Development and Management**

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

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

**PRACTICE LIFE SPAN: 5 years**

**Enhancement Description:**

When flooded to shallow depths during fall and winter, agricultural fields provide ideal foraging habitat for myriad species of waterfowl and wading birds. Harvested and idled agricultural lands, notably those occurring within rice rotations, contain high densities of residual (i.e., waste) grain and natural seeds following harvest. Seed densities in harvested rice fields may rival those documented in intensively managed moist-soil units, especially in the Gulf Coast and Central Valley of California. In addition, flooded conditions promote establishment of aquatic invertebrate populations, thus providing protein-rich food sources for shorebirds as well as waterfowl and wading birds.

**Criteria:**

This enhancement applies to crop land use acres with leveed fields capable of holding water at an average depth of 6 to 18 inches for the duration of the activity.

- Develop a wildlife habitat management plan for the targeted species suite.
- Water control structures that affect applicable fields will be closed by mid-fall and remain closed through February 15. For fields where harvest of the crop occurs after mid-fall (e.g., ratoon rice), structures must be closed within 2 days following harvest and remain closed through February 15.
- Applicable fields must be flooded to an average depth of 6 to 18 inches.



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- Water depths of 6 to 10 inches provide maximum benefit to targeted species.
- Water depths shall not exceed 18 inches for any extended period.
- Manipulation can occur prior to holding water. Manipulation should not affect greater than 80 percent of the field to which the activity is applied.
- A Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Guide (WHEG) specific to shallow water habitat on cropland must be used to show that implementation of the Enhancement will improve wildlife habitat value from fair (planning criteria = 0.5) to good (planning criteria greater than 0.5 and less than or equal to 0.6) or from good to very good (planning criteria greater than 0.6).

Note: This Enhancement may be paired with E647136Z1-Manipulate vegetation on fields where rainfall is to be captured and retained. If not paired with E647136Z1-Manipulate vegetation on fields where rainfall is to be captured and retained, this Enhancement may also be paired with E646136Z3-Shorebird habitat, late season shallow water with manipulation or E646136Z4-Shorebird habitat, extended late season shallow water with manipulation.

### **Documentation Requirements:**

- Copy of the wildlife habitat management plan for the targeted species suite (including the WHEG scores for present and planned conditions).
- Field log to include:
  - Crops grown and the harvest date for the crops grown on the applicable acres;
  - Date/time the water control structure was closed;
  - Date/time of each field visit and observed water levels;
  - Date/time when the water control structures were opened.
- Digital photographs of the condition of the structures and the habitat provided.

This enhancement is considered adopted on the land use acre when water control structures affecting subject fields are closed by mid-fall, or within 2 days after harvest, if the harvest occurs after mid-fall.



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