



**CONSERVATION ENHANCEMENT ACTIVITY**

**E64613722**

**CONSERVATION  
STEWARDSHIP  
PROGRAM**

Extend retention of captured rainfall to provide enhanced cover and shelter for late winter habitat for migratory waterfowl and shorebirds

**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 cover and shelter for myriad species of waterfowl and wading birds. Many declining suites of wildlife species rely on early successional habitats for at least part of their life cycle needs. Migratory shorebird species in particular rely on open, moist soil or shallowly flooded conditions for foraging and security. Harvested and idled agricultural lands, notably those occurring within rice rotations, can contain high densities of early successional vegetation. When moisture is added to this situation, cover and shelter is provided to early successional species. Benefits may become greatest during late winter and early spring as birds are assimilating nutrient and fat reserves in preparation for northward migration. However, agricultural fields flooded during fall-winter are typically drained during late January or February in advance of spring planting. This often results in a rapid reduction in available habitat, and may constrain ability of migratory birds to adequately prepare for migration, with greatest impacts likely occurring during years of low winter precipitation. Retention of water on agricultural lands into early spring will produce maximum benefits to migratory waterfowl and shorebirds by providing high quality habitat during a time when habitat may otherwise be in low abundance.

**Criteria:**



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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 affecting the subject land use are to be closed by mid-fall and remain closed until late winter to early spring.
  - Water depths of 6 to 10 inches provide maximum benefit to targeted species.
  - Water depths shall not exceed 18 inches for any extended period.
- 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 grouped with E647137Z1-Manipulate vegetation on fields where rainfall is to be captured and retained. If not grouped with E647137Z1-Manipulate vegetation on fields where rainfall is to be captured and retained, this Enhancement may also be grouped with E646137Z3-Shorebird habitat, late season shallow water with manipulation or E646137Z4-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.

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The enhancement is considered adopted when the water control structure affecting the land use acre remains closed beyond mid to late winter.

