

WILDLIFE HABITAT INCENTIVES PROGRAM



June 2006

**Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program
(WHIP)
Indiana 2006 Proposal**

State Objectives

The objective of the State WHIP plan is to increase high quality wildlife habitat for upland wildlife, wetland wildlife, threatened and endangered species, fish and other types of wildlife habitat.

A WHIP Work Group of the State Technical Committee was charged to gather resource data, draft a WHIP plan as a recommendation to the committee, and identify potential partners. Members of the Work Group included U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Indiana Division of Fish and Wildlife, Private Consultants, Wildlife organizations, and Agricultural groups.

State Wildlife Priorities

Over the past 50 years, evolving agricultural land-use practices have transformed the American landscape. Widespread land conversions combined with more intensive farming practices have caused corresponding declines in wildlife populations. This is especially true for wildlife species that depend on grassland habitats. Extensive draining has also drastically reduced habitat for wetland dependent species.

As a result, Indiana NRCS has decided to place an emphasis on restoring prairie and savannah habitat through the planting of warm season grasses. Over 2800 acres have been planted to grass over the past four years of the program. Associated with this are early successional habitat practices such as strip disking, strip mowing and prescribed burning. Emphasis is also being placed on wetland restoration and upland habitat.

Wildlife species to be targeted include the Bobolink, Western Meadowlark, Grasshopper Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow, Eastern Meadowlark, Field Sparrow and Northern Bobwhite. All of these species have shown declines in population. Loss of habitat is usually considered to be the major factor contributing to wildlife population declines and is generally considered to be the greatest threat to present day wildlife populations.

Targeted wetland species include three federally listed mussels (Northern Riffleshell, Clubshell, and White Cat's Paw) and two state listed turtles (Blanding's Turtle and Spotted Turtle).

Indiana NRCS is also working closely with the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) in an effort to treat sites infested with kudzu. Several pilot sites were selected to determine if there is an effective treatment to control the spread of this invasive species. Consideration is being given to expanding this to other invasive species in future years.

Potential Partners that will be utilized to implement WHIP include:

Indiana State Department of Agriculture
Division of Soil Conservation

Indiana Department of Natural Resources
Division of Nature Preserves
Division of Fish and Wildlife
Division of Reclamation
Division of Water
Division of Forestry
Division of Entomology and Plant Pathology

Indiana Department of Transportation

U.S. Forest Service
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

The Nature Conservancy
Quail Unlimited - offered technical assistance, in-kind or cash match (brochures, grass)
as appropriate for private lands initiatives.
Pheasants Forever
J.F. New and Associates
Soil and Water Conservation Districts

State Ranking Criteria

The National WHIP ranking tool from ProTracts will be used to rank WHIP applications in Fiscal Year 2007. State and local priorities will be used in developing the ranking tool. Local wildlife priorities, as identified in the conservation needs assessment completed through the locally led process, will be incorporated into the ranking tool.

Performance Measurement and Accountability

Program implementation will be measured and reported in ProTracts. Reports will be generated to assess the implementation of scheduled practices and identify areas where additional work is needed. It will also assure that contracts are current in installing planned measures. Progress will also be recorded in the Program Results System (PRS). This will indicate if the WHIP program is meeting the state's goals for this program.