



What is the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program

The Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) is a voluntary program for people who want to develop or improve wildlife habitat on tribal and private lands. It provides both technical assistance and cost sharing to help establish and improve fish and wildlife habitat.

How WHIP Works

Landowners agree to prepare and implement a wildlife habitat development plan. The U.S. Department of Agriculture - Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) provides technical and financial assistance for the establishment of fish and wildlife habitat development practices. Payments are to cost-share practice establishment only; WHIP does not provide rental income or easement purchase payments.

The Plan

Participants work with NRCS and other conservation partners to prepare a wildlife habitat development plan. The plan describes the landowner's goals for improving wildlife habitat, includes a list of practices and a schedule for installing them, and details the steps necessary to maintain the habitat for the life of the agreement.

Cost-Share Assistance

NRCS provides the technical assistance with cost-share payments used to establish, maintain, or replace wildlife habitat practices. Federal cost-sharing will reimburse up to 75% of costs. State wildlife agencies or private organizations may provide additional funding or expertise to help complete the project. Generally the total cost share cannot exceed \$10,000 per contract.

The cost-share agreement normally lasts 5 -10 years from the date the contract is signed. Under the agreement, the landowner agrees to maintain the cost-shared practices and allow NRCS access to monitor the progress and effectiveness of the practices.

What's Eligible

Any landowner is eligible to participate. Almost any type of land may be eligible, including:

- grassland
- woodland/pastureland
- wetlands
- streams and riparian areas
- agricultural or non-agricultural land

Land that is not eligible for other state or federal conservation programs may be eligible for WHIP. To participate, you must own or have control of the land under consideration for the duration of the contract.



What Land is Not Eligible

Land currently enrolled in the Water Bank Program, Conservation Reserve Program, or Wetlands Reserve Program is not eligible. Land is also ineligible if it is used for mitigation to remedy violations, if the site is owned by the Federal Government, or if USDA determines that onsite or offsite conditions would undermine or reduce the benefits of habitat development.

Minnesota Priorities

WHIP proposals will be evaluated based on Minnesota wildlife concerns. WHIP applications will be ranked on a number of factors, including type of habitat to established or managed, proximity to other wildlife areas, expected habitat quality improvement and benefits to at risk species.

The goal of WHIP in Minnesota is to "maintain a healthy, diverse ecosystem through the improvement, enhancement and restoration of fish and wildlife habitat, in cooperation with private agricultural landowners". WHIP emphasizes the management and establishment of declining species and habitats.

How to Apply

Landowners may apply at their local NRCS office. Application for WHIP will occur on a continuous basis, with ranking and funding periodically throughout the year.

For More Information

For more information about WHIP, contact the Natural Resources Conservation Service or your local USDA Service Center listed in the telephone book U.S. Department of Agriculture. Information is also available on NRCS's World Wide Web site at www.mn.nrcs.usda.gov.

TYPE OF HABITAT	PRACTICES
Riparian	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instream structures • tree/shrub plantings • native grasses
Prairie Restoration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • native grasses • burning • fencing
Forestland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fencing • tree/shrub plantings • openings • timber stand improvement
Pastureland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fencing • grazing systems • native grasses
Farmstead Shelterbelts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • establishment • renovation

