

Wetland Reserve Program Compatible Use Guidance

Based on National Office guidance (WRP Manual 514.20 and 21) and numerous compatible use discussions, Wisconsin NRCS has generated the following list for guidance in determining if a compatible use authorization may be authorized. It is impossible to predict all of the potential requests for compatible use authorizations so each request must be evaluated on its own merit, *even though it may be on the list below*. As stated in the manual, 'a determination of "no adverse impact" is insufficient justification for authorizing an activity. Also, "only activities that further both the long-term protection and enhancement of the wetland and other natural areas of the project may be authorized.' However, something that will have no adverse impact *and* will further assist a landowner with quiet enjoyment may be authorized (e.g., trails). As stated in the deed, the landowner has the right to maintain private access, hunting, fishing and other quiet uses and does not need written authorization for these reserved rights.

Trails

Hiking trails can be up to 6 feet wide and mowed as needed. New trails shall be designed and located with input by the Wetland Specialist or Biologist. Be careful not to fragment the habitat with numerous crisscrossing trails. If trails go through a wet spot, a wooden foot bridge, boardwalk, rock, or wood chips may be allowed or recommended at the discretion of the Wetland Specialist/Biologist.

Vehicle trails can be 10 feet wide and mowed as needed. Existing roads can be maintained. NRCS will authorize **no new vehicular roads unless they are needed to access a water control structure, legal drain, or other required access**. Snowmobile, horse, bike, and ATV trails may be authorized on a case-by-case basis. Conditions must be clearly defined to ensure that habitat is not adversely impacted.

Plant Propagation

Seeds or individual plants of grass, forbs, shrubs, and trees planted on the easement area must be native to the area.

Trees, in general, are not recommended in a wetland or upland area unless site conditions dictate that trees should be part of the restoration and management plan (e.g., reforestation of a floodplain). See Wisconsin NRCS' "WRP Tree List" and use Wisconsin Job Sheets 623 and 624 for planting guidance.

Harvest of seed for personal use or use on other WRP sites is allowed. Transplanting individual specimens from the WRP site to another site is not allowed; however, transplanting within the easement area is allowed (e.g., transplanting some plants prior to restoration). Every effort should be made to use local genotype seed when physically and economically possible. No more than 25% of the available mature seed should be collected during any season.

Flower Gardens

Only native flower gardens are allowed and plants may not be harvested. The size and configuration will be determined by the Wetland Specialist/Biologist.

Food Plots

Food plots are limited to 5% of the easement area or a total area no larger than 5 acres in size for each easement contract (e.g., a 200-acre easement is still allowed only a 5-acre food plot). Large contiguous WRP easements that are subsequently divided are still limited to this 5-acre restriction. The area of the plots should be divided between the landowners.

Parking and Camping Areas

The temporary mowing of an area to park a vehicle or trailer is allowed, size and location to be determined locally. This will reduce the chance of fire for dead and dry vegetation in autumn. The policy of "Leave No Trace" should be followed for utilization of these areas. Fire pits are not allowed. Locations will be delineated on an air photo. Camping is a reserved right and does not require a compatible use authorization; however, all trailers and campers must be removed by the end of the hunting season.

Game Farms

Licensed game farms are not allowed on WRP eased areas. Hunting of released birds for personal recreation during the regulated hunting season where allowed by the WDNR is a reserved right and does not require a compatible use authorization.

Ponds

No newly constructed deep water ponds are allowed on the easement. *Existing* deep water ponds are allowed. Aerators are not allowed because they promote fish that prey on other wetland-dependent species. Additional shallow scrapes may be allowed, at the owner's expense, with a compatible use authorization following NRCS standards and guidance.

Dog Training

During the nesting season (May 15 – July 31), unleashed dogs are not allowed for training purposes on the easement area. Outside of that time period, dog use is allowed as part of the landowner's reserved right to quiet enjoyment and does not require a compatible use authorization.

Hunting Blinds

Permanent structures are not allowed unless they existed on an easement recorded prior to October 2000. Portable hunting blinds or blinds that are removed at the end of the hunting season are part of the reserved right to quiet enjoyment. Landowners do not need compatible use authorizations to use them.

Haying, Mowing, or Grazing

Haying, mowing, or grazing as a management tool is only allowed in areas of woody encroachment or reed canary grass invasion. Haying or mowing is allowed only once annually between July 31 and September 1. Grazing is only allowed under an approved grazing plan. Judicious use of these tools is critical and close monitoring is necessary to ensure that they are benefiting the wetland functions and values. On easements that closed before 1997, NRCS will evaluate use of these tools on a case-by-case basis.

Timber Harvest

Pre 2001 easements – Timber harvest is allowed to manage the stand to achieve or protect wildlife habitat and wetland functions and values in consultation with a professional forester. Subsequent

timber harvests however, must comply with existing WRP policy.

Post 2001 easements – timber harvest is allowed ‘where *wildlife* experts have documented the technical necessity to remove individually marked trees as a wildlife and wetland management measure for the specific purpose of protecting and enhancing optimum wildlife habitat and wetland functions and values,’ in consultation with a professional forester.

Occasional **dead fall** removal for landowner use (firewood) is allowed and does not need a compatible use authorization.

Management and Maintenance Activities

Activities such as mowing, burning, control of invasive plants, and water manipulation are necessary to ensure quality habitat and are allowed and encouraged. Activities should be defined in the management plan. Compatible use authorizations are required any time a landowner is affecting the hydrology or vegetation of the project area even when the landowner is carrying out management activities determined necessary by NRCS.

Nest Structures

Nesting structures do not require compatible use authorizations. Guidance should be given as to the number and location of the structures to maximize nesting success.