

Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program

The Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP) is a voluntary program for private and Tribal land to develop or improve high quality habitat that supports fish and wildlife populations of National, State, Tribal, and local significance. Through WHIP, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) provides technical and financial assistance to landowners and others to develop upland, wetland, aquatic, and other types of wildlife habitat on their property.

Land eligible for WHIP includes:

- Private agricultural land including cropland, grassland, rangeland, pasture, and other land determined by NRCS to be suitable for fish and wildlife habitat development.
- Nonindustrial private forestland including rural land that has existing tree cover or is suitable for growing trees.
- Indian land.



How WHIP Works

The NRCS State Conservationist, with recommendations from the State Technical Committee and other partners, may identify priorities for enrollment in WHIP that complement the goals and objectives of relevant fish and wildlife conservation initiatives at the state, regional, and national levels. The priorities serve as a guide for the development of WHIP ranking criteria in a state.

Applicants interested in entering into a cost share agreement with NRCS to develop fish and wildlife habitat may file an application at any time. Applicants must own or control land and provide evidence that they will be in control of land for the duration of a cost-share agreement.



A WHIP plan of operations (WPO) is required for the area covered in the application and becomes the basis for developing the WHIP cost-share agreement. Cost-share agreements between NRCS and the participant are for a minimum of one year after completion of the last conservation practice up to 10 years. Through reimbursement, NRCS will provide financial assistance to install conservation practices for permanent, priority fish and wildlife habitat. Participants are expected to maintain cost-shared conservation practices for the expected lifespan of the conservation practice.

Up to 25 percent of WHIP funds will be available for long-term cost-share agreements (15 years or longer) to protect and restore essential plant and animal habitat. NRCS can pay up to 90 percent of the cost to install conservation practices in these long-term agreements. Essential plant and animal habitat includes critical habitat designated under federal and state law, habitat of listed or candidate species that can be improved with specific conservation practices, or particularly rare and unique habitats that could support at-risk wildlife species.



For more information and updates about WHIP, please refer to the Natural Resources Conservation Service Website at <http://www.nc.nrcs.usda.gov/contact/directory/index.html>

Free technical guidance and information related to managing WHIP for wildlife is available from Wildlife Commission staff. Please call the Wildlife Resources Commission, Division of Wildlife Management at 919-707-0050 if you have questions or need assistance.

*Prepared by Patrick Farrell, NCWRC Technical Assistance Biologist,
patrick.farrell@nc.usda.gov*