

Fiscal Year 2008 Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) Ranking Template Questions

When ranking an application, **utilize the ranking template for which the most acres of habitat are planned through WHIP**. The application should be ranked based on planned practices and management associated with the WHIP contract.

The first few screens of the ranking template require the land use(s), resource concern(s), and planned conservation practice(s) to be identified. The land use(s) will be based on the planned land use. In order to be eligible for WHIP, an existing resource concern must be present and the planned cost-share practices within this application will address the resource concern(s) that actually exists at the site at the time of the application. Please select only the primary resource concern for each planned practice. Reference South Dakota (SD) Bulletin SD300-8-10 for the list of conservation practices and associated resource concerns.

National Priorities Addressed

The national questions included in the ranking template are below. The national definition of "considerable" is any practice with a positive Conservation Practice Physical Effects (CPPE) for the resource concern. The CPPE tables can be viewed at the following Web address: <https://smartech.sc.egov.usda.gov/cppe.aspx>.

1. *Will the treatment you intend to implement using WHIP result in the restoration, development, or enhancement of declining or important native wildlife habitats, such as brush, grass, forbs, or waterways?*

The recognized declining habitats, in SD, are tall grass prairie and mixed grass prairie. Other important habitats, in SD, include sagebrush habitats (western SD, particularly in Butte, Fall River, and Harding Counties), riparian areas with native plant communities throughout the state, wetlands throughout the state, and prairie dog towns and beaver impoundments.

2. *Will the treatment you intend to implement using WHIP result in the protection, restoration, development, or enhancement of wildlife habitat for at-risk species which can include candidate species and state listed threatened and endangered species, such as habitat for sage grouse?*

The federal and state-listed threatened, endangered, and candidate species are identified in Tables 1 and 2 of the Threatened and Endangered Species materials in Section II of the SD Technical Guide (SDTG). The SD Game, Fish and Parks (SDGF&P) maintains lists of rare animals and plants on its Wildlife Diversity page, found at: <http://www.sdgifp.info/Wildlife/Diversity/index.htm>. Sage grouse are considered an at-risk species due to the national initiatives to avoid a federal listing.

3. *Will the treatment you intend to implement using WHIP result in the protection, restoration, development, or enhancement of wildlife habitat for federally listed threatened and endangered wildlife species?*

To take credit, the treatment must occur on or adjacent to habitats occupied by a federally listed species. For Topeka shiners, practices that will beneficially impact water quality in Priority Stream Zone A, or improve native plant community composition, or trend within flood plain areas adjacent to Priority Stream Zone A, are eligible.

For other species, the treatment must beneficially affect habitat for a federally listed species with a known location within one mile of the treatment area of potential effects. A decision to take points will be approved by a Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) biologist, with any needed consultation/concurrence by United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and SDGF&P. (Some federally listed species are also state listed and, thus, could require consultation with both agencies).

4. *Will the treatment you intend to implement using WHIP result in the reduction of invasive species on wildlife habitats, such as trees, brush, or aquatic plant species?*

South Dakota has both state and locally recognized noxious weeds, which are identified at the following SD Department of Agriculture Web site: <http://www.state.sd.us/doa/das/noxious.htm#weed>. If any of these species will be reduced by use of WHIP funds, ranking points may be taken.

5. *Will the treatment you intend to implement using WHIP result in the protection, restoration, development, or enhancement of declining or important aquatic wildlife species' habitats such as stream habitat improvement, removal of impairments on waterways, etc.?*

Points may be taken if the project to be implemented with WHIP funds will protect, restore, develop, or enhance riparian, stream, lake, or wetland habitats that are required habitat(s) for any threatened, endangered, or rare species listed for SD or for sage grouse. A decision to take these points requires the approval of a NRCS biologist with any needed consultation/concurrence by SDGF&P and/or USFWS.

State Issues

1. *Is native sod being converted for tree planting, food plot(s), planting introduced grass species, or a grass monoculture? EXCEPTION: It is acceptable to break native sod to plant clumps of native species appropriate for the site.*

Native sod is anything that is identified on a Farm Service Agency (FSA) map as not having a farm, tract, or field number. The use of chemicals to totally destroy all existing vegetation will be considered conversion.

2. *Are partners (private organizations or non-United States Department of Agricultural (USDA) agencies) financially contributing to the planned WHIP project?*

The partners and their contributions must be identified within the assistance notes. The partner's contribution(s) must be secured before taking credit.

3. *Will the treatment you intend to implement using WHIP result in the restoration of declining or important native pollinator (e.g., solitary and/or ground nesting bees, beetles, butterflies, moths, birds, and bats) habitat of at least 10 acres through the implementation of identified conservation practices?*

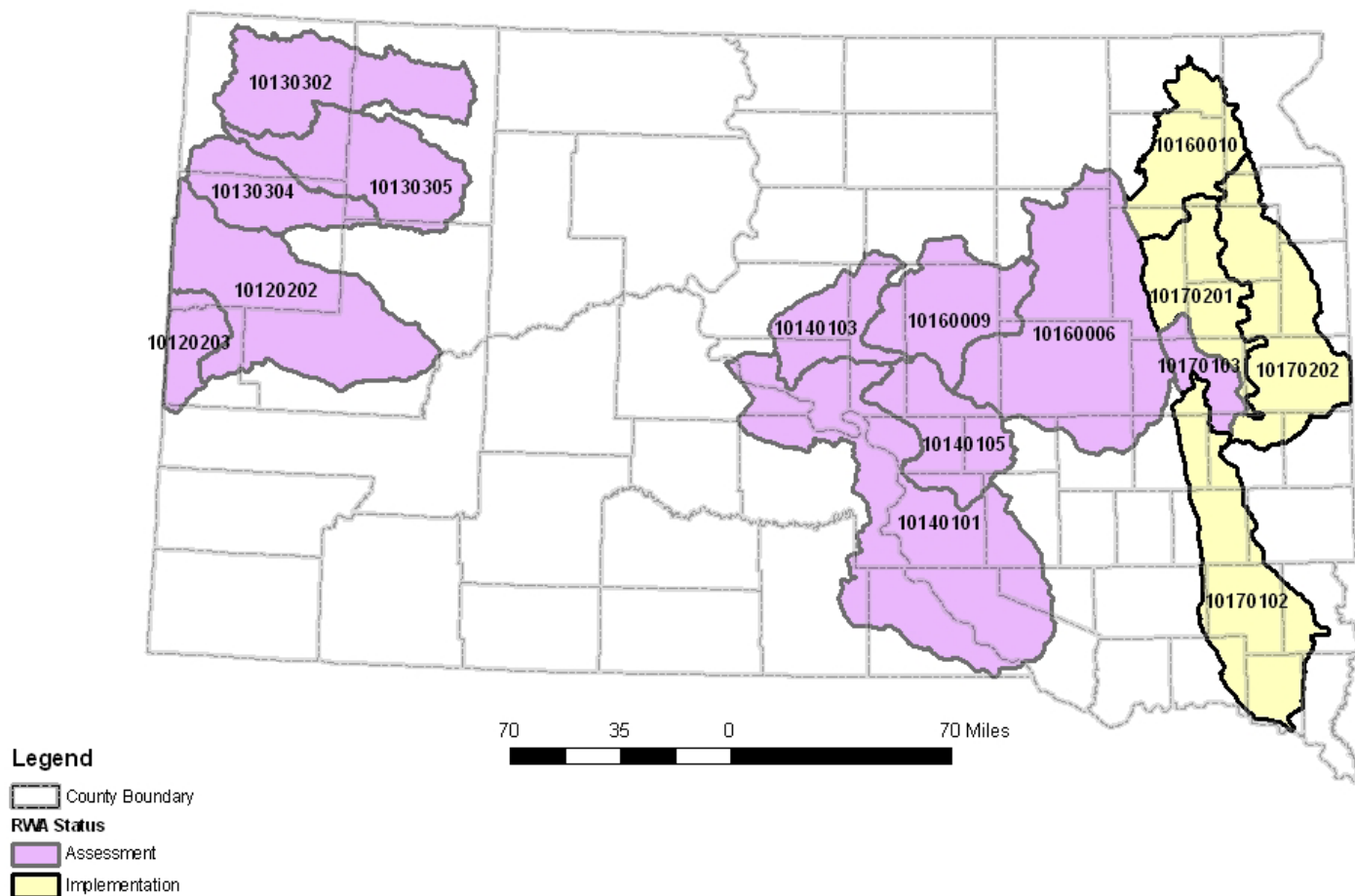
To properly develop native pollinator habitat, plant selection should be made to ensure at least one species is blooming during the entire growing season (spring, summer, and early fall; April through October). **NOTE:** Range Technical Note 4, Table 3, will be modified to include a column for "Bloom Period"; however, in the interim, a bulletin is forthcoming with the applicable information. Points can be obtained under either of the following conditions:

- a. If wildflowers and/or flowering shrubs are exclusively seeded/planted (separately from a range/grassland seeding), a minimum of at least five acres of wildflower forbs or no more than five percent of any field/tract/site should be planted to pure wildflower forbs; or at least 0.1 acres of flowering shrub planting per site.
- b. If the wildflowers are used in conjunction with the native grassland planting, the minimum of five percent of the seeding mixture (five percent times a full seeding rate) must be planted to native forbs.

Non-planting measures such as protection or exclusion are not considered when taking points.

4. IF APPLICABLE, ANSWER "YES" TO ONLY ONE QUESTION WITHIN THIS SET! Is the application located within a Rapid Watershed Assessment (RWA) area where the RWA Implementation Plan is being executed? Figure 1 below identifies RWA Implementation Project Areas (gold).
5. IF APPLICABLE, ANSWER "YES" TO ONLY ONE QUESTION WITHIN THIS SET! Is the application located within a RWA area where the assessment is in progress? Figure 1 below identifies RWA Assessment Project Areas (purple).

Figure 1. SOUTH DAKOTA WATERSHED PLAN PROJECT AREAS



6. Will the contract improve habitat for a federal or state threatened, endangered, or special concern species documented on the application area since 1990? Documentation of consultation with USFWS and/or SDGF&P is attached.

Taking these points will require consultation with a NRCS biologist who will insure that documentation is completed and any needed site-specific consultation with USFWS is completed. This must be attached with the application form.

At-risk species include plant and animal species that are:

- Federal listed threatened or endangered, proposed, or candidate species (http://southdakotafieldoffice.fws.gov/endangered_species.htm); or
- State listed threatened or endangered species (<http://www.sdgifp.info/Wildlife/Diversity/TES.htm>); or
- State listed rare and special concern species (<http://www.sdgifp.info/Wildlife/Diversity/RareAnimal.htm>) and (<http://www.sdgifp.info/Wildlife/Diversity/rareplant2002.htm>); or
- Sage grouse, for which there are numerous current initiatives to attempt to avoid a federal listing.

To take the points for habitat improvement for federal or state threatened, endangered, or special concern species, the project must meet the criteria of items 1, 2, and 3 as follows:

1. The project site must meet at least one of the following conditions:
 - a. Be within 1 mile of a known location as recorded in the SD Natural Heritage Database, and the record shall be less than 25 years old; or
 - b. Include critical habitat for piping plovers (<http://mountain-prairie.fws.gov/pipingplover/sdunit1.pdf> and <http://mountain-prairie.fws.gov/pipingplover/sdunit2new%20plover.pdf>); or
 - c. Provide beneficial impacts to Topeka shiner Priority Stream Zone A (including recently identified stream reaches occupied by Topeka shiners);
 - d. Greater than 50 percent of the tract containing the project site shall be within 5 miles of an active, inactive, or historic lek site as recorded in the sage grouse lek site data layers that have been made available for field offices involved in the sage grouse initiative.
2. The project must provide beneficial impacts to habitat for the species present.
3. The project, practices, and points must be approved by a NRCS biologist, with any needed concurrence from USFWS and/or SDGF&P. The concurrence and project implementation shall be according to the SD Procedures for Threatened, Endangered, and Other Special Concern Species, as found in Section II of the SDTG.

Please see the Natural Heritage database map maintained in file 190-14-6.

7. *Will the contract improve suitable habitat within the expected range of a federal or state listed threatened, endangered, or special concern species? Documentation of the consultation with USFWS and/or SDGF&P is attached.*

Habitat for a particular threatened and endangered or special concern species is present in the project area and there is a reasonable chance that the species may occur there if surveys or sampling is accomplished, and the WHIP project will improve habitat conditions for the species. The landowner must have a habitat development plan for the listed species with concurrence from USFWS and/or SDGF&P, as appropriate.

Local Issues Addressed ~ Grassland Habitat

1. *Will the proposed WHIP project result in native shrub/tree clump planting(s) not to exceed 0.25 acres per clump with a maximum of 2 acres except for "natural ecosystems"?*

The project may not exceed 0.25 acres per clump with a maximum of 2.0 acres except for "natural ecosystems." The minimum acres of wildlife habitat included in the WHIP contract will be at least 20 acres. If the natural ecosystem (e.g., Missouri River breaks, woody draws) includes shrub/tree plant communities then the entire draw/riparian area could be planted.

Existing shrub clumps and planted shrub clumps will count as part of the 2.0 acre maximum in non-"natural ecosystems." Native shrubs/trees are found in Woodland Technical Note 37. Please refer to the range site and/or ecological site descriptions and/or consult your NRCS biologist for site-specific species selection.

Shrub/tree clumps must include species that are rated as Y or M for wildlife food and/or wildlife cover and be considered as native. Deciduous trees may be included in the clump plantings if the mature height at 20 years is less than 30 feet. Coniferous species may be included if the mature height at 20 years is less than 15 feet. Use expected tree heights at 20 years found in SDTG Section II. Planting, seedbed preparation, and weed control will follow guidelines found in Woodland Technical Note 38.

Livestock must be excluded from Shrub/Tree clumps.

2. *Will native grassland prairie (5 species grass/forb mix) (550 or 643) be restored?*

The restoration on cropland must meet the Range Planting (550) or Restoration and Management of Declining Habitats (643) Standards and Specifications.

3. *Will a Dense Nesting Cover Mixture be established in accordance with the 645 Technical Guide Standard?*
The restoration on cropland must be one of the dense nesting cover mixtures identified with the Upland Wildlife Habitat Management (645) Standard and Specification.
4. *Will a tame/introduced non-invasive or native grass seeding (645) be planted?*
The restoration on cropland must meet the Upland Wildlife Habitat Management (645) Standards and Specifications.
5. *Will livestock be excluded from an existing stand of grass and managed for wildlife?*
The exclusion will be a new exclusion of an already established stand of grass for the purpose of developing habitat to be managed for wildlife.
6. *Is the adjacent landscape use within 0.5 mile radius less than 50 percent cropland use?*
The surrounding land use within 0.5 mile radius is less than 50 percent cropland.
7. *Is the size of the largest protected area more than 50 acres?*
The largest protected area that is part of this WHIP contract, which includes new grass seeding or grassland areas managed for wildlife, must be more than 50 acres in size.
8. *Is the size of the largest protected area between 25.0 to 49.9 acres?*
The largest protected area that is part of this WHIP contract, which includes new grass seeding or grassland areas managed for wildlife, must be at least 25.0 acres or less than 49.9 acres in size.
9. *Is the size of the largest protected area between 10 to 24.9 acres?*
The largest protected area that is part of this WHIP contract, which includes new grass seeding or grassland areas managed for wildlife, must be at least 10.0 acres or less than 24.9 acres in size.
10. *Is the size of the largest protected area less than 10.0 acres?*
The largest protected area that is part of this WHIP contract, which includes new grass seeding or grassland areas managed for wildlife, is less than 10.0 acres in size. If there is no protected area adjacent to the application area, the answer will be "No."

Local Issues Addressed ~ Riparian Habitat

1. *Will the proposed WHIP project result in native shrub/tree clump planting(s) not to exceed 0.25 acres per clump with a maximum of 2 acres except for "natural ecosystems"?*
The project may not exceed 0.25 acres per clump with a maximum of 2 acres except for "natural ecosystems." The minimum acres of wildlife habitat included in the WHIP contract will be at least 20 acres. If the natural ecosystem (e.g., Missouri River breaks, woody draws) includes shrub/tree plant communities, then the entire draw/riparian area could be planted.

Clumps will not exceed 0.25 acres in size except for "natural ecosystems" (see above). Native shrubs/trees are found in Woodland Technical Note 37. Refer to the range site and/or ecological site descriptions and/or consult your NRCS biologist for site-specific species selection.

Shrub/tree clumps must include species that are rated as Y or M for wildlife food and/or wildlife cover and be considered as native. Deciduous trees may be included in the clump plantings if the mature height at 20 years is less than 30 feet. Coniferous species may be included if the mature height at 20 years is less than 15 feet.

Use expected tree heights at 20 years found in the SDTG, Section II. Planting, seedbed preparation, and weed control will follow guidelines found in Woodland Technical Note 38.

Livestock must be excluded from Shrub/Tree clumps.

2. *Will livestock be excluded from the riparian area for the duration of the WHIP contract? This question applies only to new exclusions.*

Award points for livestock exclusion from the riparian area if they will be excluded for the entire contract period. If livestock is currently excluded from the riparian area, these points are **not** applicable.

3. *Will the riparian development be longer than 1 mile?*

The meandering length of the riparian area is greater than 1 mile.

4. *Will the riparian development be ½ to one mile in length?*

The meandering length of the riparian area is ½ to one mile.

5. *Will the riparian development be ¼ to ½ mile in length?*

The meandering length of the riparian area is ¼ to ½ mile.

6. *Will the riparian development be less than ¼ mile in length?*

The meandering length of the riparian area is less than ¼ mile.

7. *Is the average width of the managed riparian area greater than 500 feet?*

The average width of the riparian area is greater than 500 feet. The average width is measured in the same manner as Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) practices (CP-21, CP-22, CP-29, CP-30).

8. *Is the average width of the managed riparian area between 150 to 500 feet?*

The average width of the riparian area is between 150 and 500 feet. The average width is measured in the same manner as CRP practices (CP-21, CP-22, CP-29, CP-30).

9. *Is the average width of the managed riparian area less than 150 feet?*

The average width of the riparian area is less than 150 feet. The average width is measured in the same manner as CRP practices (CP-21, CP-22, CP-29, CP-30).

Local Issues Addressed ~ Wetland Habitat

1. *Will this application restore a drained or farmed wetland according to the Wetland Restoration (657) Standard?*

The restoration of a drained or farmed wetland will meet the Wetland Restoration (657) Standard and is eligible for 75 percent cost-share.

2. *Will this application enhance a wetland according to the Wetland Enhancement (659) Standard?*

The restoration of a drained or farmed wetland will meet the Wetland Enhancement (659) Standard and is eligible for 75 percent cost-share.

3. *Will this application create a wetland according to the Wetland Creation (658) Standard?*

The restoration of a drained or farmed wetland will meet the Wetland Creation (658) Standard and is eligible for 75 percent cost-share.

4. *Will a shallow water embankment pond (maximum depth 8 feet above the natural landscape) with the entire embankment and pool area fenced 100 feet beyond the high water line be installed?*

A shallow water embankment is defined as any embankment that has a maximum depth of eight feet or less from the elevation of the principal spillway or emergency spillway, if there is no principal spillway. The maximum depth is measured from the natural landscape elevation, including any natural channel elevation depth, but does not include gullies. Natural landscape elevation is defined as the landscape elevation that would have existed prior to the formation of any gully. The entire embankment, emergency spillway, and pond area will be fenced 100 feet beyond the high water mark if livestock will be used in management of the habitat. If livestock are used in management of the habitat, a pipeline and tank, or nose pump, may also be included for cost-share. The embankment will be designed according to the Pond (378) Standard and Specification and is eligible for 75 percent cost-share.

5. *Will a water embankment pond greater than 8 foot of depth above the natural landscape with the entire embankment and pool area fenced 100 feet beyond the high water line be installed?*

The embankment pond has depth of greater than eight feet. The maximum depth is measured from the natural landscape elevation, including any natural channel elevation depth, but does not include gullies. Natural landscape elevation is defined as the landscape elevation that would have existed prior to the formation of any gully. The entire embankment, emergency spillway, and pond area will be fenced 100 feet beyond the high water mark if livestock will be used in management of the habitat. If livestock is used in management of the habitat, a pipeline and tank, or nose pump may also be included for cost-share. The embankment will be designed according to the Pond (378) Standard and Specification and is eligible for 25 percent cost-share.

6. *Will 40 acres or more of surrounding upland herbaceous cover be managed for wildlife according to the Upland Wildlife Management (645) Standard?*

The WHIP contract will include an area of 40 acres or more of upland herbaceous cover surrounding the wetland area or embankment pond.

7. *Will 10.1 to 39.9 acres of surrounding upland cover be managed for wildlife according to the Upland Wildlife Management (645) Standard?*

The WHIP contract will include an area of 10.1 to 39.9 acres of upland herbaceous cover surrounding the wetland area or embankment pond.

Local Issues Addressed ~ Woody Habitat

1. *Will the woody planting be 13 rows or more? Points should be awarded based on 51 percent of the planned acreage.*

Example: 20 acres of tree/shrub planting: 8 acres of 13 rows (40 percent), 6 acres of 9 rows (30 percent), and 6 acres of 5 rows (30 percent). None of these are 51 percent individually, but there are 70 percent of the acres which are 8 rows or more, so this planting could answer "Yes" to Question 2.

2. *Will the woody planting be 8 to 12 rows? Points should be awarded based on 51 percent of the planned acreage.*

Example: 20 acres of tree/shrub planting: 8 acres of 13 rows (40 percent), 6 acres of 9 rows (30 percent), and 6 acres of 5 rows (30 percent). None of these are 51 percent individually, but there are 70 percent of the acres which are 8 rows or more, so this planting could answer "Yes" to Question 2.

3. *Will the woody planting be less than 8 rows? Points should be awarded based on 51 percent of the planned acreage.*

Example: 20 acres of tree/shrub planting: 8 acres of 13 rows (40 percent), 6 acres of 9 rows (30 percent), and 6 acres of 5 rows (30 percent). None of these are 51 percent individually, but there are 70 percent of the acres which are 8 rows or more, so this planting could answer "Yes" to Question 2.

4. *Is the woody planting less than ¼ mile from winter roosting/bedding cover?*

The winter roosting/bedding cover must be less than ¼ mile from the planned woody planting.

5. *Is the woody planting between ¼ to ½ mile from winter roosting/bedding cover?*

The winter roosting/bedding cover must be within ¼ to ½ mile of the planned woody planting.

6. *Is the woody planting between ½ to 1 mile from winter roosting/bedding cover?*

The winter roosting/bedding cover must be within ½ to 1 mile of the planned woody planting.

7. *Is the woody planting ¼ mile from winter food? In order to obtain these points, the winter food supply must be at least the minimum size required in the Upland Wildlife Habitat Management (645) Standard for the target species. If size is not mentioned, the supply must be at least 0.5 acres.*

The winter food must be less than ¼ mile from the planned woody planting, but does not have to be a food plot. Natural foods and waste grain on cropland will work for most species. Do not include cropland that is grazed by livestock. Reference the Upland Wildlife Habitat Management (645) Standard and Specification for species requirements.

8. *Is the woody planting between ¼ to ½ mile from winter food? In order to obtain these points, the winter food supply must be at least the minimum size required in the Upland Wildlife Habitat Management (645) Standard for the target species. If size is not mentioned, the supply must be at least 0.5 acres.*

The winter food must be within ¼ to ½ mile from the planned woody planting, but does not have to be a food plot. Natural foods and waste grain on cropland will work for most species. Do not include cropland that is grazed by livestock. Reference the Upland Wildlife Habitat Management (645) Standard and Specification for species requirements.

9. *Is the woody planting between ½ to 1 mile from winter food? In order to obtain these points, the winter food supply must be at least the minimum size required in the Upland Wildlife Habitat Management (645) Standard for the target species. If size is not mentioned, the supply must be at least 0.5 acres.*

The winter food must be within ½ to 1 mile from the planned woody planting, but does not have to be a food plot. Natural foods and waste grain on cropland will work for most species. Do not include cropland that is grazed by livestock. Reference the Upland Wildlife Habitat Management (645) Standard and Specification for species requirements.