NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD AND SPECIFICATIONS

WILDLIFE WATERING FACILITY

(no.)

Code 648

DEFINITION

Develop, improve, or modify watering places and systems for wildlife.

PURPOSE

- Provide adequate quality drinking water during critical periods for wildlife.
- Create or expand suitable habitat for wildlife.
- Improve water quality and accessibility for wildlife.

CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES

In areas where new, additional, or improved watering places are needed to increase the range, distribution, improve the habitat of, or attract wildlife by meeting their water requirements.

Where lack of adequate water has been identified as the limiting habitat component.

CRITERIA

General Criteria Applicable to all Purposes

Because each facility is unique to species, habitat, topography, and climate, watering facilities must have a site specific plan. Each site is unique and the planner must consider the method of construction, size and available water sources that are necessary to meet the purpose of this practice.

The watering facility will have sufficient size and depth to provide a permanent, accessible, dependable, and suitable quality water source during dry months of normal rainfall patterns.

Wildlife watering facilities will be spaced one-half mile apart or no closer than one half mile to a dependable quality water supply. (One dependable water supply per 160 acres). Spacing may be closer if obstacles, such as major highways, high fences, etc., prevent access to nearby sources of water.

The design will include appropriate safety features to minimize the hazards of the facility.

Methods used will be designed to protect the soil resource from erosion.

Facilities will be protected from livestock damage. See LIVESTOCK EXCLUSION (472).

Invasive species and noxious weeds will be controlled.

Facilities will be designed and installed in compliance with all state and federal laws.

Disturbed areas will be vegetated according to a revegetation plan. Use CONSERVATION COVER (327) unless the area is subject to frequent overflows or spillway protection is needed, then CRITICAL AREA PLANTING (342) will be used. Native plant materials will be used whenever possible to achieve the desired purpose.

A wildlife watering facility will not be located where there will be excessive sediment accumulation.

CONSIDERATIONS

Effects on target species and the ecosystem by concentrating grazing, predation, hunting, etc.

Accessibility of the site for installation and maintenance.

Effects upon natural springs, wetlands, other aquatic sites and associated unique flora and fauna.

This practice may be used to promote the conservation of declining species, including threatened and endangered species.

Aesthetics of the installation.

Use by reptiles and amphibians. Stacked logs and/or rock piles may be located near the water's edge to provide critical habitat for local reptile and amphibian species.

Effects on downstream flows or ground water that could affect other water users or associated aquatic sites

PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

Plans and specifications for this practice will be prepared for each site. Plans and specifications will be recorded using approved specification sheets, job sheets, technical notes, or narrative documentation in the conservation plan or other acceptable documentation to describe the requirements for applying the practice to achieve its intended use.

Embankments and Dugouts

The watering facility will have a surface area of at least 750 square feet. The average water depth will be at least 3 feet when full.

The maximum size of a watering facility is 0.5 acres. If a larger impoundment is desired design it as a pond using the POND (378) standard.

Surface runoff basins with earth embankments intended to store more than 3 feet of water against the embankment will be designed according to POND (378) with the exception of size and depth. Smaller earth fills may be designed as a DIKE (356).

At least one slope must permit wildlife to enter and leave easily (6:1 or flatter slope).

Springs and Seeps

The reliability and quantity of flow from a spring or seep will be checked before development as a wildlife watering facility.

Intermittent springs will be developed only if adequate checks show that water is available for the intended periods of use. Large capacity storage (minimum of 50 gallons) will be provided to assure an adequate water supply when intermittent flow stops. See SPRING DEVELOPMENT (574) for additional information.

Springs and seeps will be dug to firm ground or rock to obtain the maximum flow and all sources should be directed to a central collection basin.

When using tanks or troughs, place ramps, ladders, or floats in the facility to provide a means of escape for birds and small mammals.

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

The purpose of operation, maintenance, and management is to insure that the practice functions as intended for the life of the practice.

Facilities will be checked annually to insure proper function. Repair and maintain as needed.

Inspect the area adjacent to the facility to make sure the area is well protected with desirable vegetation and not subject to erosion or sediment deposition. Correct as needed.

Facilities not designed to withstand or operate during freezing weather will be winterized prior to winter conditions.