

BALANCING FOOD SAFETY AND SUSTAINABILITY

Opportunities for Co-management - Vegetated Practices for Wildlife

*This is one of a series of resource sheets for **food safety auditors** that describe conservation practices commonly used in agriculture's production environment.*



Images of Conservation Cover¹ and Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management² in the agricultural production environment

This information can help you to

Recognize practices that provide wildlife habitat in the agricultural environment .

Understand the purposes these practices serve in the agricultural environment.

Recognize the language growers may use to explain why providing wildlife habitat is important in their production environment.

Understand when audit standards may consider practices that provide wildlife habitat as addressing farming impacts on the environment and biodiversity and/or as potential contributors to food safety risk.

Retiring land from agricultural production is sometimes the most effective method for providing additional permanent habitat for specific wildlife species. Practices to promote these objectives may protect wetland features already in the environment or plant additional vegetation.

¹ This practice is currently listed as [Conservation Cover #327](#) by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. The NRCS National Practice Standards are updated regularly. Check website for latest standard information.

² This practice is currently listed as [Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management #644](#) by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. The NRCS National Practice Standards are updated regularly. Check website for latest standard information.

Conservation Cover is the practice of establishing and maintaining permanent vegetative cover in upland areas to reduce [soil erosion](#) and protect wildlife. This practice applies on land to be retired from agricultural production. Native plant species are preferred.

Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management is the practice of improving, creating, or managing wetland habitat for wildlife, particularly for rare, threatened, or endangered wildlife and vegetative species. Wetland habitat management focuses on protecting plant and animal species in and around wet areas by improving upstream and adjacent farming and grazing practices or by establishing a vegetated buffer around the habitat.

Advantages ¹	Disadvantages
Characteristics shared by practices	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improves water quality by filtering runoff• Reduces soil erosion from wind and water• Improves groundwater recharge• Provides recreational value, including hunting and wildlife viewing opportunities• May provide beneficial insect and raptor habitat• Improves animal habitat, cover and shelter	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• May provide habitat for rodent or bird pests• Potential loss of agricultural production related income
Conservation Cover	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stabilizes soil• Decrease in labor and equipment costs• Reduces runoff and downstream flooding	
Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Filters sediment and other pollutants• Buffers peak flood runoff for reduced downstream flooding• Enhances habitat for wetland wildlife and plants species	

¹From [Farm Water Quality Management Practice Sheets](#) Conservation Cover #327 and Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management #644

In some audit standards these practices may help producers to demonstrate knowledge of the impacts of farming on the environment, including fugitive dust, and efforts to maintain biodiversity. They may trigger concerns about animal activity, fecal contamination, proximity to habitat for wildlife, or water of unknown quality.

Scenarios

Wetland area is monitored for presence of wildlife. Closely mowing the vegetated overflow and perimeter areas facilitates monitoring potential movement of wildlife into cropped areas.

Additional Resources

[Balancing Food Safety and Sustainability: Opportunities for Co-management, 2012](#)

Additional resources on co-management of food safety and sustainability may be found at on the UC Food Safety Website under the [Pre- and Post-Harvest Produce](#) link. You can also contact Mary Bianchi, UC Cooperative Extension Emeritus Farm Advisor in San Luis Obispo County at mlbianchi@ucanr.edu.

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