



Fact Sheet

February 2004

Farm Bill 2002

Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program in Nevada

Since WHIP began in 1998, nearly 11,000 participants have enrolled more than 1.6 million acres into the program. Most efforts have concentrated on improving upland wildlife habitat, such as native prairie, but there is an increasing emphasis on improving riparian and aquatic areas. The 2002 Farm Bill greatly expands the available tools for improving wildlife habitat conditions across the Nation.

How WHIP Works

The State WHIP plan serves as a guide for the development of the State WHIP ranking criteria. Local work groups and the State Technical Committee provide input into the State plan and its priorities. For FY 2004, Nevada has established a program priority to address at-risk habitats. In particular, sage grouse applications will be given a high priority for fund consideration.

Participants voluntarily limit future use of the land for a period of time, but retain private ownership. NRCS works with the participant to develop a wildlife habitat development plan. This plan becomes the basis of the cost-share agreement between NRCS and the participant. NRCS provides cost-share payments to landowners under these agreements that are usually 5 to 10 years in duration, depending upon the practices to be installed. There are shorter-term agreements to install practices that are needed to meet wildlife emergencies, as approved by the NRCS State conservationist. NRCS also provides greater cost-share assistance to landowners who enter into agreements of 15 years or more for practices on essential plant and animal habitat. NRCS can use up to 15 percent of its available WHIP funds for this purpose.

NRCS does not place limits on the number of acres that can be enrolled in the program or the amount of payment made. NRCS welcomes projects that provide valuable wildlife habitat and does not want to discourage any landowner who desires to implement practices that will improve habitat conditions for declining species.

Applications are accepted through a continuous sign-up process. Applications may be obtained and filed at any time with your local USDA Service Center or conservation district office. Applications also may be obtained through USDA's e-gov Internet site at: www.sc.egov.usda.gov. Enter Natural Resources Conservation Service in the Agency field, Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program in the Program Name field, and CCC-1250 in the Form Number field. Applications also may be accepted by cooperating conservation partners approved or designated by NRCS.

Eligibility

Eligible lands under the program are:

- Privately owned land;
- Federal land when the primary benefit is on private or Tribal land;
- State and local government land on a limited basis; and
- Tribal land.

If land is determined eligible, NRCS places emphasis on enrolling:

- Habitat areas for wildlife species experiencing declining or significantly reduced populations;
- Practices beneficial to fish and wildlife that may not otherwise be funded; and
- Wildlife and fishery habitats identified by local and State partners and Indian Tribes in each State.

The Adjusted Gross Income provision of the 2002 Farm Bill impacts eligibility for WHIP and several other 2002 Farm Bill programs.

Individuals or entities that have an average adjusted gross income exceeding \$2.5 million for the three tax years immediately preceding the year the contract is approved are not eligible to receive program benefits or payments. However, an exemption is provided in cases where 75 percent of the adjusted gross income is derived from farming, ranching, or forestry operations. The final rule for this provision has not yet been published.

For More Information

If you need more information about WHIP, please contact your local USDA Service Center, listed in the telephone book under U.S. Department of Agriculture, or your local conservation district. Information also is available on the World Wide Web at: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/farmbill/2002/>.



Visit USDA on the Web at:
<http://www.usda.gov/farmbill>