

# **NRCS-FWS ESA Programmatic Consultations**

MCFA-ESA Workshop  
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# Agenda Topics:

- Background
- 2008, '09, '10 Working Sessions
- Deliverables
- Recommendations

# NRCS Role on Private Lands

- Between 60-70% of the land base in the lower 48 (US) is working agricultural land under private ownership.
- NRCS' mission is to provide, protect, and conserve natural resources on private lands.

# Conservation through Farm Bill activities

- Technical Assistance in conservation planning and project design
- Assistance with cost-share and incentive programs for implementing conservation actions

# Conservation Practices provide the basis for implementing Conservation Programs



~ 170 National Conservation Practice Standards (CPS)

CPS address soil, water, air, plant, animal, & human resource concerns

# Stream Habitat Improvement



Connecticut

# Streambank Stabilization



Swamp Creek, Georgia

# Stream Habitat Improvement



Kentucky



# Example of Farm Bill programs administered by NRCS

Major NRCS Conservation Program include:

- WRP (Wetland Reserve Program)
- EQIP (Environmental Quality Incentives Program)
- CSP (Conservation Stewardship Program)
- WHIP (Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program)
- HFRP (Healthy Forest Reserve Program)

**~ \$1 BILLION annually**

# NRCS capacity to deliver

- Financial Assistance appropriations have far outpaced Technical Assistance dollars
- Awareness of need for programmatic ESA solutions (Fed and State)
- Need for Partnerships
- Facilitated the MOU

# Background

- NRCS National Policy – 2004
- HFRP design meeting in MS - June 2006
- National Meeting – NCTC 2006
- MOU – February 2007
- Regional Sessions – Summer 2007
- Interagency Agreement – July 2008
- Working Sessions – August 2008 forward

# 2008 Working Sessions

- Field Organized
- Customized and focused
- Reflected a wide variety of existing understanding and partnerships
- Beginning of the process

# Working Session Objectives

- Discuss and Understand Programs
- ID Opportunities to Streamline ESA compliance
- ID Opportunities to Enhance Cooperative Conservation

# Working Session

## Common Attributes:

- Better understanding of agency objectives
- Discussion of Tools Available
- Deliverables
- Most preferred - S7 informal programmatic following the Kentucky model
- Additional focus and understanding on other ESA programs (S4, S6, and S10)

# Louisiana Session:

- Focus on all species and all Conservation Practices
- Specific timetable for completion (CY 2009)
- Spinoff issues relating to LA Black Bear Critical Habitat and WRP

# Montana Session:

- Specific initiative developed with a larger pool of partners
- Specific meeting to address sage grouse conservation with initial field trip
- Sage Grouse listing decision will not change intended goal of partnership, but may affect which ESA tool to select
- Partners have a high level of sensitivity on other species/issues (e.g., Lynx, Bull Trout, Grizzly)



# Iowa Session:

- Focus on all species and all Conservation Practices
- Effects analysis complete
- Interested in multi-state programmatic (I-bats)

# New England States Session:

- Included RI, CT, MA, NH
- Programmatic CCAA for NEC
- Programmatic informal framed up
- Strong State agency leadership

# Utah Session:

- Partnership has long history of working together (SHA, CCAA, HCP, etc) with other ESA tools
- Seeking solutions to funding/staffing issues
- Likely outcome is programmatic informal

# Nebraska Session:

- Focus on understanding and awareness
- Building upon existing programmatic formals (Platte River)
- Developing programmatic informal – all species, all practices
- Interested in developing/using other tools
- Strong State agency leadership

# Arizona Session:

- Focusing on programmatic informal-  
all species, all practices
- Landscape level approach desired
- Conservation systems approach

# Mississippi Session:

- Focusing on programmatic informal-  
all species, all practices
- Addressing state-listed species
- Landscape level approach desired
- Integration with 4(d) rule for LABB

## Nevada Session:

- Pursuing programmatic on all species and all conservation practice standards
- Initial effort with focus on standards that conserve sage obligate species
- Potential to spend EQIP \$\$ on public lands, so effort has engaged on aligning all standards whether on private or public lands

# 2009 Efforts

- Mississippi – WGS Completed
- Nevada – WGS Completed
- Indiana – August
- Michigan – August
- North Carolina – August/September
- West Virginia - September



# 2010 Efforts

- Alabama
- Kansas
- Ohio
- Colorado
- New York
- South Carolina
- Multi-State Bog Turtle (NY, NJ, PA)
- Washington
- Oregon
- Wisconsin

# Accomplishments to Date

- Completed: KY, FL, PR, VT, ME, MD, NE, IA
- CCAA for the New England Cottontail
- VA, DE, MS, AZ, LA, New England multi-state programmatic on track for completed this CY
- WRP priorities for the LABB
- R5 hosted executive meeting with affected state conservationists
- Special EQIP for Sage Grouse in MT

# Conservation Practice Matrix

- 595 Pest Management (ac.)(also includes Herbaceous Weed Control Conservation Practice)
- ~~X~~<sup>Gen</sup>, ~~X~~<sup>Plant</sup>, ~~X~~<sup>AQ1</sup>, ~~X~~<sup>FWS</sup>, ~~X~~<sup>RHS</sup>, ~~X~~<sup>bat</sup>
- ~~B~~<sup>Inv</sup>
- **Contact the NRCS Biologist if Windows Pesticide Screening Tool (WIN-PST) results are Intermediate or High. Application within 50 feet of a stream with listed T&E will be hand applied by spot treatment.**

# Qualifiers:

## XGen

- If the practice will be placed in a habitat type where a threatened or endangered species may reside, further investigation is required . Review the Sensitive Habitat Fact Sheet, then make a visual observation of the area to determine if the species or habitat for the species exists.
- **Examples include:** Avoid ground disturbing activities within Red Hills Salamander habitat. Avoid altering hydrology of ephemeral drains (avoid logging during wet weather) within the FWS habitat.

# Qualifiers

## X Plant

- If the practice will be placed in a habitat type where a threatened or endangered species may reside AND if disturbance of native vegetation (changing landuse, herbicide application, earthmoving, soil disturbance, etc.) is involved in the installation of this practice, further investigation is required . Review the Sensitive Habitat Fact Sheet and plant fact sheets. Make a visual observation of the area to determine if the species or habitat for the species exists.

# Summary

- Working Group Sessions have made measureable progress to date where line managers have made this partnership a priority.
- The partnership has gone beyond streamlining - Farm Bill dollars are aligning with ESA to build projects on private lands that recover and enhance species of mutual interest.

# Challenges

- Workload scheduling
- Dedicating a block of time
- Expectations
- Trust

# Recommendations

- Encourage opportunities for multi-state resolutions with wide ranging species and issues (Aquatic species, Sage Grouse, I-bat, RCW, etc)
- Seek opportunities to expand partnership (FSA, NMFS, DOD, USFS, BLM, etc)



Thank You!