

WILDLIFE HABITAT COST-SHARE PROGRAM

THE OBJECTIVE

Since 96 percent of the land in Indiana is privately owned, the majority of our wildlife populations are dependent on the availability of habitat on private lands for their survival. Unfortunately, this habitat is in short supply. The main objective of the Wildlife Habitat Cost-Share Program is to encourage landowners to develop wildlife habitat by reducing the cost of its development and management. Landowners may receive reimbursement for up to 90 percent of the cost of the developing and maintaining wildlife habitat, not to exceed \$1,000 .

DO YOU QUALIFY?

You are eligible if:

1. You own or exercise control over 10 or more acres, and
2. The parcel to be developed is not part of a licensed or commercial hunting preserve.

WHAT TYPES OF PRACTICES MAY BE COST-SHARED?

Permanent Herbaceous Cover - the establishment of cool season grasses, warm season grasses, legumes, and forbs (wildflowers) to provide nesting, brood-rearing, and loafing/roosting cover for wildlife. Cost-sharing may be provided for seed, ground preparation, lime, fertilizer, herbicide and the cost of planting, rental of equipment, or contracting for a completed project.

Permanent Woody Cover - the establishment of tree and shrub windbreaks, corridors, and coverts to provide protective nesting, brood-rearing, loafing/roosting, and winter cover for wildlife. Cost-sharing may be provided for planting materials, ground preparation, herbicide and the cost of planting, rental of equipment, or contracting for a completed project.

Vegetation Management - the application of practices that modify succession or the existing vegetation to improve wildlife habitat, such as strip disking, strip spraying, fescue eradication, woodland edge enhancement and the creation of forest regeneration openings. Cost-sharing may be provided for ground preparation, herbicide and the cost of planting, rental of equipment, or contracting for a completed project.

Wetland Restoration, Creation, or Enhancement - cost-sharing may be provided for the construction and materials for dams, levies, dikes, and water control structures used in developing or improving shallow-water wetland areas. No cost-share will be provided for the acquisition or installment of pumping systems. No cost-share will be provided for the development of deep-water ponds (average water depth exceeds 3 feet).

Other Habitat Development and Management Practices - other practices may be cost-shared

if they are determined by the inspecting district wildlife biologist to be of value in improving and maintaining wildlife habitat on private land.

HOW DOES THE PROGRAM WORK?

1. A person wishing to apply for cost-share assistance must first contact their District Wildlife Biologist and make arrangements to discuss the wildlife practices to be developed at an on-site visit.
2. The District Wildlife Biologist will then prepare a cost-share agreement listing the specific practices that both parties agree need to be implemented; including the estimated costs of materials and contracted services; and the cost-share rate. All cost-share payments will be based on prevailing local prices for labor, materials or services and the cost-share rate. The applicant or landowner may be required to show purchase receipts and may be requested to obtain written quotes for materials and services.
3. Upon receipt of the agreement, the applicant should review the practice specifications, estimated costs, cost-share rate, and the dollar amount the Division of Fish and Wildlife agrees to pay the landowner or applicant upon completion of the practices. If the applicant agrees with its contents, the applicant should then sign the agreement and return it to the District Wildlife Biologist.
4. The biologist will then forward the agreement to the Private Lands Program Coordinator for final approval. Upon approval, the Coordinator will send a notification letter and a signed copy of the cost-share agreement to the landowner or applicant, signifying the Division's commitment to provide cost-share assistance.
5. Upon completion of the practices outlined in the agreement, the applicant must contact the District Wildlife Biologist for a final inspection of the completed work. Applicants should retain a copy of all receipts for materials and services for the biologist's review.
6. Payment will be made according to the cost-share rates agreed upon in the contract. The applicant should receive payment within 3 to 4 weeks after the final inspection.

WHAT ARE THE LIMITATIONS OF THE PROGRAM?

1. All practices must be completed by May 30 of the following year.
2. The Division of Fish and Wildlife will not be liable for any non-payment of charges for materials, labor or services contracted by the landowner or applicant in response to the cost-share agreement.
3. Agreements extending beyond one project year will not be considered: however, cost-share may be approved on the same practice in subsequent years.
4. No payment will be made without final inspection and certification by the District Wildlife Biologist.
5. The maximum cost-share to each landowner or applicant is limited to \$1,000 per year.

- The minimum cost-share is \$50.
6. The maximum cost-share rate for any practice will be 90 percent of the cost of development.
 7. If additional cost-share funding for the same practice development is received from other sources (including other State, Federal, or private sources) cost-share through this program will be reduced so that the total of all cost-share assistance received does not exceed 100 percent of the project's total cost.
 8. The landowner does not relinquish ownership or control of his property.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. *Are private groups and organizations eligible?*
ANSWER: Private groups or organizations are eligible for cost-share if the practice occurs on private land.

2. *What happens if a landowner fails to comply with the cost-share agreement?*
ANSWER: The penalty for failure to comply with the cost-share agreement will be no payment and potential loss of eligibility for future cost-share.

3. *Can cost-share areas be hunted?*
ANSWER: Landowners who receive cost-share do not relinquish ownership or control of their property. According to state law, hunters must obtain the landowner's permission before hunting on private land.

4. *What happens if the actual expenses exceed the estimated practice costs?*
ANSWER: According to the agreement, the Division of Fish and Wildlife will pay the landowner or applicant only the amount equal to the estimated cost of the practice, times the agreed upon cost-share rate. The applicant should obtain written quotes for all estimated costs to reduce the chance of increased costs later on.

5. *What happens if only a portion of the practices specified in the agreement are completed?*
ANSWER: If only a portion of the practices specified in the agreement are completed, then the Division of Fish and Wildlife will pay the applicant an amount equal to the cost-share rate times the estimated cost of the practices that have been completed.

6. *I would like to develop wildlife habitat on my land, but I don't know what is needed. Is there someone who can help me?*
ANSWER: Our District Wildlife Biologists are competent, technically trained biologists. One of their duties is to assist landowners with wildlife management. They will be able to make helpful suggestions for improving the wildlife habitat on your property.