


# Cost-Share Programs, Deer Habitat Enhancement, and PNIF Implications

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# What are the Issues?

- Are we using public \$\$ to provide:
  - Food Plots, to increase or fatten up the deer herd?
  - Winter Thermal Cover, to increase deer survival?
  - Forest Stand Improvement, improve deer visibility, create openings, design the perfect deer stand?
  - Conservation Buffers (Windbreaks/Shelterbelts, Riparian Forest Buffers, etc.) for deer travel corridors, cover (esp. winter cover), habitat

# Cost-Share Programs with Forestry/Wildlife Components

- Landowner Incentives Program (LIP, MDNR)
- Partners for Fish and Wildlife (USFWS)
- Conservation Reserve Program (CRP, FSA)
- Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP, NRCS)
- Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP, NRCS)

# Michigan DNR Landowner Incentive Program (LIP)

- Goals: “...enhance, restore and protect wetland and grassland habitats for species at risk.”
- Provide technical & financial assistance to:
  - Establish prairies
  - Restore wetlands, prairies, and savannas
  - Remove exotic species
  - Conduct prescribed burns on grasslands & wetlands

# Michigan DNR Landowner Incentive Program (LIP)

## ➤ Eligibility:

- Limited to statewide Priority Areas
- Within Priority Areas preference given to:
  - Properties with either endangered species on the property or at least 12 acres in size
  - Properties outside Priority Areas may be considered if > 40 acres

# Partners for Fish and Wildlife (USFWS)

- Habitat restoration and improvement projects that favor:
  - Migratory birds, migratory fish, and federally listed endangered or threatened species
  - Specifically:
    - Wetlands
    - Native prairie and grasslands
    - Riparian corridor, streambank and in-stream habitats

# Conservation Reserve Program (CRP, FSA)

- Purpose: "...to establish long-term, resource conserving covers on eligible farmland."
- Goals: "Reduce soil erosion, protect water and air quality, restore wetlands and improve wildlife habitat."

# Specific CRP Wildlife Habitat Goals

- Establish “...vegetative covers defined as best suited for wildlife”
  - Must “...generally meet multiple seasonal (e.g. nesting cover, winter cover) requirements for wildlife of local or regional concern”
- “Sensitive wildlife ecosystem restorations”
  - “....wetland restoration, wildlife corridors, riparian buffers, longleaf pines and rare and declining habitats.”



# CRP Forestry/Wildlife Practices

- Tree Planting (General) - CP3
- Hardwood Tree Planting – CP3A
- Wildlife Habitat - CP4B & CP4D
- Vegetative Cover – Trees – Est. - CP11
- Wildlife Food Plot – CP12
- Windbreaks – CP5A, CP16A, CP 17A
- Riparian Buffer – CP22
- Bottomland Timber Est. on Wetlands – CP31

# CRP Ranking Criteria

- Emphasis on species composition/seed mix that most favors priority wildlife
- Hardwood Tree Planting (CP3A): Highest point total for at least 3 mast-producing spp.

# CRP Ranking Criteria

## ➤ Wildlife Food Plot (CP12):

- Guidance in NRCS Upland W/L Habitat Management standard, emphasizing spp. diversity & pre-settlement vegetation
- Only eligible in conjunction with certain other practices (mostly native grasses & deciduous trees/shrubs)
- Limited in size (10% of field, max. 5 ac.)
- No cost-share to establish
- No opportunity to earn points for Cover Ranking Factor N1A (favoring native species)

# Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

- Resource Concerns include:
  - Threatened, endangered, or special concerns species systems
  - Integrated (into cropland) wildlife management systems
  - Riparian corridor management systems
  - Forestry systems

# Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

- Emphasis on creating wildlife habitat in areas where there is presently little or none
- Where wildlife species are identified they are “threatened, endangered or of special concern”

# Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP)

- Purpose: Creating or enhancing wildlife habitat on non-cropland systems (vs. EQIP on cropland systems)
- Habitat Priorities
  - Herbaceous habitats: grasslands prairies, savannas & barrens
  - Aquatic buffers: adjacent to wetlands, streams & water bodies
  - Forestland expansion or improvement
  - T & E species or habitat
- Cost-share NOT available for annual food plots

# Assistance is moving toward the Landscape Focus

- Rare and declining habitats (e.g., tall-grass prairie, riparian habitats, early successional)
- Regionally important wildlife species (e.g., northern bobwhite, sage grouse)
- Requires integrating landscape level planning with individual landowner objectives and targeted species' habitat requirements

# The Challenge

- What does a public servant say to a client who wants something (lots of deer to shoot) that agency policy does not support?



# Tools for Targeting Cost-Share

- Favoring rare, declining, threatened and/or endangered species and habitats
- Using ranking criteria to favor certain practices (e.g. warm season grasses)
- Using ranking criteria to limit or exclude other practices (annual food plots)

# Tools for Educating PNIF

- Identifying Resource Concerns (deer impacts)
- Providing alternatives in a conservation plan, including some that favor other spp. over deer
- Program rules (ranking criteria, eligible practices)
- Emphasizing workload goals that match policy and programs (“I’ve got to address EQIP/WHIP workload before I can do food plots”)