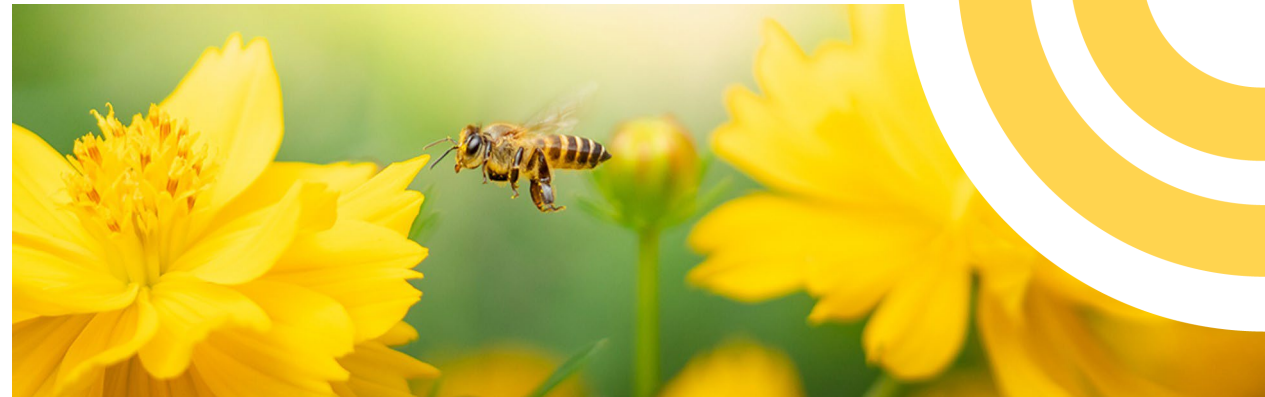




Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



Wetlands and Forestry

Julie Devers – State Biologist AND Steve Strano – State Resource Conservationist

MARYLAND

Wetlands – Changes in Practice Standards

- Practices available previous to 2026
 - Wetland Restoration (657)
 - ~~■ Shallow Water Development and Management (646)~~
 - Wetland Creation (658)
 - Wetland Enhancement (659)
- Practices available in 2027
 - Wetland Restoration (657)
 - Seasonal Water Management for Wildlife (646)
 - Wetland Creation (658)
 - Wetland Enhancement (659)

Conservation Practice Standard 646 - Changes

- No longer a practice for **Shallow Water Area Development and Management**
- Changed to **Seasonal Water Management for Wildlife**
 - Flooding for target species - Adding and removing boards in water control structure to manage water levels
 - Does not include construction or adding structures – assumes existing infrastructure
 - Payment rates for Seasonal Water Management – 2 scenarios
 - Capture Water, High Labor Inputs Required for Management
 - \$39.45 per acre
 - Capture Water, Low Labor Inputs Required for Management
 - \$22.65 per acre

Seasonal Water Management for Wildlife

- Do we want to allow producers to flood crop fields?
 - We have historically discouraged plant and flood and encouraged moist soil management (native vegetation)
 - Focused on habitat for waterfowl, not hunting
- Flooded crop fields in winter can provide additional habitat for waterfowl and shore birds AND some water quality benefits
- Hunting regulations allow only standing crop
- We would require that the crop be harvested and no more than 5% of the crop is left standing
- No financial assistance for dikes but could provide financial assistance for water control structure

CREP

- Still have both practices available
 - **CP23 – Wetland Restoration**
 - Higher incentive payment (% of soil rental rate) – 200%
 - MACS cost share for implementation – 87.5% (37.5% from MACS)
 - Moist soil management on 30%
 - **CP9 – Shallow Water Area**
 - Lower incentive payment – 100%
 - No MACS cost share for implementation
 - Moist soil management on 80%

How do we implement Shallow Water Area

- “Shallow Water Area” – 80% moist soil management
 - Dike and Levee (356) AND Structure for Water Control (587) for any (hydric and non-hydric) soils
- OR
- Wetland Creation (658) – **CHANGE** to 80% moist soil management – only on non-hydric soils

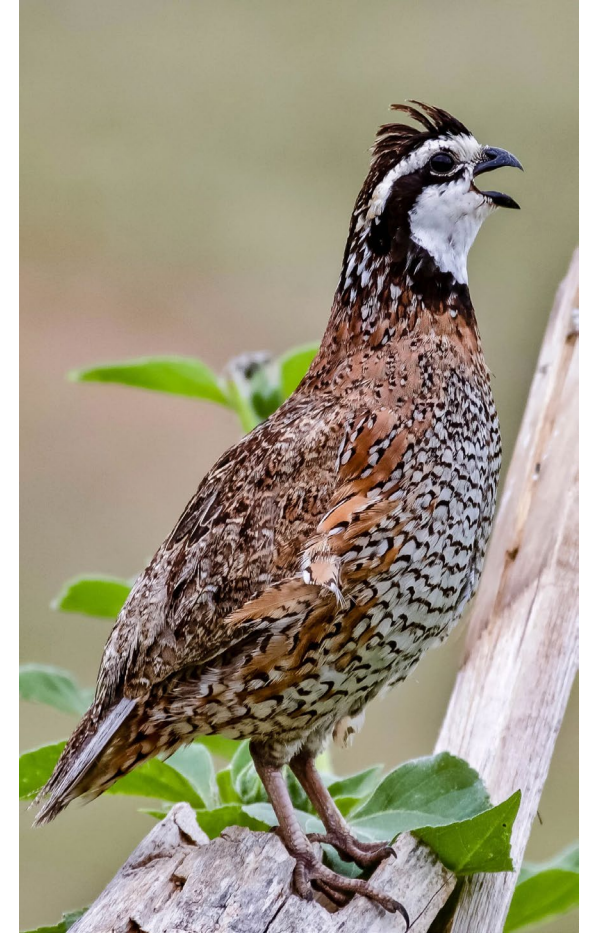
Questions for State Technical Committee

Should NRCS offer Seasonal Water Management (646) in Maryland?

Should NRCS change Wetland Creation (658) to allow moist soil management on 80% of the area?

Forested Savanna

- Increased interest in Northern Bobwhite Quail habitat management on the Eastern Shore
 - Increase in prescribed fire capacity
 - Maryland Prescribed Fire Council
 - Eastern Shore Prescribed Burning Association – private landowners
 - Increased interest in managing forest for quail by planning forested savannas
 - This early successional habitat also benefits many declining species and is lacking on the Eastern Shore



Early successional habitat

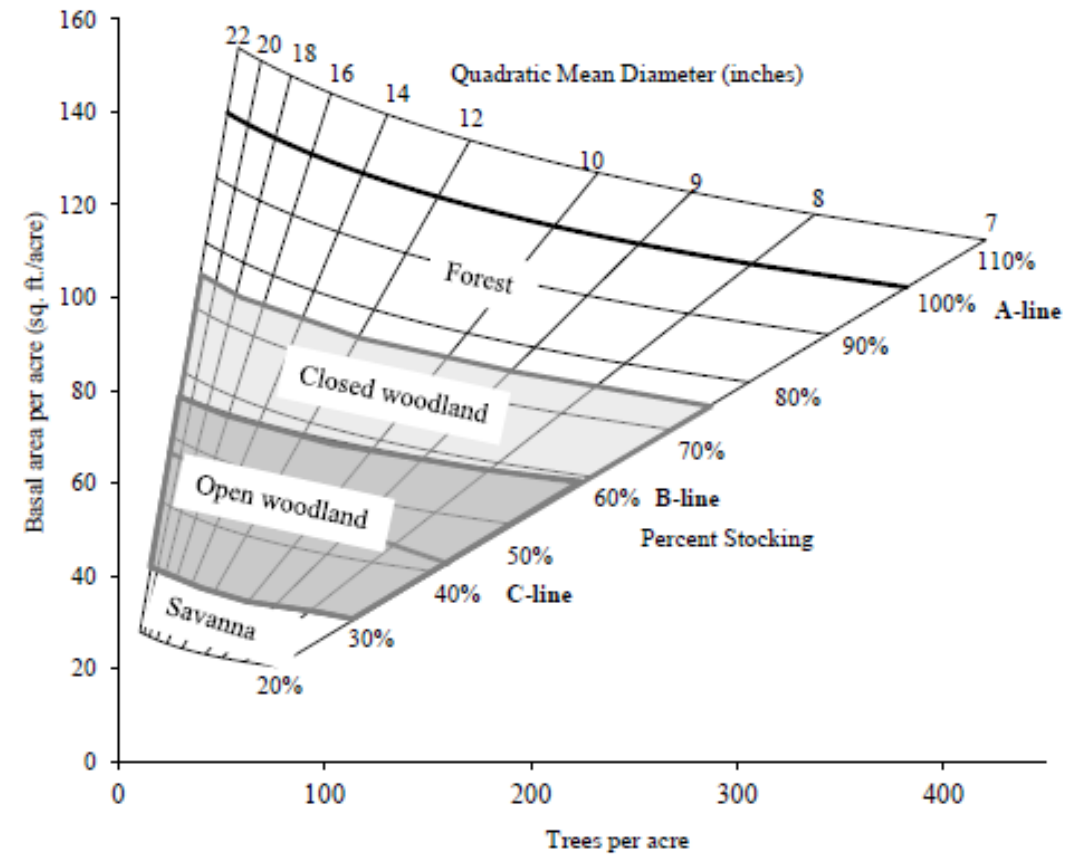
- Quail Habitat Requirements
 - 20-30% native warm season grasses for nesting
 - > 40% forbs and legumes for insect foraging
 - 10-25% shrubby cover for predator escape
- Two options – Plan on cropland or cut forest land –
 - Note: NRCS does not support land use conversion from forest to other land use
- Open canopy savanna habitat commonly is maintained in the **Southeast** where there is Long-leaf pine or mixed pine-oak forest
- Forested savanna is maintained with prescribed fire
- **Where is it appropriate to implement and maintain savanna in MD?**

Gingrich stocking chart for Savanna

- Basal area of 20 – 40 sq. ft./acre
- Stocking rate of 20-30%
- 10-100 trees per acre depending on DBH (diameter at breast height)



Pictured: Oak-pine savannas in the Pocomoke State Forest.



Kabrick et. al 2022 National Silvicultural Workshop

Forested savanna in Maryland

- What areas would have naturally supported open canopy?
 - 12% of the Eastern Shore is comprised of excessively drained sandy soils (230,000 acres)
 - Xeric dunes represent 6% of those sandy soils (14,000 acres)
 - Open canopy was historically maintained by wildfire or Native American communities
- Many forests have been replaced by or have grown up in a monoculture of Loblolly Pine

Considerations

What is the species composition?

- Pine
- Hardwood
- Mix pine hardwood

Are the soils hydric?

- Poorly drained hydric soils
- Moderately well drained soils
- Sandy loam or silt loam?

Other

- Invasive species
- Wetlands
- Riparian Areas

Proposed Flow Chart

Is the primary species Loblolly Pine (>80%)?

- If Yes – savanna habitat ok
- If No – check soils

Is the soil moderately well drained to excessively well drained?

- If Yes – savanna habitat ok
- If No (poorly drained to very poorly drained) – look further into soil composition

Are the soils sandy?

- If Yes – savanna habitat ok on mineral flats but not depressions or riparian areas
- If No (silt loam) – no savanna - limit cuts to basal area of 50-60 sq. ft./acre

Question for State Technical Committee

Do we want to promote forest savanna habitat in areas other than xeric dunes?

Do we want to provide financial assistance for savanna habitat in wetland mineral flats with sandy soils?

Structures for Wildlife - 649

- **Birds** – boxes, platforms, snags, brush pile
- **Bats** - boxes
- **Bees** – boxes with cavities
- **Salamanders** – downed wood
- **Turtles** – Basking structures, fence retrofit
- **Fish** – habitat structure
- **Small mammals** – brush pile

Financial assistance available for all programs but typically used in:

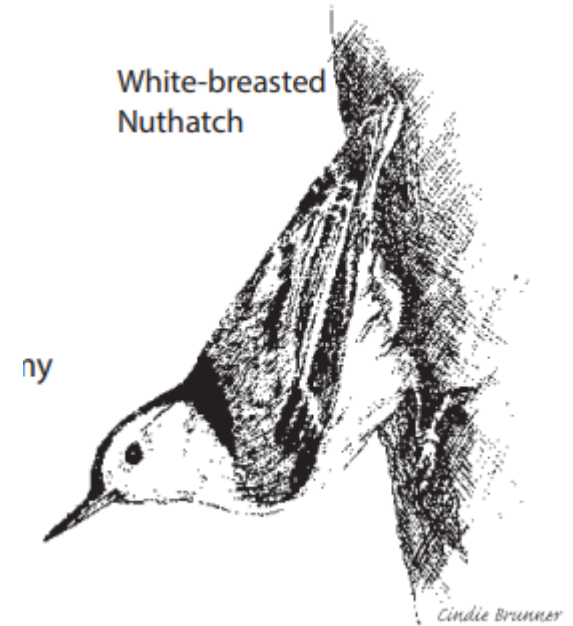
- **Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP)**
 - Financial assistance for practice implementation – 75% or 90%
- **Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)**
 - 5-year contract – minimum payment of \$4000 each year - financial assistance for practice implementation – 75%
 - Implementing 649 can make a participant eligible

Terrestrial Habitat Resource Concern

- If the structures for wildlife CPS is implemented, what is the minimum # bird boxes needed to address the resource concern?

Considerations:

- Condition of existing habitat – snags, DBH of trees in the forest
- # of bird boxes / acre
- Type of bird boxes



Questions for State Technical Committee

Can bird boxes address the lack of cavities for cavity nesting birds?

If so, is 1 bird box per 10 acres appropriate as a minimum?