

Attachment J

Initiative Name and Acronym: Northern Plains–Migratory Bird Habitat Initiative (NP–MBHI)

Initiative Description/Summary:

The NP-MBHI is supported by WHIP, EQIP, WRP, and GRP to provide producers in approved states with assistance to implement conservation practices specifically targeted to enhance habitat for migratory birds, improve water quality and quantity, and increase grassland health within the Prairie Pothole Region (PPR).

NP-MBHI is governed by a Board of Directors, chaired by the RCs and composed of the State Conservationists of included states. Adoption and modification of this guidance shall be reviewed and approved through the Board of Directors, assisted by the Initiative Coordinator.

Approved or Participating States:

- Iowa, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota

Program Contact Information:

EQIP: Mark Rose at (202) 690-2621; mark.rose@wdc.usda.gov
WHIP: Albert Cerna, (202) 720-9358, albert.cerna@wdc.usda.gov
WRP – Jessica Groves, (202) 720-1067, jessica.groves@wdc.usda.gov
GRP – Elizabeth Crane-Wexler, (202) 720-0242, elizabeth.crane-wexler@wdc.usda.gov
NP-MBHI Coordinator – vacant (Martin Lowenfish, (202)-690-4979, martin.lowenfish@wdc.usda.gov)

ProTracts Requirements:

1. Subaccount Guidance:

State Conservationists (STCs) will select the **Northern Plains MBHI** sub-account type in ProTracts for administration of funds related to the Initiative. The funding pool sub-accounts must be assigned the name of **NP-MBHI - (project or local name if applicable)** for both EQIP and WHIP funds, to facilitate monitoring of data in ProTracts.

2. Application, Evaluation, and Ranking Tool Guidance – Choice Lists and Matrix Data:

- **Approved Land Types to be populated in ProTracts AERT:**

States must assign the following land uses as eligible for this initiative. (Other land uses are not authorized for NP-MBHI)

Required Land Use
Crop
Grazed Range
Native/Naturalized Pasture
Pasture
Wildlife

- **Approved Natural Resource Concerns to be populated in ProTracts AERT:**

States must assign the following natural resource concerns for this initiative (Other resource concerns are not authorized for GoMI).

Plant Condition
Noxious and Invasive Plants
Fish and Wildlife
Habitat Fragmentation
Inadequate Cover/Shelter
Inadequate Food
T&E Species: Declining Species, Species of Concern
Threatened and Endangered Fish and Wildlife Species
Water Quality

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Excessive Nutrients and Organics in Surface Water
Excessive Suspended Sediment and Turbidity in Surface Water
Water Quantity
Excessive Runoff, Flooding, or Ponding
Excessive Subsurface Water

Note: No additional resource concerns may be added or used in ProTracts AERT to support this initiative.

• **Approved Conservation Practices to be populated in ProTracts AERT:**

Contracts developed under NP-MBHI must include at least one of the applicable core practices, or must be completing a conservation system that supports core practices that are documented as already applied on the land under contract.

Core Practices	
Practice Name	Practice Code
Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management	644
Upland Wildlife Habitat Management	645

Supporting Practices that States may offer to support this initiative:

Supporting Practices	
Practice Name	Practice Code
Conservation Cover	327
Cover Crop	340
Access Control	472
Obstruction Removal	500
Forage Harvest Management	511
Prescribed Grazing	528
Range Planting	550
Wetland Restoration	647

Note: The use of cover crop (Practice Code 340) in cropland systems is the only instance where a supporting practice may be used without an associated core practice. All other contracts developed under the Initiative must include at least one of the applicable core practices, or must support core practices documented as already applied on the land unit(s) under contract.

• **AERT Practice-Resource Concern Matrix**

States will populate the approved conservation practices in the ProTracts AERT and associate all approved resource concerns designated "C", "X", or "System" as indicated in the GoMI practice-CPPE matrix at the end of these guidelines. Within the matrix, the designations "C", "X" and "System" indicate:

- "C" = Core Practice required to be offered;
- "X" = Supporting Practice optional to be offered;
- "System" = if offered for the indicated resource concern, the practice must be implemented as part of a system of practices that addresses the resource concern indicated on the practice-resource concern matrix.

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3. Application, Evaluation, and Ranking Tool Guidance – Ranking Criteria Questions:

The total ranking points associated with initiative are distributed in AERT and approved ranking questions as follows:

AERT Level	Maximum Points	Point Percentage
National Level Ranking Questions	250	25%
State Level Ranking Questions	400	40%
Local Level Ranking Questions	250	25%
Efficiency Score	100	10%
Total Points for this initiative:	1,000	100%

The following are detailed instructions for populating ranking questions and points in ProTracts AERT.

National Level Ranking Criteria Requirements:

National ranking questions are established in ProTracts by the national office. By national policy, national priorities must account for 250 points or 25% of total points.

State Level Ranking Criteria Requirements:

State ranking questions must prioritize NP-MBHI projects that address priority needs of each state, consistent with the overall NP-MBHI objectives. These questions will be entered into ProTracts as the “State Ranking Questions” section of the AERT by each state.

Applications within the NP-MBHI will be screened according to sub-regions based on “ASFWS Waterfowl Breeding Pairs Maps” (Map A) and “Prevented Planting Occurrence Maps” (Map B). Applications will be set to **High, Medium,** or **Low** priority status in ProTracts based on the State-specific criteria below.

• **High**

North Dakota and South Dakota: Land has more than 25 breeding duck pairs per square mile or is in the Red River Watershed AND resides in a county with greater than 60,000 acres of prevented planting.

Montana: Land has more than 25 breeding duck pairs per square mile AND lies within the Sprague’s Pipit core area AND resides in a county with greater than 5,000 acres of prevented planting.

Minnesota: Land has more than 25 breeding duck pairs per square mile AND resides in a county with greater than 40,000 acres of prevented planting.

Iowa: Land contains all targeted priority wetland complex areas identified within “Identification of Potential Wetland Complex Restoration in the Prairie Pothole Region in Iowa” AND any expiring Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) wetland practices within the PPR.

• **Medium**

North Dakota: Land either has 25 breeding pairs per square mile or is in the Red River Watershed OR resides in a county with greater than 60,000 acres of prevented planting.

South Dakota: Land either has 25 breeding pairs or greater OR resides in a county with greater than 40,000 acres of prevented planting.

Montana: Land resides in a county with greater than 5,000 acres of prevented planting and EITHER of the following: Land lies within Sprague’s Pipit core area OR has less than 25 breeding duck pairs per square mile (but still supporting breeding waterfowl on planning area).

Minnesota: Land either has 25 breeding pairs per square mile OR resides in a county with between 20,000 and 40,000 acres of prevented planting.

Iowa: For WRP: Areas 80 acres or larger within one mile of a permanently protected wetland or grassland area.

Iowa: For Cover Crops: Areas less than 80 acres within one mile of a permanently protected wetland or grassland area AND within one mile of an existing CRP wetland.

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North Dakota and South Dakota: Land does not support 25 breeding pairs per square mile AND does not reside in a county with greater than 60,000 acres of prevented planting.

Montana: Land resides in a county with greater than 5,000 prevented planting acres AND within Sprague's Pipit core area AND within 1.5 miles of suitable waterfowl brood habitat.

Minnesota: Land does not support 25 breeding pairs per square mile AND does not reside in a county with greater than 20,000 acres of prevented planting.

Iowa: Areas within one mile of an existing CRP grassland practice.

Screened applications with High and Medium Priority will further be evaluated for environmental benefits found in CPM 440 Part 512, Subpart C, 512.24 & 512.25. States must contact the NP-MBHI coordinator before funding Low Priority applications. Funding priority points will be assigned to applications by employing the following ranking criteria:

- Provide a complex of wetland types.
- Provide benefits to priority migratory bird species of concern. U.S. Fish and Wildlife breeding maps (Upland Accessibility by Breeding Duck Pairs in the Prairie Pothole Region). Ranking points will be based on the amount of breeding pairs the land supports.
- Provide large blocks of nesting habitat adjacent to wetlands providing excellent nesting cover for waterfowl and other grassland nesting birds.
- Implement measures that will meet Resource Objectives A, B, and C.
- Provide agricultural alternatives to landscapes that continually experience wet conditions.
- Provide connectivity between wetlands in a wetland complex. Points will be based on the size of the connectivity area. Provide restored upland cover of native grassland species.
- Provide longer contract term to ensure longevity of applied conservation practices.

The STC will seek recommendations from the State Technical Committee in developing the ranking criteria and associated points.

- Provide a conservation plan consisting of bundled conservation practices.
- Provide opportunities for grassland established in CRP to remain in grass following program expiration.
- Provide habitat for other targeted or species of concern.

STCs will ensure all High priority applications in their States are funded before funding applications of Medium Priority.

Local Level Ranking Criteria Requirements:

Local ranking questions are approved and entered into ProTracts at the State level.

Local level ranking questions must account for a total of 250 points or at least 25% of total points available.

Cost Effectiveness Calculation:

By agency policy, the amount of points associated with the AERT cost efficiency calculation must be 100 points or 10% of total points available.

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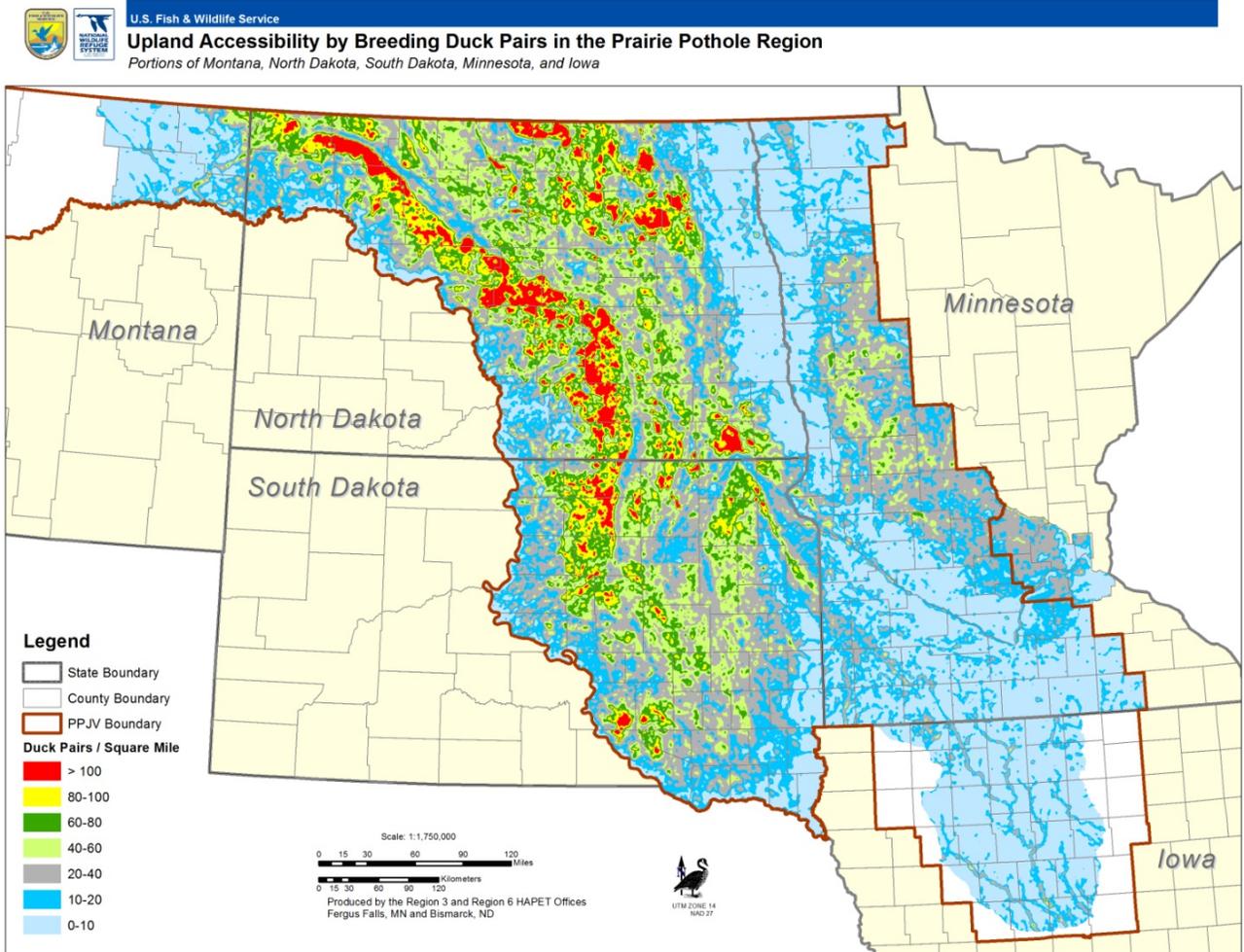
NP-MBHI Practice – CPPE Matrix

NRCS Approved Resource Concerns		Water Quantity-Excessive Runoff, Flooding, or Ponding	Water Quantity-Excessive Subsurface Water	Water Quality-Excessive Nutrients and Organics in Surface Water	Water Quality-Excessive Suspended Sediment and Turbidity in Surface Water	Plant Condition-Noxious and Invasive Plants
NRCS Natural Resource Concern Categories for ProTracts AERT. "C" = Core Practice required to be offered; "X" = Supporting Practice optional to be offered; "System" = if offered, practice must be implemented as a system addressing the indicated resource concern.						
Conservation Practice	Code					
Access Control	472	System	X	X	X	X
Conservation Cover	327	X	X	X	X	X
Cover Crop	340	X	X	X	X	X
Forage Harvest Management	511	X	X	X	X	X
Obstruction Removal	500	System	System	System	System	System
Prescribed Grazing	528	X	X	X	X	X
Range Planting	550	X	System	X	X	X
Upland Wildlife Habitat Management	645	C, System	C	C, System	C	C
Wetland Restoration	657	X	System	X	X	X
Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management	644	C	C, System	C, System	C	C

NRCS Approved Resource Concerns		Fish and Wildlife-Inadequate Cover/Shelter	Fish and Wildlife-Inadequate Food	Fish and Wildlife-Threatened and Endangered Fish and Wildlife Species	Fish and Wildlife-Habitat Fragmentation	Fish and Wildlife-T&E Species: Declining Species, Species of Concern
NRCS Natural Resource Concern Categories for ProTracts AERT. "C" = Core Practice required to be offered; "X" = Supporting Practice optional to be offered; "System" = if offered, practice must be implemented as a system addressing the indicated resource concern.						
Conservation Practice	Code					
Access Control	472	X	X	X	X	X
Conservation Cover	327	X	X	X	X	X
Cover Crop	340	X	X	System	X	System
Forage Harvest Management	511	X	X	System	X	System
Obstruction Removal	500	System	System	System	System	System
Prescribed Grazing	528	X	X	System	X	System
Range Planting	550	X	X	System	X	System
Upland Wildlife Habitat Management	645	C	C	C	C	C
Wetland Restoration	657	X	X	X	X	X
Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management	644	C	C	C	C	C

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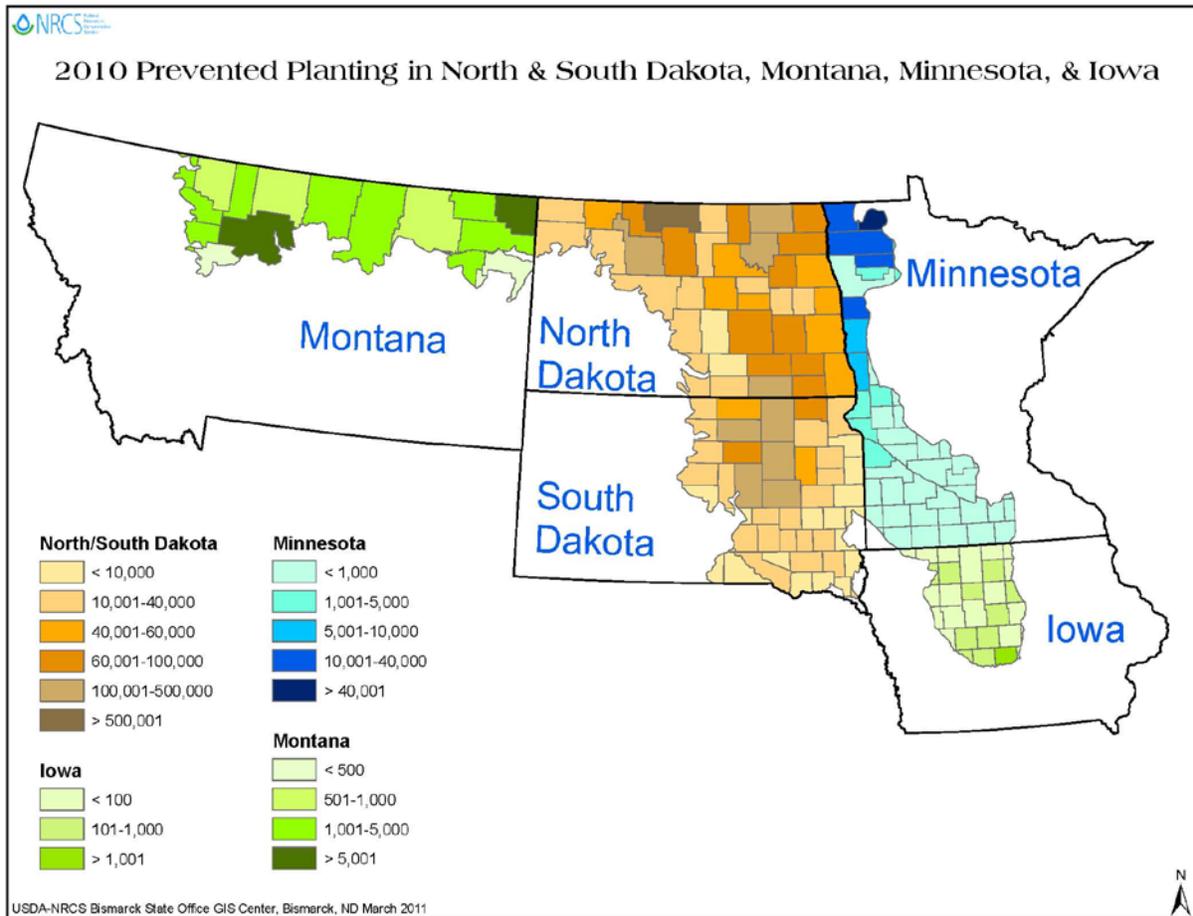
Map A



Map provided by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

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Map B



Map provided by USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service