

307.32 Working Lands for Wildlife

Name and Acronym: Working Lands for Wildlife (WLFW)

Initiative Description

The WLFW initiative was launched through a [partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service](#) (FWS) to target conservation practices that improve agricultural and forest productivity and enhance wildlife habitat. NRCS provides technical and financial assistance to participants who voluntarily make improvements to working lands. The initiative's success is measured by the effects on the habitat needs of the targeted species, as these species' habitats benefit a much broader suit of species and are representative of healthy, functioning ecosystems.

Some species initiatives offer regulatory predictability for the Endangered Species Act (ESA). This is a commitment from the FWS, formalized in a conference report, conference opinion, or biological opinion, to exempt NRCS clients from incidental take for an extended period if a species becomes protected under the ESA. This commitment remains intact as long as conservation practices are implemented as addressed during the conferencing or consultation process and included in an NRCS conservation plan ([190 GM § 410.22\(D\)\(34\)](#)). The current conference reports, conference opinions, and biological opinions are linked in the Conservation Measures section of this exhibit.

The WLFW model is defined by six elements.

- 1) Trust and Credibility: Taking a community, grassroots approach to conservation that is based on the principles of neighborliness.
- 2) Shared Vision: Finding the common link between wildlife, agriculture, and forestry that invites cooperation over conflict.
- 3) Strategic Approach: Directing resources where the biological returns are the highest.
- 4) Accountability: Using science to measure conservation effectiveness and quantify resulting outcomes.
- 5) Leverage: Multiplying investments through partnerships that achieve more conservation.
- 6) Regulatory Predictability: ESA predictability that provides peace of mind to participating landowners that they can enact conservation without concern over additional requirements if the species becomes listed under the ESA.

Species and Participating States

Initiative	Species	Participating States
Golden-Winged Warbler (GWWA)	Golden-Winged Warbler (GWWA) <i>Vermivora chrysoptera</i>	Georgia, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia
Gopher Tortoise (GOTO)	Gopher Tortoise (GOTO) <i>Gopherus polyphemus</i>	Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina
Lesser Prairie-Chicken Initiative (LPCI)	Lesser Prairie-Chicken (LEPC) <i>Tympanuchus pallidicinctus</i>	Colorado, Kansas, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas
Monarch Butterfly (MOBU)	Monarch Butterfly (MOBU) <i>Danaus plexippus plexippus</i>	Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, Oklahoma, Texas, Wisconsin
Sage Grouse Initiative (SGI)	Greater Sage-Grouse (GRSG) <i>Centrocercus urophasianus</i>	California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, Wyoming
	Gunnison Sage-Grouse (GUSG) <i>Centrocercus minimus</i>	Colorado, Utah
Southwestern Willow Flycatcher (SWFL)	Southwestern Willow Flycatcher (SWFL) <i>Empidonax traillii extimus</i>	Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah

Contact Information

For questions specific to WLFW, please contact the WLFW national coordinator, the WLFW east coordinator, or the WLFW west coordinator in the Areawide Planning Branch. For general programmatic questions, please contact the branch chief of the Programs Branch in the Financial Assistance Program Division or the national biologist of the Ecological Sciences Division.

Conservation Practices

The core and supporting practices listed below are analyzed in species-specific FWS consultations. More details about the consultation documents and predictability are provided in the Conservation Measures section below.

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Conservation plans developed for WLFW species must include at least one core practice from the following table. Also, all monarch butterfly plans must include Upland Wildlife Habitat Management (Code 645) in addition to any core and supporting practices. However, Code 645 is not required in contracts for monarch butterfly financial assistance.

Code	Core Conservation Practice	GWWA	GOTO	GRSG	GUSG	LPCI	MOBU	SWFL
314	Brush Management					X	X	
327	Conservation Cover						X	
338	Prescribed Burning					X	X	
386	Field Border						X	
390	Riparian Herbaceous Cover						X	
395	Stream Habitat Improvement & Management							X
420	Wildlife Habitat Planting						X	
511	Forage Harvest Management						X	
528	Prescribed Grazing				X	X	X	
550	Range Planting						X	
643	Restoration of Rare or Declining Natural Communities	X	X					X
644	Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management	X						X
645	Upland Wildlife Habitat Management	X	X	X	X	X		X
647	Early Successional Habitat Development/ Management	X	X				X	X

Conservation plans may also include supporting conservation practices. The following table lists supporting conservation practices that may be included in plans and contracts for WLFW species.

Code	Supporting Conservation Practice	GWWA	GOTO	GRSG	GUSG	LPCI	MOBU	SWFL
314	Brush Management	X	X	X	X			X
315	Herbaceous Weed Treatment	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
324	Deep Tillage	X						
325	High Tunnel System						X	
327	Conservation Cover	X	X	X	X	X		X
328	Conservation Crop Rotation			X	X		X	
329	Residue and Tillage Management, No-Till						X	
338	Prescribed Burning	X	X	X	X			
340	Cover Crop			X	X	X	X	
342	Critical Area Planting	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
345	Residue and Tillage Management, Reduced Till						X	
351	Well Decommissioning					X	X	
356	Dike and Levee						X	
362	Diversion				X		X	
378	Pond			X	X	X	X	
380	Windbreak/Shelterbelt Establishment and Renovation			X	X			
382	Fence	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
383	Fuel Break			X				
384	Woody Residue Treatment			X	X	X		X
386	Field Border	X						X
388	Irrigation Field Ditch			X	X			
390	Riparian Herbaceous Cover			X	X			X
391	Riparian Forest Buffer			X			X	X
393	Filter Strip						X	
394	Firebreak	X	X	X	X	X	X	
396	Aquatic Organism Passage						X	
410	Grade Stabilization Structure			X	X	X		X
420	Wildlife Habitat Planting		X			X		
430	Irrigation Pipeline			X	X			
430 AA– GG	Irrigation Water Conveyance- Pipeline				X			
441	Irrigation System, Microirrigation			X	X			X
442	Sprinkler System			X	X			

Code	Supporting Conservation Practice	GWWA	GOTO	GRSG	GUSG	LPCI	MOBU	SWFL
443	Irrigation System, Surface and Subsurface			X	X			
449	Irrigation Water Management			X	X			X
472	Access Control	X		X	X	X	X	X
484	Mulching	X		X			X	X
490	Tree/Shrub Site Preparation	X	X	X				X
500	Obstruction Removal			X	X	X	X	X
511	Forage Harvest Management			X	X	X		X
512	Pasture and Hay Planting		X	X	X	X		X
516	Livestock Pipeline		X	X	X	X	X	X
521 A–D	Pond Sealing or Lining			X				
528	Prescribed Grazing	X	X	X				X
533	Pumping Plant		X	X	X	X	X	X
548	Grazing Land Mechanical Treatment			X	X			
550	Range Planting		X	X	X	X		
560	Access Road			X	X			
561	Heavy Use Area Protection		X	X	X	X	X	X
574	Spring Development			X	X	X		
575	Trails and Walkways							X
576	Livestock Shelter Structure			X				X
578	Stream Crossing				X			X
580	Streambank and Shoreline Protection			X				X
582	Open Channel							X
584	Channel Bed Stabilization			X				X
587	Structure for Water Control			X	X		X	X
590	Nutrient Management						X	
595	Pest Management Conservation System		X	X			X	X
606	Subsurface Drain						X	
612	Tree/Shrub Establishment	X	X	X	X	X		X
614	Watering Facility		X	X	X	X	X	X
620	Underground Outlet						X	
638	Water and Sediment Control Basin				X			
642	Water Well		X	X	X	X	X	X

Code	Supporting Conservation Practice	GWWA	GOTO	GRSG	GUSG	LPCI	MOBU	SWFL
643	Restoration of Rare or Declining Natural Communities			X	X	X	X	
644	Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management			X	X		X	
649	Structures for Wildlife			X	X	X		
654	Road/Trail/Landing Closure and Treatment			X	X			
655	Forest Trails and Landings	X	X					X
657	Wetland Restoration			X			X	X
659	Wetland Enhancement						X	X
666	Forest Stand Improvement	X	X					X

Conservation Measures

FWS worked closely with NRCS to determine the effects of individual conservation practices and develop practice-specific conservation measures to avoid, ameliorate, or minimize adverse effects. Conservation measures must be included in conservation plans for all contracts funded through the WLFW Environmental Quality Incentives Program. WLFW provides participants with ESA regulatory predictability after conservation practices and associated conservation measures are implemented, regardless of funding source.

Required conservation measures and other planning considerations can be found in the species-specific FWS consultation documents linked below. These documents can also be found in the WLFW SharePoint folder titled [NI-linked guidance](#).

- [Golden-Winged Warbler Conservation Practices Measures \(August 20, 2012\)](#)
- [Gopher Tortoise Biological Conference Opinion \(August 23, 2021\)](#)
- [Lesser Prairie-Chicken Initiative Great Plains Grasslands Biome Biological Opinion \(May 24, 2023\)](#)
- [Monarch Butterfly Conference Report \(November 2, 2021\)](#)
- [SGL Greater Sage-Grouse Conference Report \(August 2, 2016\)](#)
- [SGL Gunnison Sage-Grouse Biological Opinion \(September 29, 2015\)](#)
- [Southwestern Willow Flycatcher Biological Opinion \(July 9, 2019\)](#)

Participants must also identify missing habitat components and species-specific threats for each plan by completing a wildlife habitat evaluation guide or state-approved equivalent (e.g., threats checklist, Stream Visual Assessment Protocol). Wildlife habitat evaluation guides or equivalent for each species can be found in the Field Office Technical Guide. Please seek assistance from your respective state biologist on how to conduct habitat evaluations.