Wildlife Management Practices
Event Description

Objectives

Wildlife management practices are the tools, techniques, and methods that wildlife professionals use to restore or improve wildlife habitat.

- Juniors work as a team to identify wildlife management practices which benefit selected wildlife species.
- Seniors work individually to evaluate habitat and recommend wildlife management practices for selected wildlife species at a designated management site.

Overview

Each wildlife species can benefit from a number of wildlife management practices which wildlife professionals use to help populations grow, or in the case of nuisance animals, limit their population size and nuisance behaviors. A table has been prepared for each ecoregion linking the species with recommended wildlife management practices. For example, practices which create edge and habitat diversity are selected for white-tailed deer.

- A general description of each wildlife management practice is available in the study guide.
- Specific information on recommended wildlife management practices for each species can be found in the Wildlife Species Descriptions.

Junior Event

In the Junior competition, the team completes a table which lists wildlife management practices in rows and up to eight wildlife species in columns. Junior teams are basically replicating the study table for up to eight species selected by judges. Eligible wildlife species are from the announced region only. This exercise is intended to help Juniors prepare for the Senior WHEP contest when they become eligible. For the Senior contest, contestants judge habitat individually and select which practices are appropriate for selected species at a particular site.

The team places an "X" in each box corresponding to all wildlife management practices for each species. For example, if Bluegill is the selected species for Eastern Deciduous Forest ecoregion, correct practices are: livestock management, repair spillway/levee, water control structures, decrease harvest, increase harvest, wildlife or fish survey, construct fish pond, control aquatic vegetation, fertilize/lime fish pond, reduce turbidity in fish pond, restock fish pond, streams: create pools and streams: remove fish.

Note that not all wildlife management practices are listed for each ecoregion. Only those practices appropriate for the ecoregion are listed. Refer to the specific wildlife management practice chart for the announced ecoregion to study for this event.

Contest Rules
1. This is a team event for Juniors. Talking is allowed.
2. A maximum of eight species from the announced region will be listed on the scorecard.
3. One scorecard will be provided to each <u>team</u>. Each team member needs to write his/her name on the scorecard.
4. It is suggested that one team member with a clipboard and pencil serve as recorder. All team members are expected to participate.
5. On the scorecard, mark an "X" in the box for each wildlife management practice recommended for each species.
6. The "X" should completely fill the box from corner to corner.
7. Contestants will have 30 minutes to complete this event.

Senior Event

Seniors must know which wildlife management practices are appropriate for each species and judge which practices are appropriate for a designated management site. For example, the contestant should know "Create Snags" is a wildlife management practice for wood ducks, and then judge if ample nest cavities are available. A management site will be designated for contestants to evaluate. The management site may or may not be the same area used for writing the wildlife management plan.

Management recommendations in this event should consider each species separately and independently of other species, as if each one was the only species considered on the site. Do NOT consider whether a management practice is beneficial for one species but harmful to another. As a team, you will consider these species/habitat interactions when writing the wildlife management plan.

Note that not all wildlife management practices are listed for each region. Only those practices appropriate for the region are listed. Refer to the specific wildlife management practice chart for the announced region to study for this event. Descriptions of the wildlife management practices are available as study materials. Also, species descriptions include beneficial wildlife management practices and their relevance to each species.

Prior to starting this event, information describing the field conditions will be provided to contestants about the designated management site, either verbally and/or in writing. The field condition sheet describes landowner objectives. Based on this information, an "X" should be marked in the box for each wildlife management practice recommended on a given site.

Contest Rules
1. Seniors work individually on this event, thus no talking is allowed.
2. Read the field condition sheet carefully.
3. A maximum of eight species will be listed on the scorecard.
4. On the scorecard, mark an "X" in the box for each appropriate wildlife management practice.

5. The "X" should completely fill the box from corner to corner. (Note: A drill press is used to place holes through the scorecards to facilitate scoring. Writing a tiny "x" in the middle of the box may result in a loss of points.)
6. Contestants will have 30 minutes to complete this event.

Hints & Insights
The field condition sheet may offer clues about harvest recommendations. For example, if the field condition sheet indicates wild turkeys are increasing, check "Increase Harvest" on the scorecard. If the field condition sheet indicates wild turkeys are decreasing, check "Decrease Harvest" on the scorecard. If the field condition sheet states wild turkeys are increasing and the landowner wants the population to continue growing, then check "Decrease Harvest" on the scorecard. If no mention is made of the population size or goal for wild turkey, or that the population is stable, check both "Decrease Harvest" and "Increase Harvest" on the scorecard.

When deciding whether or not to recommend a wildlife management practice, landowner objectives should determine which practices you recommend. Assess current conditions and determine if a wildlife management practice needs to be applied within the next year. Keep in mind the benefits of a wildlife management practice may not be seen for years. For example, planting mast trees to produce a food source for wood ducks is a sound practice, but those seedlings will not produce acorns for five to 20 years, depending on the species of oak planted. Some of the practices may seem contradictory. For example, Ponds: Deepen Edges discourages the growth of emergent aquatic vegetation, while Water Control Structures could encourage growth. Again, landowner objectives should determine which practice you recommend.

From previous contests, many Seniors make the mistake of automatically selecting all the wildlife management practices listed on the chart for a species. However, at times, the best recommendation is not implementing the practice at all if the habitat is already suitable. For example, do not select "Plant Trees" if the land being judged is a forest full of trees. Wildlife biologists tend to be cautious about implementing unnecessary management practices and destroying otherwise good habitat. Remember the adage, **"if in doubt, leave it out."** Judges have been known to write a field condition sheet in such a manner that only a couple, or even *zero,* management practices were necessary for a particular species!

Scoring Wildlife Management Practices
Understanding how this event is scored may help you perform better and receive a higher score.

Following is an extremely important **helpful hint**:
- When marking a Wildlife Management Practices scorecard, make sure the "X" in the box goes from one corner to the other. If this is not done correctly, the team risks losing points, because of the way the scores are tabulated.
- A drill press is used to place holes through the scorecards to facilitate scoring. Writing a tiny "x" in the middle of the box will result in a loss of points. An "x" that is not seen may be counted as incorrect.

All boxes are counted in the scoring. For example, for Eastern Deciduous Forest ecoregion, there are 240 possible correct answers because there are 30 wildlife management practices × 8 possible species on an answer sheet. Therefore, do not put an X in each box on the chart. This is especially true for Senior competitors when evaluating habitat.

Participants are given credit for:
• putting an "X" in the appropriate boxes; and
• leaving boxes blank where no "X" is indicated on the wildlife management practice chart.

Answers will be incorrect if:
• boxes that should be marked are left blank; and
• boxes that should not be marked are marked.