

## ***Technical, Financial help for fish and wildlife habitat***

If you're interested in getting technical and financial help to establish wildlife habitat on your land, look beyond the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) programs with wildlife in the name. Why? Because other USDA programs have wildlife habitat as one of their goals, and they may offer more financial incentives than the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP). And, you may be able to get into those programs right away.

"WHIP is a good program, but landowners who look only to it for habitat help are making a mistake," says Pete Heard of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Heard, Director for the NRCS Wildlife Habitat Management Institute, says the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP), the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Grassland Reserve Program also offer excellent opportunities for habitat help.

The WRP offers land easement and rental payments as well as substantial cost-share for installing practices. The program was created to restore, protect and enhance wetlands. Restored or natural, wetlands and the land that surrounds them offer about the best variety of habitat you can find for wildlife.

Then, too, habitat can be created with the EQIP program, even though the primary goal of an EQIP contract may be to improve water quality or reduce erosion. The EQIP program encompasses water conservation and improvement of grazing land and pastures.

**Get more info.** For more information, stop by the Bert J. Harris Jr. Agriculture Center on March 7<sup>th</sup> for the Second Annual Conservation Connection Day. USDA's Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) will have a booth and will have staff available to answer your questions. Or you can stop at our office at 4505 George Blvd. in Sebring. You can also visit the NRCS Wildlife Habitat Management Institute's website at [www.whmi.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.whmi.nrcs.usda.gov) or the NRCS home web site at [www.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov). The Farm Service Agency office, state fish and game, or a wildlife group can also provide help. Another web option: [www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/farmbill/2002/](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/farmbill/2002/) or [www.fb-net.org](http://www.fb-net.org)

*A number of USDA programs can help you establish wildlife habitat on land you own.*

### **Did you know....**

More than 70 percent of the land in the United States is privately owned; accordingly, most wildlife in the country depends on private citizens for the habitat that determines their wellbeing.