

**Maintaining or Improving Natural Resources**  
**Amendment to NOSB Organic System Plan Template**  
**Approved August 16, 2005**

**Introduction:**

The NOSB Crops Committee, with assistance from the Wild Farm Alliance (WFA) and National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT), developed this recommendation to implement the existing biodiversity conservation requirements of the National Organic Program (NOP) rule by adding language to the Natural Resources section of the NOSB's existing model Organic System Plan.

**Background:**

The NOP rule definition of "organic production" includes requirements to "promote ecological balance and conserve biodiversity." The preamble to the Final Rule explicitly states, "The use of 'conserve' establishes that the producer must initiate practices to support biodiversity and avoid, to the extent practicable, any activities that would diminish it." In section 205.200, the rule states, "Production practices...must maintain or improve the natural resources of the operation, including soil, water, wetlands, woodlands and wildlife."

The Independent Organic Inspectors Association first called attention to the fact that biodiversity educational materials and criteria were needed for their inspector trainings and requested that the Wild Farm Alliance (WFA) assist them with this effort. Through support of the Organic Farming Research Foundation and others, WFA formed a broad-based working group of organic farmers, certifiers and conservationists to develop biodiversity criteria and supporting guides for farmers, inspectors, and certifiers.

At the NOSB's fall 2004 meeting, WFA requested that the Board approve biodiversity criteria into their model Organic System Plan. The request was sent to the Crops Committee and over the winter revisions were made. The Board then unanimously agreed to approve draft text on biodiversity conservation at their spring 2005 meeting. Further refinement occurred with assistance from the National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT). The recommended text below is the product of that collaboration.

Many certifiers have adopted the NOSB's model OSP forms, even though use of the forms is not required for accreditation. The existence and use of the model forms helps bring consistency to inspection, certification, and accreditation processes. Approval of the biodiversity amendment to the NOSB's model OSP will provide transparent and predictable guidance to farmers, inspectors, certifiers, and accreditation auditors.

## **D. NATURAL RESOURCES:**

NOP Rule 205.2 defines Organic Production as a production system managed in accordance with the Act and its regulations to respond to site-specific conditions by integrating cultural, biological, and mechanical practices that foster cycling of resources, promote ecological balance, and conserve biodiversity. NOP Rule 205.200 and 205.203(a) requires that production practices maintain or improve natural resources (soil and water quality, wetlands, woodlands and wildlife) of the operation.

## **BIODIVERSITY MANAGEMENT**

### **Whole Farm Biodiversity Considerations:**

**Does your field map include features such as hedgerows, woodlands, wetlands, riparian zones, and special habitats?**

yes     no

**List wildlife and dominant native plants present on the farm: (note priority species)**

---

---

### **What steps do you take to plan/provide for biodiversity conservation?**

understand farm's location within watershed     ascertain what wildlife and dominant native plants existed on the land prior to farming     learn about regional natural areas and conservation priorities     work with neighbors/others to enhance biodiversity (connectivity, restoration, etc.)     other\* describe/explain:

### **How do you manage water for the needs of crops/livestock, native species and riparian ecosystems?**

plant regionally appropriate crops     conserve water     manage water for priority species  
 retain/restore vegetated riparian buffers/wetlands     protect/improve natural hydrology/ecological function of riparian area     other\*

### **Uncultivated Area Biodiversity:**

**What actions do you take to provide habitat for pollinators, insect predators, birds and bats?**

bird/bat/bee boxes     hedgerows/windbreaks     maintain/provide natural roosting/nesting/foraging sites     other\*

### **How are you restoring and/or protecting natural areas?**

manage for native plants/wildlife specific to the site     preserve/restore wildlife corridors/large blocks of habitat     establish legal conservation areas     native habitats not converted to farmland since certification     other\*

**List problem invasives:**

---

### **What actions do you take to control invasive plant/animal species, especially those threatening natural areas?**

learn about invasives     use weed- and pest-free seed/planting stock/soil amendments/mulches     monitor for new introductions and control immediately     suppress invasives using organic methods     other\*

**Cropland Area Biodiversity:**

**How do you conserve and provide habitat for wildlife?**

- companion planting/intercropping  crop diversity  wildlife-friendly fences  
 manage fallow fields for wildlife  other\*

**Do you schedule farm practices to benefit wildlife?**

- avoid nests during breeding season  stagger mowing/tilling practices  plan fields to leave food/cover for wildlife  other\*

**Biodiversity When Livestock are Involved:**

**How do you protect riparian areas and sensitive habitats?**

- fence to minimize impacting wildlife  control sensitive area access  prevent bank erosion  animals fed away from water  other\*

**What are you doing to improve your pasture or rangeland?**

- prevent overgrazing  reseed/protect trampled/eroded areas  plant native pasture  
 ecologically-sound grazing system  prescribed burning  other\*

**What wildlife-friendly management practices do you use?**

- guard animals  grazing scheduled when predation pressure low  livestock spend night in protected area  circumstances of livestock death documented  other\*  list problems with predators or other wildlife: \_\_\_\_\_

**Have you assessed the farm for biodiversity problems and greatest opportunities, and developed goals a timeline for biodiversity conservation?  yes  no**

describe/explain: \_\_\_\_\_

**How do you monitor farm biodiversity?**

- visually  species counts  other\*

**Wild Harvest Enterprises Biodiversity:**

**How do you maintain or improve the sustainability of the harvested species?**

- harvest from stable populations  minimize disruption of priority species/sensitive habitats  
 avoid erosion  allow re-establishment  monitor wild crop sustainability  other\*

**\*If you check other, please explain.**

\_\_\_\_\_

***Add the following boxes under the Natural Resources: Water Use:***

**What practices are used to protect water quality?**

- sediment basin  compost/fertilizer stored away from water