

WHEP Activities and Scoring

The National WHEP Invitational comprises 3 activities:

Activity I: Wildlife Challenge

Activity II: On-site Recommendation of Wildlife Management Practices

Activity III-A: Written Wildlife Management Plan

Activity III-B: Oral Reasons for Wildlife Management Plan

These activities may be used as presented, or they may be modified as deemed appropriate for local, regional, or state contests.

Individual Activities

Activities I, II, and III-B will be scored on an individual basis. However, awards for top individuals will be based on the sum of scores from Activity I and Activity II only. Individual scores for Activity III-B do not contribute to the top individual score because each participant gives oral reasons to a different judge.

The top three individual scores within a team for Activities I, II, and III-B will count toward the total overall team score. For teams of four members, the lowest score for each activity will be dropped. For teams of three members, all scores will count.

Activity I: Wildlife Challenge (50 points)

Activity II: On-Site Recommendation of Wildlife Management Practices (50 points)

In case of ties for top individuals (summation of Activities I and II), scores for Activity II (WMPs), then Activity I (if necessary), will be used to break ties.

Team Activity

Activity III will be scored as a team effort and will include scores for Activity III-A and III-B. The written wildlife management plan (Activity III-A) is worth 125 points. Activity III also includes up to 75 points for oral reasons for the written plan (Activity III-B). The maximum score in Activity III-B for each individual is 25 points. Only the top three scores within each team will be counted into the total score for Activity III. Thus, Activity III is worth a maximum of 200 points.

Activity III-A and III-B: Written Wildlife Management Plan and Oral Reasons (200 points)

In the case of ties for the top teams (summation of Activities I, II, and III), summation of the top three individuals in a team for Activity II score will be used to break the tie. If this does not break the tie, then summation of the top 3 individuals for Activity I will be used to break the tie. If that does not break the tie, then the National WHEP committee will decide the next step to determine the winner.

Activity I: Wildlife Challenge (50 Points)

The **Wildlife Challenge** combines wildlife identification and general knowledge. Participants visit stations where they may be presented with a wildlife specimen and questions related to the species. Participants may be asked to identify an animal by specimen or portion of specimen, photo, animal sign, or sound. Alternatively, stations may be located outdoors and questions may be related to various habitat features. Species used in Activity I will be from the ecoregion selected for the contest. Species from **Wetlands** and **Urban** may be included regardless of ecoregion selected for the contest because there are wetlands and urban areas within all ecoregions. If **Wetlands** or **Urban** is selected as the ecoregion for the contest, then species from the surrounding ecoregion also may be included in Activity I.

For example, if the Invitational is held in Maine, and **Northeast Mixed Forest** is selected as the ecoregion for the contest, then species from **Northeast Mixed Forest**, **Wetlands**, and **Urban** may be used in Activity I. If the Invitational is held in Maine and **Wetlands** is selected as the ecoregion for the contest, then species from **Wetlands** and **Northeast Mixed Forest** may be used in Activity I.

When identifying species in the **Wildlife Challenge**, the correct spelling and capitalization must be used in order to receive credit. Refer to **Index of Wildlife Species** beginning on page 69 for proper spelling and capitalization.

The objective of Activity I is to demonstrate knowledge of wildlife identification, ecoregions involved, wildlife management concepts, terminology, wildlife management practices, and the biology and ecology of wildlife species. Questions for Activity I may be from information within **Concepts and Terms, Ecoregions, Wildlife Species, Wildlife Management Practices**, and the **Glossary**.

Wildlife food items and questions pertaining to wildlife foods also may be included in the **Wildlife Challenge**. **Appendix A** provides definitions of various wildlife foods. Refer to species accounts to learn what various species eat.

Example questions for Wildlife Challenge:

Specimen at station is scaled quail.

Name this species. (**scaled quail**)

Is hard mast included in the diet of this species? (**no**)

Specimen at station is a bobcat skull.

This species can be a significant source of mortality for which species?

- a) white-tailed deer
- b) ruffed grouse
- c) **wild turkey**
- d) eastern cottontail
- e) northern bobwhite

Station is in the field along a recently disked firebreak.

What is the management feature you are standing in? (**firebreak**)

Which management practice does this feature facilitate? **Set-back Succession (Prescribed Fire)**

Activity II: On-Site Recommendation of Wildlife Management Practices (WMPs)

Activity II involves recommendation of WMPs to manage wildlife and habitat on a given site. Management recommendations in Activity II should consider each species listed **separately** and WMPs should be recommended as if each species was the only species (focal species) considered on the site. Refer to the WMP chart in the appropriate **Ecoregion**.

Prior to starting Activity II, information will be given about the site (a scenario), either verbally or written (describing field conditions). Based on this information, an "X" should be marked in the box for each WMP recommended. Contestants will have one hour to complete Activity II. This is an individual activity, so no talking or collaboration among team members is allowed.

Scoring Activity II: Wildlife Management Practices (50 points)

Total Score = [(number of correct answers marked by the contestant minus number of incorrect answers marked by the contestant) divided by total number of possible correct answers marked by specialist in charge] multiplied by 50.

The total number of possible correct answers is the number of Xs marked on the card by the specialist(s) in charge. For example, a WMP score sheet key includes 20 correct answers. The contestant marks 15 correct answers, but also marks 5 incorrect answers. The contestant's score is calculated as $[(15 - 5 = 10) / 20 = 0.50] \times 50 = 25$ points

No negative scores will be assigned. The minimum individual score on Activity II is zero. Blank WMP worksheets for each ecoregion can be found at www.whep.org.

Activity III-A: Written Management Plan (125 Points)

The Written Management Plan is a team event where team members discuss, consider, and provide written recommendations that address current conditions and objectives regarding wildlife populations and habitat on a specified property. A written scenario describing the property, current conditions, and landowner objectives is provided to teams prior to starting the activity. Each team interprets the objectives, identifies the focal species, recommends WMPs and their intended impact, and states how the plan will be evaluated.

The “Judges’ Scoring Sheet – Written Management Plan,” shown on page 14, details how plans are judged. All plans must be written using paragraph format. A sample management plan worksheet is provided below to help teams prepare for writing management plans.

Teams will be given four sheets of paper. One sheet is for writing notes. Teams may use **one side** of three sheets for their plan. Two of these sheets are for writing the plan, and the third sheet is for sketching a map of the property illustrating where practices should be implemented. Teams may use pencils only; no pens. Colored pencils are allowed for the sketch if desired. An aerial photo of the area may be provided in place of one blank sheet of paper to assist with the sketch. The team number should be written on the blank back side of each sheet. Plans not written in the proper format or not correctly identified will not be judged. Teams will have two hours to complete this activity.

Example of Written Plan Scenario

2013 National WHEP Written Plan Scenario

Atterbury Fish and Wildlife Area, Trafalgar, Indiana

The Atterbury Fish and Wildlife Area (AFWA) is 6,500 acres and was historically owned by the Department of Defense (DoD, Camp Atterbury) and is now managed by the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR). Historically, DoD leased fields to local producers for row-cropping, but there were no efforts to manage the area for wildlife. The IDNR has decided to manage particular sections of the property, including the one you are on, for species that use early successional stages, such as eastern cottontail and brown thrasher. The northern bobwhite has been identified as the focal species because bobwhite populations in the ecoregion have declined sharply over the past few decades; therefore, quail hunting has been suspended.

Funding for land management is a limitation. Thus, the IDNR has decided to continue to lease fields for row-cropping, specifically corn, soybeans, and wheat. The IDNR has calculated at least 50 percent of the area must be leased to provide sufficient income for management activities. AFWA is open for hunting. The IDNR foresees hunting opportunities for mourning dove and eastern cottontail, which are relatively common in the area.

The area you are considering is approximately 115 acres and includes 60 acres of soybeans. This section is bordered on the north side by a firebreak and a treeline, on the east side by a firebreak, on the south side by a road, and on the west side by a firebreak and woods.

Your task is to prepare a management plan that provides information and recommendations to meet IDNR’s objectives and property limitations. You have 2 hours to complete your plan. This is a team activity. Prepare your plan on 2 sheets of paper, but write only on one side of each sheet. Sketch a map of the area including placement of your management recommendations on the third sheet. Include your **team ID number** on the back of each sheet. Do not write your name or the name of your state on the sheet. Good luck and have fun coming up with your recommendations!

Part I: Plan Background (10 Points)

What are the species to be managed and what are the management objectives?

The species to be managed include northern bobwhite, eastern cottontail, and brown thrasher.

The management objectives are to manage the area for wildlife species that use early successional stages, particularly those listed above, and provide hunting opportunities.

Part II: Plan Development (40 Points)

Species Habitat requirements (20 Points)

Northern bobwhite use scattered patches of shrubby cover, well interspersed with native grasses and forbs. Areas dominated by forbs are commonly used for brooding cover. A variety of seeds, leaves, and insects are eaten.

Eastern cottontails require brushy cover interspersed with herbaceous openings. They eat forbs and grasses, bark of shrubs and young trees, buds, and browse.

Brown thrashers are found in shrub and bramble thickets, brushy hedgerows, young forests, and forest edges. They eat invertebrates and various seed found on the ground among the leaf litter. They usually nest in shrubs up to 10 feet aboveground.

Mourning dove use areas with annual and perennial grasses and forbs with considerable bare ground for feeding. They nest in shrubs and trees or on the ground. They commonly use agricultural fields for foraging. They require free-standing water daily.

Habitat Assessment (20 points)

The area under consideration is 115 acres and includes 2 fields of soybeans that have been planted via no-till agriculture that encompass 60 acres. There are field borders surrounding some portions of the soybean fields. There are 2 small woodlots with an open canopy of scattered trees and a dense brushy understory. The remainder of the area contains dense grass (tall fescue) with scattered forbs, brambles, and tree saplings. Brooding cover for northern bobwhite is limited because of a lack of mobility in the thick grass. Brushy cover used for escape and winter loafing by bobwhite is limiting. Cover for brown thrasher only exists in the 2 small woodlots. Cover for eastern cottontail is largely limited to the small woodlots. The tall fescue does not provide overhead cover. Winter cover will be severely limiting for all species after the soybeans are harvested. There is no free-standing water available.

Part III: Plan Implementation (40 Points)

Control Nonnative Invasive Species to reduce coverage of tall fescue and allow the seedbank to germinate, which will provide more food and better cover for all 4 species.

Field Borders should be established around portions of the soybean fields where there are none. This will increase usable space for northern bobwhite and eastern cottontail.

Leave Crop Unharvested will provide soybeans for northern bobwhite, mourning dove, and eastern cottontail into winter.

Plant Shrubs between sections of soybean fields that will be retained to provide a corridor connecting the two woodlots. This will increase usable space for northern bobwhite, eastern cottontail, and brown thrasher, and increase loafing and nesting cover for mourning dove.

Set-back Succession: Prescribed Fire will rejuvenate the understory in the woodlots and provide more forage for eastern cottontail and northern bobwhite.

Water Development for Wildlife (small pond) should be established to provide free-standing water for mourning doves.

Wildlife Survey should be conducted to monitor populations of all 4 species. Point counts may be used for mourning dove and brown thrasher, covey counts may be used for northern bobwhite, and observation counts and hunter harvest data can be used for eastern cottontail.

Part IV: Plan Evaluation (15 Points)

Wildlife survey data will be evaluated annually and tracked over time to estimate population trends. Hunter success and satisfaction will be accessed through surveys. Vegetation surveys will determine if additional treatment is needed to reduce tall fescue, evaluate success of shrub plantings, and evaluate habitat quality for all species.

Wildlife Habitat Education Program

Judges' Scoring Sheet – Activity III-A Written Wildlife Management Plan

Scale for scoring: 0 = very poor, no points; 10 = outstanding, maximum points

Part I: Plan background (10 points maximum) _____ points

- Accurately identified the wildlife species to be managed and accurately identified the management objectives

Part II: Plan development (40 points maximum) _____ points

- Demonstrated understanding of the habitat needs of each species (20 points)
- Accurately evaluated the area as habitat for each species (what is present and what is lacking) (20 points)

Part III: Plan implementation (40 points maximum) _____ points

- Included the appropriate management practices (10 points)
- Demonstrated knowledge of the effect of various management practices on habitat and/or the species (10 points)
- Used the appropriate native plant species or recognized nonnative invasive species (10 points)
- Recognized the management compromises necessary to meet the needs of each species and showed understanding of the mutual benefits of implementing certain practices (10 points)

Part IV: Plan evaluation (15 points maximum) _____ points

- Presented realistic methods for monitoring success of the recommendations (15 points)

Part V: Format and drawing (20 points maximum) _____ points

- Presented in the appropriate narrative format (10 points)
- Included a drawing or sketch of the area, reflecting the recommended management practices and where they should be implemented (10 points)

Activity III-A total (125 points maximum) _____ points

Activity III-B: Oral Reasons for Written Plan (75 points total per team)

After completing the written plan, each team member will be expected to demonstrate their understanding of the plan. Thus, it is important that each team member actively participates in preparing the written plan. Comprehensive knowledge of the written plan is necessary to successfully respond to judges questions about the team's plan. Team members are called individually into a room with one or two judges where they are asked a series of questions to test the individual's knowledge of the team's plan. For example, team members may be asked to explain a certain part of the plan, such as the background or implementation, or they may be asked to further explain certain management practices recommended within the plan. They may be asked to explain the habitat needs of the focal species. Questions can cover anything related to the plan, the focal species, or management practices recommended. Each team member's interview will last 4-5 minutes. The top three scores within each team will be added and combined with the written plan score for the total score for Activity III.

Note: Oral reason scores are not included in determining high individual scores.

Sample questions and requests:

- Explain the WMPs your team implemented for brown thrasher.
- Two of the four species in your plan had very different habitat requirements. Identify those species and explain the compromises you made to accommodate those species.
- The eastern cottontail requires early successional vegetation. Explain the practices your team chose to increase usable space and why they were recommended.
- In assessing habitat on this site, what do you consider the most limiting factor for northern bobwhite?
- Explain two methods you would use to determine the effectiveness of your team's plan.

Wildlife Habitat Education Program

Judges' Scoring Sheet – Activity III-B Oral Reasons for Wildlife Management Plan

Part 1: Subject matter (80 points maximum)

Scale for scoring: 0 = very poor, no points; 20 = outstanding, maximum points

- Understanding of species biology and management (0 – 20) _____ points
- Understanding of species habitat requirements (0 – 20) _____ points
- Understanding of wildlife management practices and implementation (0 – 20) _____ points
- Knowledge of concepts and terms (0 – 20) _____ points

Part 2: Contestant (20 points maximum)

Scale for scoring: 0 = very poor, no points; 10 = outstanding, maximum points

- Logic, reasoning, and organization (0 – 10) _____ points
- Poise, voice, and body language (0 – 10) _____ points

Activity III-B total (25 points maximum) _____ X 0.25 = _____ points