

Habitat Conservation and Rehabilitation Policy

Policy No: 10-03

Policy Title: Habitat Conservation and Rehabilitation

Policy Statement: Conserve and Restore Freshwater Habitats

Principles Applied:

Habitat maintenance and restoration ensures the physical health and sustainability of watersheds and the species and communities they support. Specific principles to achieve this policy statement include:

- An ecosystems approach which includes striving to maintain and rebuild native biological diversity;
- Use a watershed approach with nested logical and ecological geographic units such as valley segments and stream corridors;
- Apply the natural channel systems approach to stream corridor and habitat management;
- Where possible attempt to restore to a pre-determined natural state. Where this is not possible, focus on rehabilitation to reclaim as functional a condition as possible within existing constraints;
- Watershed connectivity should be re-established where it naturally occurred except where issues of invasive or non-native species need to be addressed;
- Habitat protection and rehabilitation should be based upon both fish community and habitat objectives in keeping with the natural tendencies of the ecosystem.

Policy Rationale and Considerations:

There is an implicit link between in-stream habitat, the health of the stream channel, its corridor and its watershed. Overall physical health and function of habitat should be ensured at all scales to ensure the persistence of native fish communities. Freshwater Conservation Canada approaches habitat management from a

watershed-based perspective to protect and restore healthy habitats within healthy watersheds.

Objectives of Policy Statement:

Habitat is created by physical processes operating over medium to long periods of time on the structure and composition of rivers and lakes. Freshwater Conservation Canada and its chapters should strive to maintain and restore a watershed's stream corridor/riparian systems and channel structure through activities at several scales from watershed plans, to stream corridor plans to riparian and in-channel restoration programs/projects.

Implications to Organization:

Meaningful actions should focus on a full range of activities at a range of spatial scales. Freshwater Conservation Canada uses a watershed-based approach to set context for our actions and then uses a range of approaches to resolve habitat issues including: policy development, input to land use decisions, watershed planning, application of the principles of Natural Channel Systems, re-establishing connectivity, stream corridor restoration through riparian plantings, education and awareness and advocacy for better land management.

Delivery:

The national role focuses on development of a broad-based watershed program, implementation of strategic restoration/rehabilitation projects, acquisition of good science to inform habitat management approaches, educational programming, and development of policy and educational materials and programs and provide practical technical support for local and watershed planning and restoration activities. Local chapters aid in the development of watershed plans, contribute to plan implementation and conduct habitat restoration with guidance and support from professionals.

Supporting Information:

More information on this Core Policy can be found in Policy Brief #1 of the National Conservation Agenda.

Effective Date: December 13, 2010

Last Board Approval Date: August 14, 2017