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## Waterbirds on Working Lands Recommended Practices for Soy Production

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Soybean is an important protein source for waterbirds and wildlife. In untilled soybean fields, there can be considerable amounts of waste grain following harvest. Low areas and seasonal wetlands in soybean fields can also provide valuable resting and nesting environments for waterbirds.

For most farmers, improvements to wildlife habitats within or near their soybean crop will only require minor modifications to current practices. The recommendations fall into five areas of your operation as outlined below. Please also see [Recommended Practices for All Row Crops](http://www.audubon.org/bird/waterbirds/all_crops.html) ([http://www.audubon.org/bird/waterbirds/all\\_crops.html](http://www.audubon.org/bird/waterbirds/all_crops.html)).

- 1. Nutrient management.** Nutrient management should follow a nutrient management plan that takes into consideration water quality and wildlife impacts.
- 2. Tillage management.** Use a reduced-tillage or no-till system. This will improve water quality, as well as leave waste grain for migrating and nesting birds. Long-term no-till systems will improve terrestrial and aquatic invertebrate populations and overall soil health. Earthworms and other soil organisms can be important to waterbirds and are more abundant in no-till systems.
- 3. Integrated Pest Management.** Use an insect- and weed-management program that has minimal impact on the environment. When managing soybean insects, such as soybean aphid, only treat when aphid thresholds have been reached, and use a mild form of insecticide such as a pyrethroid. Avoid drift from non-selective herbicides into field border and edge environments.
- 4. Harvest Management.** If you are using a rice rotation or want to improve waterfowl habitat, consider flooding soybean fields in the fall. If flooding is to be conducted, use variable water depths.
- 5. Field Border and Edge Management.** Maintain wetlands and try to enhance field border effects in and around soybean. Filter and buffer strips should be used when feasible. If a farm has temporary wetlands or nonproductive areas, consider enrolling these lands in [conservation programs](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs) (<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs>) such as CRP, WRP, or easements. Your state may also have additional programs that may help with conservation.