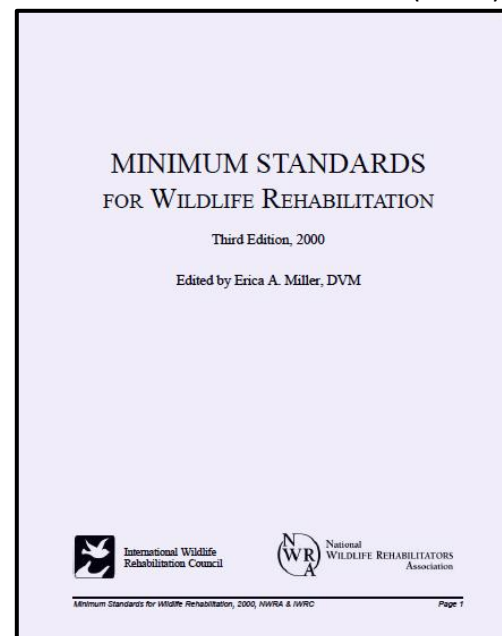# NWRA and IWRC Minimum Standards for Wildlife Rehabilitation

The two national membership-based wildlife rehabilitation organizations, the National Wildlife Rehabilitators Association (NWRA) and the International Wildlife Rehabilitation Council (IWRC) collaborated on a document that was intended to provide guidance and suggestions on general rehabilitation practices and on cage and enclosure design, construction, and use. Over the years, a copy of this document has been available free of charge from either organization's website, or click here for a PDF of the 2012 - 4th edition version.

The document contains many helpful suggestions for new rehabilitators. The document is based on the input from experienced rehabilitators on cage design and specification that has proven to be successful in rehabilitation. The document includes the statement that the contents are intended as suggestions, and the intention is that the document will continue to evolve over time.

The US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) cites this document in rehabilitation regulations regarding caging requirements. While the USFWS permit requirements in **50 CFR Part 21, §31** refer to the Minimum Standards document as 'guidelines,' some of their permit officers have applied them as minimum requirements.

Some state wildlife agencies refer to this document as a reference or guide, while others have chosen to implement the document as minimum requirements to issue a permit or license.

Unfortunately, the document's own title implies the existence of "Standards" when such is not the case.

IWRC has a letter posted on their website that reaches out to NWRA to discuss the merits of renaming the document to address this unintended 'hard and fast' use by regulatory agencies.

In the meantime, rehabilitators applying for or renewing a USFWS migratory bird rehabilitation permit should become very familiar with the caging outlined in the document since it is likely to affect whether a permit is granted and for which species.