

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE
CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD
UPLAND WILDLIFE HABITAT MANAGEMENT

(Ac.)

CODE 645

DEFINITION

Provide and manage upland habitats and connectivity within the landscape for wildlife.

PURPOSE

Treating upland wildlife habitat concerns identified during the conservation planning process that enable movement, or provide shelter, cover, food in proper amounts, locations and times to sustain wild animals that inhabit uplands during a portion of their life cycle.

CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES

Land where the decision maker has identified an objective for conserving a wild animal species, guild, suite or ecosystem.

Land within the range of targeted wildlife species and capable of supporting the desired habitat.

CRITERIA

General Criteria Applicable to all Purposes

Habitat development and management necessary to achieve the purpose(s) shall be based on the Georgia Wildlife Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) assessment which will be used to identify habitat-limiting factors in the planning area. The assessment procedure shall be used to determine habitat suitability for individual fields, home range areas, habitat type or natural community as well as to provide an overall evaluation for the entire property or operating unit.

Application of this practice shall remove or reduce limiting factor(s) in their order of significance, as indicated by results of the habitat evaluation.

Application of this practice alone, or in combination with other supporting and facilitating practices, shall result in a conservation system that will enable the planning area to meet or exceed the minimum quality criteria for wildlife habitat established in Section III of the FOTG.

Habitat Appraisal: The assessment will result in a quality rating or habitat suitability index. Use the Georgia Wildlife Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) assessment tool. Georgia Quality Criteria can be met if a minimum Wildlife Habitat Index value of .50 is planned if wildlife is a secondary land use and .75 is planned if wildlife is the primary land use objective of the client.

Contact an NRCS Biologist for planning assistance, if necessary.

Establish additional criteria for components of this practice including, but not limited to:

- vegetation establishment for shelter, food and to enable movement;
- structural measures to provide shelter, food or enable movement; and
- manipulation of vegetation to sustain desirable habitat conditions over time.

Plant material specifications shall include only high quality native species which are adapted to the geographical regions of Georgia when planning and establishing permanent habitat. Refer to eFOTG Section IV Tools, for list of Georgia native plant species.

A few species of introduced annual plants such as millet or perennial clovers may be used in small food plot areas. No species that is on the Federal plant list or the GA Exotic Pest Plant Council's invasive plant list may be used for this practice. <http://www.gaeppc.org/>

Site preparation, planting dates, and planting methods shall optimize vegetation survival and growth.

Equipment travel, grazing, haying and other disturbance to habitat shall be restricted during critical periods such as nesting, brood rearing, fawning or calving seasons. States may establish exceptions when certain disturbance causing activities are necessary to maintain the health of the plant community and control noxious weeds.

Control of regulated noxious weeds and invasive plants shall be specified. Management measures will be provided to control invasive species and noxious weeds.

When controlling areas of invasive and noxious species with herbicides, protect native forbs and legumes by applying herbicides on a "spot" basis.

CONSIDERATIONS

This practice may affect the target species as well as non-target species through mechanisms such as hunting, predation, disease transmission, nest parasitism, etc. Consider effects of this practice on species with declining populations.

Wildlife population control may be necessary to protect and maintain certain habitats. This is a responsibility of the landowner. State and federal regulations may apply to population control methods.

Undisturbed areas conserved at a sufficient extent during management activities, may sustain disturbance-intolerant animals and plants.

Other conservation practices that may be utilized in conjunction with this practice to create a wildlife management plan include:

Brush Management (314)

Herbaceous Weed Control (315)

Conservation Cover (327)

Pasture & Hay Planting (512)

Early Successional Habitat Development/Management (647)

Restoration and Management of Rare or Declining Habitats (643)

Tree/Shrub Establishment (612)

Hedgerow Planting (422)

Prescribed Grazing (528)

Prescribed Burning (338)

Forage Harvest Management (511)

Access Control (472)

Riparian Forest Buffer (391)

Riparian Herbaceous Cover (390)

Forest Stand Improvement (666)

Wetland Restoration (657)

PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

NRCS shall ensure that plans and specifications for this practice are prepared by persons with adequate training in the fields of wildlife management, biology or ecology.

Written specifications, schedules and maps shall be prepared for each planning area and each habitat type. Specifications will be developed for each site based on the applicable facilitating practice Job Sheets and the Wildlife Habitat Suitability Index (HSI). Use value of .50 if wildlife is a secondary land use and .75 if wildlife is the primary land use.

Specifications shall:

- Identify the amounts and kinds habitat elements, locations and management actions necessary to achieve the client's management objectives. Use the HSI output to document the limiting factors of each land use and the planned conservation practices
- Describe the appropriate method, timing and intensity of management needed to produce the desired habitat conditions and sustain them over time.

Specifications shall be transmitted to clients using NRCS approved specifications sheets, job sheets, or customized narrative statements included in the conservation plan.

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

The following actions shall be carried out to ensure that this practice functions as intended throughout its expected life:

- Evaluate habitat conditions on a regular basis in order to adapt the conservation plan and schedule of implementation.
- Annually inspect and repair structural or vegetative components of this practice.

REFERENCES

Bolen, Eric and William Robinson. 2002. Wildlife Ecology and Management 5th Edition. Prentice Hall, 656 pp.

Bookhout, T.A. (ed.). 1996. Research and Management Techniques for Wildlife and Habitats, 5th Ed. Wildlife Society, 740 pp

Rayne, Neil F. and Fred C. Bryant. 1994. Techniques for Wildlife Habitat Management of Uplands. McGraw-Hill, Inc., 841 pp.

United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service. National Biology Manual. Title 190, Washington, DC.

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