

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD

EARLY SUCCESSIONAL HABITAT DEVELOPMENT/MANAGEMENT

(Acre)

CODE 647

DEFINITION

Manage early plant succession to benefit desired wildlife or natural communities.

PURPOSE

Increase plant community diversity to provide wildlife habitat for early successional species.

CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES

On all lands that are suitable for the kinds of desired wildlife and plant species.

CRITERIA

- Early successional management will be designed to achieve the desired plant density, vertical and horizontal structure, and species composition.
- Methods used will be designed to maintain soil erosion quality criteria.
- Vegetative manipulation to maximize plant and animal diversity will be accomplished by disturbance practices including prescribed burning, disking, mowing, grazing, herbicide application, timber harvesting, or a combination of the above.
- This practice shall be applied periodically to maintain the desired early successional plant community.
- Native adapted plant materials will be used to achieve desired plant community.
- Management practices and activities are not to disturb cover during the primary nesting period of April 15 to August 15 for grassland species. Exceptions will be allowed for periodic burning or mowing, when necessary, to maintain the health of the plant community. Mowing may be needed during the plant establishment period to control weeds or as a precursor to aid the implementation of disking, burning, or herbiciding.
- Measures must be provided to control noxious weeds and other invasive species when these plants impact desirable plant communities.
- To benefit insect food sources for grassland nesting birds, spraying or other control of noxious weeds will be done on a “spot” treatment basis to protect legumes and other forbs that benefit native pollinators and other wildlife.
- Treatment shall be accomplished whenever succession is near the end of or has gone past the desired stage.

Conservation practice standards are reviewed periodically, and updated if needed. To obtain the current version of this standard, contact the Natural Resources Conservation Service [State Office](#) or visit the electronic [Field Office Technical Guide](#).

NRCS, TN
October 3, 2005

CONSIDERATIONS

All habitat manipulations should be planned and managed according to soil capabilities, and recommendations for management will avoid excessive soil loss.

Early successional treatments should be distributed throughout the managed area.

Managing for early successional plant communities is beneficial, if not essential, for less mobile animal species (e.g., Northern bobwhite and cottontail rabbit). The less mobile the species, the more important to provide all habitat requirements in a small area.

For treatments facilitated by strips (mowing, disking, and prescribed burning) design and install the treatment layout to best facilitate operation of farm machinery or to make easily controlled burning boundaries. Whenever possible, lay out strips to have some multiple or full width passes by all farm implements.

Grazing may be used as a management tool to achieve the intended purpose of this practice. A grazing plan is required.

This practice may be used to promote the conservation of declining species, including threatened and endangered species.

The disturbance interval for maintaining early successional habitats should be approximately 2-4 years to benefit most wildlife. In determining the actual disturbance interval, the wildlife species of concern, disturbance technique planned, soil productivity, plant response, and timing of application must be considered.

PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

Specifications for this practice shall be prepared for each site. Specifications shall be recorded using approved specification sheets, job sheets, narrative statements in the conservation plan, or other acceptable documentation.

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

The following actions shall be carried out to ensure this practice functions as intended throughout its expected life. These actions include normal repetitive activities in the application and use of the practice (operation) and repair and upkeep of the practice (maintenance).

Any use of fertilizers, pesticides, and other chemicals to assure early successional management shall not compromise the intended purpose. Refer to Conservation Practice Standards Nutrient Management (Code 590) and Pest Management (Code 595) for guidelines on proper application.

REFERENCES

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