

**NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE
CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD**

EARLY SUCCESSIONAL HABITAT DEVELOPMENT/MANAGEMENT

(Ac.)

CODE 647

DEFINITION

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

PURPOSE

Increase plant community diversity to provide 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

Management will be designed to achieve the desired plant community in density, vertical and horizontal structure and plant species diversity.

Vegetative manipulation can be accomplished by disturbance practices used alone or in combination that include, but is not limited to: precision herbicide applications, light disking, mowing, brush hogging, hand cutting, chainsaw, brush-saw, grinding, chipping, prescribed grazing, or a combination of these.

Where planting is required, native regionally adapted plant materials will be used whenever possible.

Planting of noxious weeds and invasive species is prohibited.

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

Locate food and cover to maximize access by target species, minimize their predation, and to minimize impacts to sensitive or protected

habitats.

Measures must be provided to control noxious weeds and other invasive species.

To benefit insect food sources for grassland nesting birds, spraying or other control of noxious weeds will be done on a "spot" basis to protect grasses, forbs and legumes that benefit native pollinators and other wildlife. Herbicide applications will be applied according to NRCS practice standard *Pest Management*, code 595.

Buffers to enhance water quality and wildlife cover (e.g., herbaceous, shrubby, treed areas, etc.) must meet or exceed Maine NRCS' wildlife habitat evaluation procedure (WHEP) criteria, or other approved habitat assessment procedures.

Meet or exceed state recommended best management practices.

All management will be conducted in time and space and using methods to minimize negative impacts to wildlife or their habitat.

- Equipment travel, grazing, haying and other disturbance to habitat shall be restricted during critical periods such as wildlife nesting, brood rearing, fawning or calving seasons.
- States may establish exceptions when disturbance is necessary to restore and maintain the health of plant communities (e.g., control of invasive exotic plants).

Peer-reviewed habitat management guidelines developed for New England, Maine's wildlife and habitat in particular, will be used where available.

Minimize soil disturbance in natural communities where soil integrity is essential,

Conservation practice standards are reviewed periodically and updated. To obtain the current version of this standard, visit the [electronic Field Office Technical Guide](#); contact Jeff Norment, NRCS Biologist, at 207-990-9571 or jeff.norment@me.usda.gov, with questions or comments.

**NRCS, ME
May 2007**

on steep slopes (> 5%), on highly erodible land, and where invasion of noxious species is likely.

Where grazing is used as a management tool under this practice, a prescribed grazing plan developed to specifically meet the intent and objective(s) of this standard is required.

Avoid and minimize soil compaction.

All activities planned under this practice shall comply with applicable federal, tribal, state, and local laws, rules and regulations.

CONSIDERATIONS

This practice should be applied periodically to maintain the desired early successional plant community and rotated throughout the managed area.

Wildlife habitat purposes often require lighter seeding rates than specified for soil erosion.

Managing for early successional plant communities is beneficial if not essential for less mobile animal species. The less mobile the species, the more important it is to provide all the habitat requirements in a small area.

Design and install the treatment layout to best facilitate operation of all machinery used to make easily controlled burning boundaries. Whenever possible, lay out strips to have some multiple or full width passes by all farm implements.

Prescribed grazing may be used as a management tool to achieve the intended purpose of this practice.

Management practices and activities should not disturb cover during the primary nesting period for grassland species. Exceptions can be allowed for periodic burning, light disking, selected herbicide techniques, selected mechanical removal or mowing when necessary to maintain the health of the plant community. Mowing may be needed during the plant establishment period to control weeds and growth of woody vegetation.

PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

Maine specifications developed for this practice standard, other appropriate supporting and facilitating NRCS practice standards,

**NRCS, ME
May 2007**

provided in reference material, or other sources approved by the NRCS state office may be used.

Written specifications, schedules and maps shall be prepared for each planning area and each habitat type. Specifications shall:

- Identify the amounts and kinds habitat elements, locations and management actions necessary to achieve the management objectives.
- 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, customized narrative statements, or other written means of sufficient detail to properly establish, manage and maintain the practice.

Specifications shall be reviewed and approved by an NRCS biologist, persons with applicable NRCS job approval authority, and cooperating state or federal biologist working in coordination with NRCS. Approval by other resource professionals or entities can occur when directed by NRCS State biologist.

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

The following actions shall be carried out to insure that 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).

- Periodic disturbance will be incorporated into the management plan to ensure the intended purpose of this practice.
- Any use of fertilizers, pesticides and other chemicals to assure early successional management shall not compromise the intended purpose.
- Annually inspect and repair structural or vegetative components of this practice.

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