

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

**EARLY SUCCESSIONAL HABITAT  
DEVELOPMENT/MANAGEMENT (ACRE)**

**CODE 647**

**MONTANA TECHNICAL GUIDE**

**SECTION IV**

**DEFINITION**

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

**PURPOSE**

- Increase plant community diversity.
- Provide habitat for early successional wildlife or aquatic species.
- Provide habitat for declining species.

**CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES**

On all lands where **maintenance of early successional habitat is needed** for the desired kinds of wildlife and plant species.

**CRITERIA**

- Early successional management will be designed to achieve the desired plant community in density, vertical and horizontal structure, and plant species diversity.
- Methods used will be designed to maintain soil erosion quality criteria.
- Vegetative manipulation to maximize plant and animal diversity can be accomplished by disturbance practices including; prescribed burning, light disking, mowing, grazing, or a combination of the above.

- This practice should be applied periodically to maintain the desired early successional plant community.

- Native adapted plant materials will be used whenever possible, but introduced species may be appropriate depending upon objectives.

- Management practices and activities are not to disturb cover during the primary nesting period 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 **undesired vegetation**.

- Measures must be provided to control severe outbreaks of noxious weeds and other invasive species in order to comply with state noxious weed laws.

- Spraying or other **forms** of noxious weed control will be done on a “spot” basis to protect insect food sources for grassland nesting birds **and to protect** forbs and legumes that benefit native pollinators and other wildlife.

- **This standard is not to be used where plant communities are considered rare and declining.**

- **Implementation of this practice will not adversely affect threatened, endangered or state species of special concern or their habitats.**

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NOTE: This type of font (**AaBbCcDdEe 123..**) indicates NRCS National Standards.  
This type of font (**AaBbCcDdEe 123..**) indicates Montana Supplement.

## CONSIDERATIONS

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

Early successional treatments should be rotated throughout the managed area.

Treatment shall be accomplished whenever succession has gone past the desired stages.

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

Design and install the treatment layout to best facilitate operation of all machinery used on the strips 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 (plant, wildlife or aquatic) species.

## PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

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

## 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).

Any use of fertilizers, pesticides, and other chemicals to assure early successional management shall not compromise the intended purpose.

**Conservation practice standards are reviewed periodically and updated if needed. To obtain the current version of this standard, contact the Natural Resources Conservation Service.**