

**NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE  
CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD**

**RESTORATION AND MANAGEMENT  
OF RARE OR DECLINING HABITATS**

(Ac.)

**CODE 643**

**DEFINITION**

Restoring and managing rare and declining habitats and their associated wildlife species to conserve biodiversity.

**PURPOSE**

Provide habitat for rare and declining species.

**CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE  
APPLIES**

Sites that previously or currently support the rare or declining habitat targeted for restoration or management.

Refer to Terrestrial Natural Communities of Nebraska (Version III – June 30, 2003), (Biology Technical Note #65), for more detailed information on plant communities considered rare or declining. The following plant communities are listed as either critically imperiled or imperiled (S1 or S2):

Woodland and Forest Communities

- Ponderosa Pine Forest
- Oak-Hickory-Ironwood Forest
- Bur Oak-Basswood-Ironwood Forest
- Paper Birch Springbranch Canyon Forest
- Red Oak-Basswood-Ironwood Forest
- Upland Bur Oak Forest
- Lowland Bur Oak Forest
- Lowland Hackberry-Black Walnut Forest
- Eastern Cottonwood-Dogwood Riparian Forest
- Eastern Cottonwood-Willow Riparian Forest
- Green Ash-Elm Canyon Bottom Forest
- Oak Woodland

Wetland Herbaceous Communities

- Marsh Seep
- Prairie Fen
- Sandhills Fen
- Pond Marsh
- Eastern Saline Marsh
- Eastern Cordgrass Wet Prairie
- Eastern Saline Meadow
- Eastern Sedge Wet Meadow
- Northern Cordgrass Wet Prairie
- Playa Wetland
- Western Streamside Wet Meadow
- Spikerush Vernal Pool
- Wheatgrass Playa Grassland

Upland Herbaceous Communities

- Sand Sage Prairie
- Tallgrass Prairie
- Wet-Mesic Tallgrass Prairie
- Missouri River Valley Dune Prairie
- Missouri River Floodplain Terrace Grassland
- Silver Sagebrush Shrub Prairie
- Greasewood Shrub Prairie
- Shortgrass Prairie
- Loess Bluff Prairie
- Northern Sand/Gravel Prairie

**CRITERIA**

Methods used will be designed to protect the soil resource from erosion and compaction.

Invasive species and noxious weeds shall be controlled. When possible, control will be done on a “spot” basis to protect native forbs and legumes that benefit native pollinators and other wildlife.

Undisturbed areas shall be conserved on a sufficient extent of the area to sustain disturbance-intolerant species.

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

**NE-T.G. Notice 594  
Section IV  
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## RESTORATION AND MANAGEMENT (643) -2

Species and seeding rate specifications will be prepared to achieve desired habitat condition. Refer to the Restoration and Management of Rare or Declining Habitats Design Procedures (643DPa for prairie and 643DPb for woodland and forest) for additional information. Restorations associated with Wetland Herbaceous Communities listed above will often require use of the Wetland Restoration (657) or Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management (644) standard for additional guidance.

Only high quality and ecologically adapted native plant materials will be used. When feasible, only local ecotypes will be used. Seed or seedlings that are local ecotype must have originated from within the following mileage restrictions: South – 250 miles, North – 150 miles, East and West – 200 miles; and must have resulted from only natural selection (no artificial breeding or selection for traits). Mixtures which contain greater than 25% plant materials (by seeds or seedlings per unit area) that do not meet these requirements are not considered local ecotype.

Native sources from within 100 miles on similar soil types are preferred.

When local ecotype sources are not feasible to use, select 'source identified class' seed or, if applicable, varieties that have local origins (i.e., Garden County Sand Bluestem, Nebraska 28 Switchgrass, etc.).

Site preparation, planting dates and methods, and plant material care and handling shall optimize vegetation survival and growth. Refer to the Herbaceous Vegetation Design Procedures (550 DP) and/or Tree/Shrub Planting Procedures Guide (380 TPP) for additional information.

A pretreatment assessment of the targeted habitat will be documented to provide a baseline for comparison with post-treatment habitat assessment.

Use of fertilizers, pesticides and other chemicals shall not compromise the intended purpose of this practice

### CONSIDERATIONS

All necessary local, state, and federal permits shall be obtained by the landowner (or designee) prior to the restoration.

Confer with other agencies and organizations to develop guidelines and specifications for conserving declining habitats.

Vegetative manipulations to restore plant and/or animal diversity can be accomplished by prescribed burning or mechanical, biological or chemical methods, or a combination of the four.

Rotate management activities throughout the site for increased benefits to habitat conditions.

The harvest of native plant material from similar local plant communities to augment seedlings/plantings is encouraged where practical. Once established, the restored site may serve as a source of native plant material for future nearby restorations.

To meet the quality criteria requirements for wildlife habitat (food, water, cover, etc.) in Section III of the FOTG, the planned system must provide a total rating of 0.5 or higher for the conservation treatment unit. Rating shall be recorded using Rangeland, Woodland, or Riparian Habitat Evaluation Worksheets (NE-CPA-35, NE-CPA-36, and NE-CPA-43 respectively).

### PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

Specifications for this practice shall be prepared for each habitat type. Specifications shall be recorded using approved specifications sheets and job sheets. Narrative statements in the conservation plan or other acceptable documentation may provide supplemental information to the specifications and job sheets.

### OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

Haying, grazing and other management activities will be planned and managed (including exclusion) as necessary to achieve and maintain the intended purpose.

Vegetation management and maintenance activities shall not be conducted during the nesting season except when necessary to achieve the desired habitat condition.

Habitat conditions should be evaluated on a regular basis to adapt the conservation plan and schedule maintenance to ensure the desired habitat condition.

Management and maintenance activities should be rotated to mimic natural disturbance regimes.

## REFERENCES

Barbour, M.G., and W. D. Billings (eds.). 2000. North American Terrestrial Vegetation. Cambridge University Press, New York, Second Edition, 695 pp.

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American Geography Society, Special Publication 36. 116 pp. + map Second edition (revised), 1975.

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Kaul, R., D. Sutherland, and S. Rolfsmeier. 2006. The Flora of Nebraska. School of Natural Resources, University of Nebraska-Lincoln. 966 pp.

Steinauer, G. and S. Rolfsmeier. 2003. Terrestrial Natural Communities of Nebraska (Version III – June 30, 2003). Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, 162 pp.