

**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

- To increase diversity of the native plant community.
- Provide wildlife or aquatic habitat for early successional species.
- Provide habitat for declining species.

CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES

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

CRITERIA

Early successional management will be designed to achieve the desired native plant community in density, vertical and horizontal structure, and plant species diversity.

Methods used will be designed to maintain soil erosion quality criteria.

Vegetation manipulation to maximize plant and animal diversity or to manage for any particular species can be accomplished by treatments including: thinning of excessive woody vegetation, prescribed burning, grazing, woody vegetation establishment by planting, natural regeneration, mechanical or chemical control of undesired species, or a combination of the above.

This practice should be applied periodically as needed to maintain the desired successional plant community.

Management practices and activities should not disturb cover during the peak nesting period for grassland birds. Exceptions will be allowed when necessary to maintain the health of the plant community. Disturbances may be needed during the plant establishment period to control weeds and regrowth of undesirable woody vegetation.

- Measures must be provided to control noxious vegetation and other problematic species.
- To promote insect food sources for grassland nesting birds, control of noxious vegetation will be done on a "spot" basis to protect forbs and legumes that benefit native pollinators and other wildlife.
- The landowner shall obtain all necessary local, state and federal permits that apply remembering that wildlife management does not meet the requirements for an agricultural exemption under the Clean Water Act.

CONSIDERATIONS

All habitat manipulations will be planned and managed according to soil capabilities and recommendations for management will avoid excessive soil loss. Early successional treatments

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

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should be rotated throughout the managed area. Treatment and/or manipulations shall be implemented 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 it becomes 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 prescribed 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. When used, a grazing plan is required. Early successional habitat management/development may be used to promote the conservation of declining species, including threatened and endangered species.

PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

Specifications for this practice shall be prepared for each site and 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 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 inorganic fertilizers, pesticides and other chemicals shall not compromise the intended purpose

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