

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

VIRGINIA CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD

EARLY SUCCESSIONAL HABITAT DEVELOPMENT/MANAGEMENT

(Acre)

CODE 647

DEFINITION

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

mowing, drum chopping, or a combination of the above.

PURPOSES

- Increase plant community diversity
- Provide habitat for early successional species
- Provide habitat for declining species

- 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 should avoid disturbing cover during the primary nesting period of April 1 - August 15. 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 competition.

CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES

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

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

CRITERIA

- Early successional management will be designed to achieve the desired plant community in density, vertical and horizontal structure, and plant species diversity.
- Early successional communities are dominated by grass-forb-shrub cover (community age 0 to about 10 years old).
- 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, haying, light disking,

- To benefit insect food sources for nesting birds, spraying or other maintenance control of noxious weeds will be done on a "spot" basis to protect forbs, legumes and other desirable plants. These plants also benefit native pollinators and other wildlife.

CONSIDERATIONS

All habitat manipulations will be planned and managed according to soil capabilities and recommendations for management will avoid excessive soil loss and water quality impairment. A soil loss calculation to design and size the area may be needed. Activities

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

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such as disking should always be done on the contour.

Early successional treatments should be rotated throughout the managed area to maintain multiple vegetative stages.

Treatment shall be accomplished whenever succession has gone past the desired stages (usually in intervals of 2-4 years).

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 or to make easily controlled burning boundaries as needed.

This practice may be used to promote the conservation of declining species, including threatened and endangered (plant, wildlife or aquatic) species. Contact the NRCS State Biologist for assistance.

PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

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

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

It is vital that actions be carried out to ensure that this practice is retained in the early successional stage and 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 Virginia Conservation Practice Standards *Nutrient Management (Code 590)* and *Pest Management (Code 595)*.

Management (Code 595) for guidelines on proper application.

REFERENCES

1. Virginia Pest Management Guide published by the Virginia Cooperative Extension Service.
2. Virginia Conservation Practice Standards *Nutrient Management (Code 590)* and *Pest Management (Code 595)*.

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Approved Practice Narratives
(Acre)
(CODE 647)

647 D1 Early Successional Habitat Development/Management: Perform practices such as prescribed burning, haying, light disking, drum chopping or mowing to maintain the area in an early successional stage (grass-forbs-shrubs). Periodic re-application of one or more of these practices is required to maintain this vegetative condition.

647 D2 Early Successional Habitat Development/Management: Maintain in an early successional (grass-forbs-shrubs) vegetative stage by periodic application of measures that will delay advancement to tree cover. Specific recommendations, including timing, will be provided.

647 D3 Early Successional Habitat Development/Management: Manage to improve wildlife habitat and/or natural communities for early successional species (adapted to a grass-forb-shrub vegetative stage). Periodic application of practices that delay advancement to tree cover is vital to this practice.

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