

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.

managed area is recommended for large areas where practicable.

Grazing of the early successional habitat is not permitted within a riparian area.

PURPOSE

Increase plant community diversity to provide habitat for early successional species.

CONSIDERATIONS

Vegetative manipulation to maximize plant and animal diversity can be accomplished by disturbance practices including: selected herbicide techniques, brush management, prescribed burning, light disking, mowing, prescribed grazing, or a combination of these.

CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES

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

Wildlife benefit from various successional vegetative conditions including grassland and shrubland habitat. It is essential to understand the daily and seasonal requirements of the targeted species or guild of species prior to implementation of this practice. Refer to Virginia Conservation Practice Standard 645 (*Upland Wildlife Habitat Management*) to assist in identifying habitat limiting factors in the planning area.

CRITERIA

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

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

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

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

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.

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

Wildlife habitat plantings 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.

To make easily controlled management boundaries, design and install the treatment layout to best facilitate operation of all machinery. Whenever possible, lay out strips which allow some multiple or full width passes by all farm implements. Where applicable, areas to be used as fire lines should be incorporated.

Flash grazing outside of riparian areas may be used as a management tool to achieve the intended purpose of this practice. Flash grazing is defined as a very limited grazing regime, usually not more than a couple days depending on the size of the area and type, class and size of animals. Its sole purpose is to manage vegetation for wildlife and its frequency is defined in the associated job sheet.

Management practices and activities should not disturb cover during the primary nesting period for grassland and/or early shrubland species. Exceptions can be allowed for 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 or undesirable vegetation.

Consider splitting the 647 habitat into alternative successive stages with the vegetative manipulation strategy in different years.

PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

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

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

The actions, as indicated on the job sheet, shall be carried out to ensure that this practice functions as intended throughout its expected lifespan. 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.

REFERENCES

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Burger, L.W., Quail Management: Issues, Concerns, and Solutions for Public and Private Lands-A Southeastern Perspective, 2002. Proceedings of the National Quail Symposium 5.

Hamrick, R.G., and J.P. Carroll. Response of Northern Bobwhite Populations to Agricultural Habitat Management in South Georgia, 2002. Proceedings of the 9th Annual Conference of the Wildlife Society.

Roseberry, J.L. Effects of Emerging Farm Practices and Practices on Habitat Quality for Upland Game: Upland Game Habitat Associations, 1992. Cooperative Upland Research, Illinois Department of Conservation.

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