

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE
CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD

UPLAND WILDLIFE HABITAT MANAGEMENT

(Ac.)

CODE 645

DEFINITION

Provide and manage upland habitats and connectivity within the landscape for wildlife.

PURPOSE

Treating upland wildlife habitat concerns identified during the conservation planning process that enable movement, or provide shelter, cover or food in proper amounts, locations, and times to sustain wild animals that inhabit uplands during a portion of their life cycle.

CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES

Land where the decision maker has identified an objective for conserving a wild animal species, guild, suite, or ecosystem.

Land within the range of targeted wildlife species and capable of supporting the desired habitat.

CRITERIA

General Criteria Applicable to all Purposes

A Wildlife Habitat Evaluation, approved by the NRCS State Office, shall be used to identify habitat-limiting factors in the planning area.

Application of this practice shall remove or reduce limiting factor(s) as indicated by results of the habitat evaluation.

Application of this practice alone, or in combination with other supporting and facilitating practices, shall result in a conservation system that will meet or exceed fifty percent (50%) of the general wildlife habitat

potential for the planned project condition regardless of land use.

Conservation plans developed with wildlife as the primary objective shall meet or exceed seventy-five percent (75%) of the general habitat potential for the planned project condition.

Additional Criteria for Establishing Plants that Enable Movement or Provide Shelter or Food

Plant material specifications shall require the use of native species whenever possible and include only high quality and adapted species. Natural succession may be used to establish the desired vegetative community, where soil quality is high, and a desirable seed source is nearby.

Where planting is required, site preparation, planting dates, and planting methods shall optimize vegetation survival and growth. Introduced/exotic plants species are discouraged. Refer to the Plant Establishment Guide for Virginia.

Additional Criteria for Manipulation of Vegetation to Sustain Desirable Habitat Conditions over Time

Actions needed to sustain desirable wildlife habitat conditions over time include reapplication of this practice at intervals longer than 3 years.

Equipment travel, grazing, haying, and other disturbance to habitat shall be minimized during April 15th – August 15th to avoid disturbing wildlife reproduction activities. Exceptions for establishing habitat-forming vegetation and controlling invasive or unwanted plants may be implemented when these activities are

necessary to maintain the health of the plant community.

Regulated noxious weeds and invasive plants shall be controlled.

CONSIDERATIONS

This practice may affect the target species as well as non-target species through mechanisms such as hunting, predation, disease transmission, nest parasitism, etc. Consider effects of this practice on species with declining populations.

Wildlife population control may be necessary to protect and maintain certain habitats. This is a responsibility of the landowner. State and federal regulations may apply to population control methods.

Undisturbed areas conserved at a sufficient extent during management activities, may sustain disturbance-intolerant animals and plants.

Other conservation practices that may be used in conjunction with this practice to create a wildlife management plan include Virginia Conservation Practice Standards:

Conservation Cover (327)

Conservation Crop Rotation (328)

Early Successional Habitat Development/Management (647)

Fence (382)

Field Border (386)

Forest Stand Improvement (666)

Hedgerow Planting (422)

Pasture & Hay Planting (512)

Pest Management (595)

Prescribed Burning (338)

Prescribed Grazing (528)

Residue (and Tillage) Management (329, 344, 345, and 346)

Restoration and Management of Rare or Declining Habitats (643)

Riparian Forest Buffer (391)

Riparian Herbaceous Cover (390)

Tree/Shrub Establishment (612)

Use Exclusion (472)

PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

Written specifications, schedules, and maps shall be prepared for each planning area and each habitat type.

Specifications shall:

- Identify the amounts and kinds of habitat elements, locations, and management actions necessary to achieve the client's management objectives.
- Describe the appropriate method, timing, and intensity of management needed to produce the desired habitat conditions and sustain them over time.

Specifications shall be transmitted to clients using NRCS approved specifications sheets, job sheets, or customized narrative statements included in the conservation plan.

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

The following actions shall be carried out to ensure that this practice functions as intended throughout its expected life:

- Evaluate habitat conditions on a regular basis in order to adapt the conservation plan and schedule of implementation.
- Annually inspect and repair structural or vegetative components of this practice.

REFERENCES

Bolen, Eric and William Robinson, 2002. Wildlife Ecology and Management 5th Edition, Prentice Hall.

Bookhout, T.A. (ed.). 1996. Research and Management Techniques for Wildlife and Habitats, 5th Edition, Wildlife Society.

Rayne, Neil F. and Fred C. Bryant, 1994. Techniques for Wildlife Habitat Management of Uplands. McGraw-Hill, Inc.

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