

**NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE  
CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD**

**UPLAND WILDLIFE HABITAT MANAGEMENT**

(acre)

**CODE 645**

**DEFINITION**

Creating, restoring, maintaining, or enhancing areas for food, cover, and water for upland wildlife and species which use upland habitat for a portion of their life cycle.

**PURPOSE**

Provide a variety of food for the desired kinds of wildlife species.

Provide a variety of cover types for the desired kinds of wildlife species; examples include nesting, fawning, loafing, resting, escape, travel lanes, and thermal.

Arrange habitat elements in proper amounts and locations to benefit desired species.

Manage the wildlife habitat to achieve a viable wildlife population within the species home range.

**CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES**

On all landscapes that are suitable for the kinds of wildlife habitat needed within the range of the desired species or the natural community under consideration.

**CRITERIA**

**General Criteria Applicable to all Purposes**

Identify management objectives. Objectives may be:

To provide for the habitat requirements of specific species.

To provide for diverse habitats of a certain quality.

For the desired species, identify the types, amount, and distribution of habitat elements and the management actions necessary to achieve the management objectives.

The landowner shall obtain all necessary local, state, and federal permits that apply.

Habitat development and management necessary to achieve the purpose(s) shall be based on a wildlife habitat appraisal or suitable habitat evaluation. The appraisal or evaluation procedure shall be used to determine a habitat suitability for either individual fields, home range areas, habitat type or natural community as well as provide an overall evaluation for the entire property or operating unit.

**Habitat Appraisal or Habitat Evaluation:**

Wildlife habitat evaluations may be done using any of the following:

USFWS Habitat Evaluation Procedure Models (HEP);

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) or other formally developed species-specific models;

NRCS state developed wildlife habitat appraisal guide; or

Other Models: More comprehensive habitat information and habitat requirements for individual species are available through the NRCS State Biologist.

The evaluation will result in a quality rating or habitat suitability index (HSI). This will consider the type, amount, and distribution of habitat elements required. The quality rating or HSI will be compared to the quality criteria in Section III of the North Dakota Field Office Technical Guide.

If the evaluation indicates a level below the acceptable quality criteria, alternatives will be recommended that will result in the necessary changes in habitat elements or their management to bring the rating up to the minimal acceptable or above.

If the evaluation is at the minimum or above, alternatives will be recommended that will result in the necessary management to preserve, maintain or improve the existing habitat in its present state or toward optimum conditions.

### **Habitat Elements**

The following habitat elements will be considered when assessing wildlife habitat. Not all apply to every habitat type.

#### Food

Type  
Amount

#### Cover

Type  
Amount

#### Water

quality  
quantity  
accessibility  
seasonal availability

#### Interspersion and Distance to

crops  
grasses and or legumes  
shrubs  
trees  
water  
openings

#### Migration

routes  
season of use  
corridors

### **Criteria for Providing Habitat Requirements**

As indicated by the wildlife habitat evaluation, certain habitat elements may be weak or missing. For the desired species, identify the types, amount, and distribution of habitat elements and management actions necessary to achieve the management objectives.

The amount and kinds of habitat elements planned, their location, and management shall be identified in a management plan.

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

To the extent practical, habitat maintenance, improvements, and other disturbances such as

hay or grazing will be applied in a manner and time period that minimizes adverse impacts on desired wildlife species. These practices may be applied during the primary nesting season but on a portion of the acreage.

### **CONSIDERATIONS**

Consider scheduling management of wildlife cover on a rotational plan, so that a portion of the habitat is still available and undisturbed each season.

Wildlife population control (hunting to reduce numbers) which is the responsibility of state and federal wildlife agencies and the landowner may be necessary to protect and maintain certain habitats.

Consider manipulations of habitat that may impact more than the targeted wildlife species.

Consider effects of management on non-target aquatic and upland wildlife species, and impacts to Threatened and Endangered Species. This practice may be used to promote the conservation of declining species, including Threatened and Endangered Species.

The use of native plant materials should be encouraged.

Consider effects on the movement of dissolved substances to groundwater and to downstream surface waters.

Consider effects of known or expected hazardous materials on wildlife or human use related to wildlife.

Consider effects of management actions on compliance with state and federal hunting regulations (e.g., baiting).

Consider the impact of elevated wildlife uses on adjacent lands (e.g., crop depredation).

Consider the effects of wind and water erosion.

Consider effects of volume, rates of runoff, infiltration, evaporation, and transpiration on the water budget.

Consider effects on movement of sediment, and soluble and sediment-attached substances carried by runoff and/or wind.

Consider the problems of habitat fragmentation when using this practice. Create large blocks of habitat versus increased edge, which may lead to predation and parasitism, i.e. cowbirds.

Consider habitat linkages and habitat corridors when developing upland wildlife habitat to decrease adverse impacts of edge.

### **PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS**

Plans and specifications for this practice shall be prepared for each site. Plans and specifications shall be recorded using approved specification sheets, job sheets, technical notes, or narrative documentation in the conservation plan, or other acceptable documentation.

- Document the habitat needs for the targeted species and how those needs will be met.

### **OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE**

The purpose of operation, maintenance, and management is to insure that the practice continues to function as intended.

At a minimum, a plan for operation and maintenance of upland wildlife habitat shall include a schedule for monitoring and management of structural and vegetative measures.