

**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**

- Increase plant community diversity.
- Provide wildlife or aquatic habitat for early successional species.
- Provide habitat for declining species.

**CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES**

On all lands where early successional habitat needs to be maintained in a state that is suitable for the kinds of wildlife and plant species that are desired.

**CRITERIA**

- Early successional management will be designed to achieve the desired plant community in density, vertical and horizontal structure, and plant species diversity.
- 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, light disking, mowing, grazing, or a combination of the above.
- 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 are not to disturb cover during the primary nesting period of April 1 to October 1 for ground nesting species. 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 undesirable vegetation.
- Measures must be provided to control severe outbreaks of noxious weeds and other invasive species in order to comply with state noxious weed laws.
- Spraying or other forms of noxious weed control will be done on a "spot" basis to protect insect food sources for grassland nesting birds and to protect forbs and legumes that 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.

Early successional treatments should be rotated throughout the managed area.

Treatment shall be accomplished 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 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 controlled 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. A grazing plan is required.

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

#### **PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS**

Specifications for this practice shall be prepared for each site. Specifications shall be recorded using approved specifications sheets, technical notes, job sheets, narrative statements in the conservation plan, or other acceptable documentation. Contact a Natural Resources Conservation Service biologist for assistance.

#### **OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE**

Actions shall be carried out to ensure 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 fertilizers, pesticides, and other chemicals to assure early successional management shall not compromise the intended purpose.