

**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.

PURPOSE

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

CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES

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

CRITERIA

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.

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

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

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.

Any use of fertilizers, pesticides and other chemicals to assure early successional management shall not compromise the intended purpose.

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.

This practice should be applied periodically to maintain the desired early successional plant community and rotated throughout the managed area. Treatment should be applied whenever succession has gone past the desired stages.

Wildlife habitat purposes 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.

This practice may be used to promote the conservation of declining species, including threatened and endangered species.

Design and install the treatment layout to best facilitate operation of all machinery used to make easily controlled burning boundaries. Whenever possible, lay out strips to have some multiple or full width passes by all farm implements.

Prescribed grazing may be used as a management tool to achieve the intended purpose of this practice.

Equipment travel, grazing, haying, habitat management/maintenance practices, and other disturbance activities shall be restricted during critical periods such as nesting, brood

Conservation practice standards are reviewed periodically, and updated if needed. To obtain the current version of this standard contact your Natural Resources Conservation Service [State Office](#), or visit the [electronic Field Office Technical Guide](#).

NRCS, Mississippi
August 2006

rearing, fawning or calving seasons. In Mississippi, this critical period is from April 1 to October 1. Exceptions can be allowed to maintain the health of the plant or ecological community being managed for the benefit of wildlife (e.g., mechanical or other means to control noxious vegetation during establishment or restoration of desirable vegetation or use of prescribed fire to mimic natural seasonal occurrence of fire). Exceptions must be approved by an NRCS biologist.

PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

Plans and specifications for this practice shall be prepared for each site and shall be transmitted to clients using NRCS approved specifications sheets, job sheets, technical notes, or customized narrative statements included in the conservation plan.

NRCS shall ensure that plans and specifications for this practice are reviewed and approved by an NRCS biologist. Approval by state wildlife agency or other biologist can occur when directed by NRCS State biologist.

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 management and/or maintenance to ensure the desired habitat condition.

- Annually inspect and repair structural or vegetative components of this practice.

Periodic disturbance will be incorporated into the management plan to ensure the intended purpose of this practice. Management and maintenance activities should be rotated to mimic natural disturbance regimes.

REFERENCES

Best, L. B., K. E. Freemark, J.J.Dinsmore and M. Camp. 1995. A review and synthesis of bird habitat use in agricultural landscapes of Iowa. *Am. Midl.Nat.* 134:1-29.

Burger, L.W. 2002. Quail management: Issues, concerns, and solutions for public and private lands-a southeastern perspective. *Proceedings of the National Quail Symposium* 5.

Hamrick, R.G., and J.P. Carroll. 2002. Response of northern bobwhite populations to agricultural habitat management in south Georgia. *Proceedings of the 9th Annual Conference of the Wildlife Society* 9:129.

Roseberry, J.L. 1992. Cooperative upland research. Effects of emerging farm practices and practices on habitat quality for upland game: Upland game habitat associations. Illinois Department of Conservation