

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE
CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD

**RESTORATION AND MANAGEMENT
OF RARE OR DECLINING HABITATS**

(Ac.)

CODE 643

DEFINITION

Restoring and managing rare and declining habitats and their associated wildlife species to conserve biodiversity.

PURPOSE

Provide habitat for rare and declining species.

CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES

Sites that previously or currently support the rare or declining habitat targeted for restoration or management.

Rare and declining habitats in California include but are not limited to the following ¹

- Coastal dunes in southern CA
- Native Grasslands
- Alkali sink scrub in southern CA
- Central Valley riparian forest
- Sagebrush steppe in Intermountain West
- Old Growth Coniferous Forests
- Coastal Redwood forests
- Riparian forests
- Coastal sage scrub in southern CA
- Coastal mixed chaparral in southern CA
- Wetlands (all types)
- Large streams and rivers

CRITERIA

Methods used will be designed to protect the soil resource from erosion and compaction.

Invasive species and noxious weeds shall be controlled. When possible, control will be done on a "spot" basis to protect native forbs and legumes that benefit native pollinators and other wildlife.

Undisturbed areas shall be conserved on a sufficient extent of the area to sustain disturbance-intolerant species.

Species and seeding rate specifications, as prescribed in the California Vegetation Guide specific to the MLRA for the site, will be used to achieve desired habitat condition. When feasible, only local ecotypes will be used.

Site preparation, planting dates and methods, and plant material care and handling shall optimize vegetation survival and growth.

A pretreatment assessment of the targeted habitat will be documented to provide a baseline for comparison with post-treatment habitat assessment.

Use of fertilizers, pesticides and other chemicals shall not compromise the intended purpose of this practice, and shall be done in accordance with all pertinent labels, laws, and regulations.

All activities will be scheduled to minimize impact to the priority wildlife species of all classes.

CONSIDERATIONS

All necessary local, state, and federal permits shall be obtained by the landowner (or designee) prior to the restoration.

Confer with other agencies and organizations to develop guidelines and specifications for conserving declining habitats.

Haying, grazing and other management activities (including exclusion) will be planned and managed as necessary to achieve and maintain the intended purpose.

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

Vegetation management and maintenance activities shall not be conducted during the nesting season except when necessary to achieve the desired habitat condition.

Cultural Resources Considerations

NRCS policy is to avoid any effect to cultural resources and protect them in their original location. Determine if installation of this practice or associated practices in the plan could have an effect on cultural resources. The National Historic Preservation Act may require consultation with the California State Historic Preservation Officer.

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/cultural.html> is the primary website for cultural resources information. The California Environmental Handbook and the California Environmental Assessment Worksheet also provide guidance on how the NRCS must account for cultural resources. The e-Field Office Technical Guide, Section II contains general information, with Web sites for additional information.

Document any specific considerations for cultural resources in the design docket and the Practice Requirements worksheet.

Endangered Species Considerations

If during the Environmental Assessment, NRCS determines that installation of this practice, along with any others proposed, will have an effect on any federal or state listed

Rare, Threatened or Endangered species or their habitat, NRCS will advise the client of the requirements of the Endangered Species Act and recommend alternative conservation treatments that avoid the adverse effects. Further assistance will be provided only if the client selects one of the alternative conservation treatments for installation; or with concurrence of the client, NRCS initiates consultations concerning the listed species with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Marine Fisheries Service and/or California Department of Fish and Game.

PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

Specifications for this practice shall be prepared for each habitat type. Recommendations shall be provided using approved specifications and job sheets. Narrative statements in the conservation plan or other acceptable documentation may provide supplemental information to the specifications and job sheets.

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

Specifications shall:

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

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

Habitat conditions should be evaluated on a regular basis to adapt the conservation plan and schedule maintenance to ensure the desired habitat condition.

Management and maintenance activities should be rotated to mimic natural disturbance regimes.

REFERENCES

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