

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.

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

PURPOSE

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

Application of this practice alone, or in combination with other supporting and facilitating practices, shall result in a conservation system that will enable the planning area to meet or exceed the minimum quality criteria for wildlife habitat established in Section III of the FOTG.

CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES

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

When present, state and Federal Threatened and Endangered species and Species of Special Concern habitat will take priority over other wildlife species.

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

Establish additional criteria for components of this practice including, but not limited to:

vegetation establishment for shelter, food and to enable movement;

CRITERIA

General Criteria Applicable to all Purposes

A habitat evaluation or appraisal, approved by the NRCS state office, shall be used to identify habitat-limiting factors in the planning area.

structural measures to provide shelter, food or enable movement; and

manipulation of vegetation to sustain desirable habitat conditions over time.

In absence of a suitable quantitative model or appraisal guide, provide a narrative description evaluating both benchmark conditions and after practice implementation. Qualitatively describe the conditions of habitat components or wildlife species needs according to related quality criteria ranges and values in Section III of the technical guide. Where available, use of ecological site wildlife interpretations can assist in identifying native climax vegetative conditions and current seral stage presence and qualitative features.

Plant material specifications shall include only high quality and adapted species.

Site preparation, planting dates, and planting methods shall optimize vegetation survival and growth.

Equipment travel, grazing, haying and other disturbance to habitat shall be restricted during critical periods such as nesting, brood rearing, fawning or calving seasons. States may establish exceptions when certain disturbance causing activities are necessary to maintain the health of the plant community and control noxious weeds.

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 [Field Office Technical Guide](#).

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Control of regulated noxious weeds and invasive plants shall be specified.

CONSIDERATIONS

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

The intermixing of plant species and plant communities that provide the upland habitat components will improve habitat diversity. Numerous habitat types in small units provide greater diversity and edge. The amount of diversity providing food or cover is generally correlated with higher wildlife population numbers, especially game species. However, habitat diversity is not suitable for many projects where focus species habitat needs can require specific single larger blocks of missing contiguous habitat or components which may be needed to benefit or augment existing conditions. Many native songbirds, neotropical migratory birds, and other species of wildlife require specific single conditions which may be absent from an existing project site.

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.

Consult appropriate local or state NRCS, ADF&G, USFWS or other federal agency or tribal authority for details on habitat management or plans for identified species in the project area.

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

Other conservation practices that may be utilized in conjunction with this practice to create a wildlife management plan include:

Pasture & Hay Planting (512)

Wildlife Watering Facility (648)

Early Successional Habitat Development/Management (647)

Restoration and Management of Rare or Declining Habitats (643)

Tree/Shrub Establishment (612)

Range Planting (550)

Prescribed Grazing (528)

Prescribed Burning (338)

Forage Harvest Management (511)

Use Exclusion (472)

Riparian Forest Buffer (391)

Riparian Herbaceous Cover (390)

Forest Stand Improvement (666)

Consider adding structural complexity by placing brushpiles or other natural physical features (ex. tree's, logs, stones, etc.).

Snag creation should be considered where risks to human and forest health are minimal.

Subsistence Use Areas

Consider the impact on traditional users and cultural needs of harvesting plants and animals for subsistence and for ceremonial purposes.

Conservation plans should address subsistence hunting and fishing as an objective where legitimately recognized, as well as how the implementation of this practice will enhance, create or protect this resource.

PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

NRCS shall ensure that plans and specifications for this practice are prepared by persons with adequate training in the fields of wildlife management, biology or ecology.

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

Specifications shall:

- Identify the amounts and kinds habitat elements, locations and management actions necessary to achieve the client's management objectives.
- List the species or general kinds of wildlife for which the land is being managed, i.e. songbirds, moose, bears, deer, caribou, upland game birds, fur bearers, neotropical

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migratory birds, bats, riparian species, tundra species, boreal species etc.

- 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

Bookhout, T.A. (ed.). 1996. Research and Management Techniques for Wildlife and Habitats, 5th Ed. Wildlife Society, 740 pp

Bolen, Eric and William Robinson. 2002. Wildlife Ecology and Management 5th Edition. Prentice Hall, 656 pp.

Rayne, Neil F. and Fred C. Bryant. 1994. Techniques for Wildlife Habitat Management of Uplands. McGraw-Hill, Inc., 841 pp.

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ADF&G, 2006. A Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy. Our Wealth Maintained.

http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/species/wildlife_action_plan/cwcs_main_text_combined.pdf