United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

Conservation Practice Standard Overview

Early Successional Habitat Development/Management (647)

Early successional habitat development/ management involves manipulating a stand of plants to create and maintain early successional attributes that benefit desired wildlife and/or natural communities.

Practice Information

Ecological succession is a term used to describe the predictable changes that take place in an ecological community following disturbance. After a site is disturbed the composition of plants and animals changes over time. The habitat associated with the early stages of succession is, by nature, temporary. Vegetation management is generally required to maintain the wildlife and other ecological benefits unique to the early stages of succession. This practice increases plant community diversity and provides habitat for early successional plant and animal species. This is usually accomplished by periodic vegetative disturbance, which may be mechanical, chemical, biological, or a combination of these techniques.

Conservation benefits may include but are not limited to:

- creation of a desired plant community,
- reduced soil erosion and sedimentation,
- improved water quality,
- increased streamflow,

- improved wildlife habitat,
- improved forage, and
- reduced wildfire hazard.

Common Associated Practices

Early Successional Habitat Development/ Management (647) is commonly applied with conservation practices such as Field Borders (386), Forage Harvest Management (511), Land Clearing (460), Integrated Pest Management (595), Tree/Shrub Establishment (612), and Upland Wildlife Habitat Management (645).

For further information, contact your local NRCS field office.