

**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.

Where planting is required, native regionally adapted plant materials will be used whenever possible. Plant material specifications shall include only those found in the California Vegetation Guide specific to that MLRA for the site.

Native plants will be used wherever 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.

**CONSIDERATIONS**

Vegetative manipulation to maximize plant and animal diversity can be accomplished by management practices including: selected herbicide techniques, brush management, interseeding, 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.

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.

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. Management activities would be described under the practice requirements of the complementary practice Prescribed Grazing (528)

Management practices and activities should not disturb cover during the primary nesting period for grassland species. Exceptions can be allowed for periodic burning, light disking, selected herbicide techniques, selected

mechanical removal or mowing when necessary to maintain the health of the plant community. Mowing may be needed during the plant establishment period to control weeds and growth of woody vegetation.

#### **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 site. Specifications shall be

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recorded using approved specifications and job sheets. Narrative statements in the conservation plan or other acceptable documentation can supplement specifications or job sheets. Specifications shall be reviewed and approved by an NRCS biologist. Approval by state wildlife agency or other biologist can occur when directed by NRCS State biologist.

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.

Recommendations shall be transmitted to clients using NRCS approved specifications, job sheets, or customized narrative statements included in the conservation plan.

#### **OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE**

The following actions shall be carried out to insure 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).

Periodic disturbance will be incorporated into the management plan to ensure the intended purpose of this practice

Any use of fertilizers, pesticides and other chemicals to assure early successional management shall not compromise the intended purpose, and shall be applied in accordance with all applicable labels, laws, and regulations.

#### **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