

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE
CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD

UPLAND WILDLIFE HABITAT MANAGEMENT

(Acres)
Code 645



DEFINITION

Provide and manage upland habitats and connectivity within the landscape for wildlife.

PURPOSE

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

CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES

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

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

CRITERIA

General Criteria Applicable to All Purposes

Use the habitat evaluations for Florida (FL-CPA-33a through k) located in Section IV of the Field Office Technical Guide to identify habitat-limiting factors in the planning area.

Remove or reduce limiting factor(s) in their order of significance, as indicated by results of the habitat evaluation and application of this practice.

Application of this practice alone, or in combination with other supporting and facilitating practices, will result in a conservation system that will enable the planning area to meet or exceed the minimum quality criteria (≥ 0.50) for wildlife habitat established in Section III of the FOTG.

Look to the Florida NRCS Conservation Practice Standard 645 Guidance, Upland Wildlife Habitat Management, for additional components of this practice including, but not limited to:

- vegetation establishment for shelter, food and corridors;
- structural measures to provide shelter, food or corridors; and
- manipulation of vegetation to sustain desirable habitat conditions over time.

Include only high quality and adapted species in plant material establishment specifications.

Optimize vegetation survival and growth through proper site preparation, planting dates and planting methods.

For information regarding site preparation, species selection, seeding rates and post planting management see:

- Florida NRCS Conservation Practice Standards Critical Area Planting, Code 342; Forest Site Preparation, Code 490; Filter Strip, Code 393; Field Border, Code 386; Forage and Biomass Planting, Code 512; Range Planting, Code 550; Tree/Shrub Establishment, Code 612;
- Florida NRCS Plant List for Conservation Alternatives, Florida NRCS Field Office Technical Guide Section II (G) (1).

Restrict equipment travel, grazing, haying and other disturbance to habitat during critical periods

such as nesting, brood rearing, fawning or calving seasons. For exceptions, see Florida Conservation Practice Standard 645 Guidance, Upland Wildlife Habitat Management.

Control all invasive-exotic plant species, as listed by the Florida Exotic Pest Plant Council, and state and federal noxious weeds (see NRCS FOTG Section I, Laws, 4). Refer to the Florida Exotic Pest Plant Council, , <http://www.fleppc.org/>

Plan site preparation and planting at a time and manner to ensure establishment, survival and growth of selected species for achieving the intended purpose(s). Follow current Florida Forest Service (FFS) *Silviculture Best Management Practices* (BMPs) “primary zone” harvest and site preparation criteria: http://www.floridaforestservice.com/forest_management/bmp

Impact to cultural resources, wetlands and Federal and State protected species need to be avoided or minimized to the extent practical during planning, design and implementation of this conservation practice in accordance with established National and Florida NRCS policy; General Manual (GM) Title 420-Part 401, Title 450-Part 401, and Title 190-Parts 410.22 and 410.26; National Planning Procedures Handbook (NPPH) FL Supplements to Parts 600.1 and 600.6; National Cultural Resources Procedures Handbook (NCRPH); and The National Environmental Compliance Handbook (NECH).

CONSIDERATIONS

General Considerations Applicable to All Purposes

Evaluate energy consumption when developing the conservation plan; plan and design practices in a manner that requires the least amount of energy to accomplish the desired outcomes.

Mechanisms such as predation, hunting, disease transmission, nest parasitism, etc. may impact more than the desired kinds of wildlife. Evaluate and take into consideration these possible effects during the planning process, especially as they relate to species with declining populations.

Wildlife population control (i.e., hunting, trapping, etc.), which is the responsibility of state and federal wildlife agencies and the landowner, may be necessary to protect and maintain certain habitat elements.

If chemical treatment is to follow summer or fall application of prescribed fire, roller-chopping, etc., wait until enough regrowth has occurred to ensure adequate leaf-area and diminished stored carbohydrate of target species before application.

Soil disturbance should be kept to a minimum in natural communities where soil integrity is essential (e.g., sand pine scrub) and on slopes steeper than 8%.

Use native plants wherever possible.

PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

Persons with adequate training and/or conservation planning authority in the fields of wildlife management, biology or ecology will prepare plans and specifications for each site or habitat area. At a minimum, the following components shall be included in an upland wildlife management plan:

1. a description of the wildlife habitat management objective(s) and the species or general kinds of wildlife, or natural communities being managed for;
2. the location and acreage to be managed for upland wildlife;
3. an aerial photograph or map with planning area boundaries and location of proposed practices delineated;
4. a soil map with the planning area boundaries delineated;
5. a wildlife habitat evaluation (e.g. FL-CPA-33a to k);
6. a description of the recommended conservation practices and their intended purpose;
7. an implementation and maintenance schedule for all recommended practices;
8. approved NRCS specifications sheets, job sheets, technical notes or customized narratives providing technical guidance on proper implementation, operation and maintenance of recommended conservation practices;

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

An operation and maintenance (O&M) plan shall be prepared and provided to the landowner to ensure that the practice functions as intended over time.

Ensure that the practice functions as intended over time through the following operation, maintenance and management procedures:

- comply with NRCS policy and applicable federal, state and local laws and regulations required during the installation;
- annually inspect and repair structural or vegetative components;
- time haying and livestock grazing to avoid periods when upland wildlife are nesting, fawning, etc. and allow the establishment, development and management of upland vegetation for the intended purpose;
- remove or treat invasive exotic plant species;
- implement biological control of undesirable plant species and pests (e.g., using predator or parasitic species) where available, safe and feasible; and
- evaluate habitat conditions on a regular basis in order to adapt the conservation plan and schedule of implementation.

REFERENCES

- Bolen, Eric and William Robinson. 2002. *Wildlife Ecology and Management* 5th Edition. Prentice Hall, 656pp.
- Bookhout, T. A., Editor. 1994. *Research and management techniques for wildlife and habitats*. Fifth ed. The Wildlife Society, Bethesda, MD. 740pp.
- Myers, R. and J. Ewel. 1990. *Ecosystems of Florida*. University of Central Florida Press, Orlando, FL. 765pp.
- NRCS. 1979. *Management for wildlife: a supplement to wildlife standards and specifications for Florida*. Gainesville, FL. 89pp.
- NRCS, National Biology Handbook, Part 614.4, Conservation Corridor Handbook
- NRCS, National Biology Manual, Title 190.
- NRCS, General Manual, Florida Supplement to Part 409: Conservation Planning Policy.
- NRCS, Wildlife Habitat Management Institute, <http://www.ms.nrcs.usda.gov/whmi/>
- Yarrow, G.K. and D.T. Yarrow, 1999. *Managing wildlife: managing wildlife on private lands in Alabama and the Southeast*. Alabama Wildlife Federation, Montgomery, AL. 588pp.