

Land User _____ County _____ Date _____
 Farm # _____ Tract # _____ Assisted By _____

Upland Wildlife Buffer



Definition

Manage early plant succession to benefit desired wildlife and/or natural communities.

Where Used

Buffers are used at the edges of cropland fields to provide essential habitat for wildlife associated with cropland field edges.

Purposes

This practice is applied as part of a conservation management system to support one or more of the following:

- Increase plant community diversity
- Provide wildlife habitat for early successional species
- Provide habitat for declining species

General Specifications

- Habitat buffers will have a minimum width of 30 feet, and a maximum average width of 120 ft.
- The primary purpose is to provide cover, nesting habitat and escape cover for upland birds and other wildlife.

Proper selection of vegetation and vegetation structure is essential. The minimal, and very necessary, practice to establish upland bird habitat is disking. For establishment, disk the entire border between the months of November and February. Planting for specific species is not always necessary. Many times the soil “seed bank” will provide the “good” wildlife plants. If after 1-2 growing seasons, legumes, partridge pea, ragweed and other beneficial species are not established, then planting these areas is recommended. Liming and fertilization are not necessary.

If fescue, bermuda grass or Bahiagrass has a continuous cover of more than 20% of the proposed buffer, remove these species with appropriate herbicide.

Operation and Maintenance

Operation and maintenance are very important. Lightly disk one third of the area each year or the entire buffer once every three years between the months of November through February. Spot spray with approved herbicide to remove non-native grasses.

Shut off sprayers and raise tillage equipment to avoid damage to field borders.

Establishment Specifications

1. Establish Habitat Buffers for Upland Birds at locations indicated on the attached layout map, according to the specification indicated by a check mark below: The buffer width will vary from 30-120 ft. **NOTE: where excessive overhanging limbs shade the edges of a field, begin laying out buffers at the average “drip line” of the trees.**

___ If bermuda, bahia, or fescue has a continuous cover of more than 20% on the proposed buffer, use appropriate herbicide to remove these species before establishing buffer.

___ Disk entire border the first year and allow native vegetation to grow. (Nov-Feb only)

___ Plant the entire border the first year with native herbaceous species such as partridge pea, beggarweed, lespedeza or ragweed. No fertilizer recommended. No lime unless ph <5.5.

NOTE: See seeding rates and recommendations below

___ Plant <4 lbs per acre of Native Warm Season Grasses (NWSG) and native herbaceous species. This will normally take 2-3 years for NWSG establishment. No Fertilizer is recommended. Lime is not recommended unless ph is below 5.5. This will delay management by disking and burning for 1-3 years.

___ Overseed wheat, oats, millet, sorghum, or milo, at 15-20 lbs per acre and leave it fallow. Do not harvest the grain. **Overseed no more than 25% of buffers.** Fertilize at the rate of 100lbs/ac of 10-10-10 if necessary.

2. Use wire flags, pipes, or metal “t” posts to identify buffer edges, provide “aiming sticks” for equipment operators, divide buffer length into thirds.
3. When a land owner only wants to put a percentage of the field perimeter in the program, use these guidelines to prioritize areas of the field.
 - a. put buffer adjacent to pines stands, especially those that have been thinned and burned.
 - b. place buffers parallel to the direction of planting.
 - c. place where water either comes into the field or exits field.
 - d. landowners discretion.

Layout (locations indicated on map, below)	Section 1	Section 2	Section 3	Section 4	Total
Buffer width (average)	ft.	ft.	ft.	ft.	ft.
Buffer length	ft.	ft.	ft.	ft.	ft.
Buffer area	ac.	ac.	ac.	ac.	ac.
Seed with:					
Seeding rate:	lbs.	lbs.	lbs.	lbs.	lbs.
Disk only	ft.	ft.	ft.	ft.	ft.

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Management Specifications-

Begin management in the year following practice establishment according to the following specification: (**mowing is not allowed for management**)

1. Control woody plants and manage habitat using one or more of the following methods.

(listed in order of priority)

- lightly disk 1/3 of the width each year during Nov.- Feb **OR**
- lightly disk 1/3 of the length (in 300 ft segments) each year during Nov.- Feb. **OR**
- lightly disk the entire buffer every three years during Nov.- Feb. **OR**
- prescribe burn 1/3 of the area every year or burn entire buffer once every three years during February-March

Lightly disk to chop plant residue (leaving about 30-50% ground cover remaining).

Example: This field border provides a habitat transition between the field and forest.

Woody vegetation is controlled by lightly disking 1/3 of the field border each fall.



2. Control tall fescue, Bermuda grass and bahia grass, throughout the buffer using an approved herbicide according to its label directions. Control is necessary when these species occur over 40% or more of the buffer.
3. Plant a cool season small grain cover crop, like wheat, where necessary to prevent soil erosion on disked strips. This will allow native vegetation to become established.
4. After 1 or 2 years, if "good" wildlife vegetative species have not been established, plant a mixture native herbaceous species such as partridge pea, beggarweed, lespedeza, ragweed and NWSG. No fertilizer is recommended. No lime is recommended unless ph is below 5.5.

