NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD

RESTORATION AND MANAGEMENT OF RARE OR DECLINING HABITATS

(Ac.)

CODE 643

DEFINITION

Restoring and managing rare and declining habitats and their associated wildlife species to conserve biodiversity.

PURPOSE

Provide habitat for rare and declining species.

CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES

Sites that previously or currently support the rare or declining habitat targeted for restoration or management.

CRITERIA

Methods used will be designed to protect the soil resource from erosion and compaction.

Invasive species and noxious weeds shall be controlled. When possible, control will be done on a “spot” basis to protect native forbs and legumes that benefit native pollinators and other wildlife.

Undisturbed areas shall be conserved on a sufficient extent of the area to sustain disturbance-intolerant species.

Species and seeding rate specifications will be prepared to achieve desired habitat condition.

Only high quality and ecologically adapted plant materials will be used. When feasible, only local ecotypes will be used.

Site preparation, planting dates and methods, and plant material care and handling shall optimize vegetation survival and growth.

A pretreatment assessment of the targeted habitat will be documented to provide a baseline for comparison with post-treatment habitat assessment.

Use of fertilizers, pesticides and other chemicals shall not compromise the intended purpose of this practice.

Where disturbance is necessary (mowing, burning, grazing, soil movement) it must be scheduled to ensure optimum pollinator success.

CONSIDERATIONS

All necessary local, state, and federal permits shall be obtained by the landowner (or designee) prior to the restoration.

Confer with other agencies and organizations to develop guidelines and specifications for conserving declining habitats.

Vegetative manipulations to restore plant and/or animal diversity can be accomplished by prescribed burning or mechanical, biological or chemical methods, or a combination of the four.

Follow NRCS policy on cultural resources.

PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

Specifications for this practice shall be prepared for each habitat type. Specifications shall be recorded using approved specifications sheets and job sheets. Narrative statements in the conservation plan or other acceptable documentation may provide supplemental information to the specifications and job sheets.

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OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

Haying, grazing and other management activities will be planned and managed (including exclusion) as necessary to achieve and maintain the intended purpose.

Vegetation management and maintenance activities shall not be conducted during the nesting season except when necessary to achieve the desired habitat condition.

Habitat conditions should be evaluated on a regular basis to adapt the conservation plan and schedule maintenance to ensure the desired habitat condition.

Management and maintenance activities should be rotated to mimic natural disturbance regimes.

REFERENCES

Barbour, M.G., and W. D. Billings (eds.). 2000. North American Terrestrial Vegetation. Cambridge University Press, New York, Second Edition, 695 pp.

Kuchler, A.W. 1964 Potential Natural Vegetation of the Conterminous United States. American Geography Society, Special Publication 36. 116 pp. + map Second edition (revised), 1975.

Noss, R.F., E.T. LaRoe III, and J.M. Scott. 1995. Endangered ecosystems of the United States: a preliminary assessment of loss and degradation. Biological Report 28; National Biological Service, Washington, D.C.