

Early Successional Habitat Development/Management - 647

Massachusetts Strip Disking Job Sheet

Client:	Farm #:	Tract #:
Planned By:	Date:	
Acres to be Managed (Patch Size):	Target Species: Grassland species	

DEFINITION

Manage plant succession to develop and maintain early successional habitat to benefit desired wildlife and/or natural communities.

BACKGROUND/PURPOSE

Dense sod and vegetation is detrimental to wildlife feeding and movement. Strip disking can improve habitat quality by releasing sod-bound grasses, reducing residue, creating bare ground, and stimulating the growth of annual plants.



Annuals are prolific seed producers and provide seed eating birds and mammals with abundant food resources. Annual plant communities also support an abundant and diverse insect population, which provides a good protein source for growing nestlings and chicks. Without regular disturbance, annual plant communities will be replaced by perennial forbs and grasses and eventually woody plants through the process known as succession.

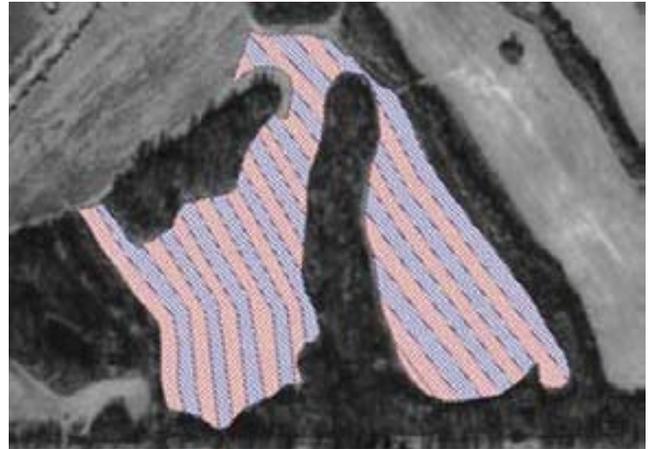


MANAGEMENT SPECIFICATIONS

- Disking can be done from fall through spring. Do not disk during the primary nesting season of April 15 through August 1.
- Disk 2 to 4 inches deep. Adjust the depth of the disk and or the number of passes to ensure that 50 percent plant residue remains on the soil surface.
- If soil erosion is a concern, the strips should be planned across the slope or on the contour. Disking should not be done on slopes greater than 5 percent.
- Do not disk sites where invasive plant species are present on site or nearby.

2-year rotation

1. Divide the field into strips from 30 to 75 feet wide.
2. Year 1, disk every other strip. Disked strips will be separated from each other by an area of undisturbed vegetation of equal width as the disked strip.
3. Year 2, disk the undisturbed strips from the previous year, leaving the first strips untouched.
4. Year 3, disk the strips that were done in year 1, leaving the strips disked in year 2 untouched.
5. Continue the rotation in subsequent years.

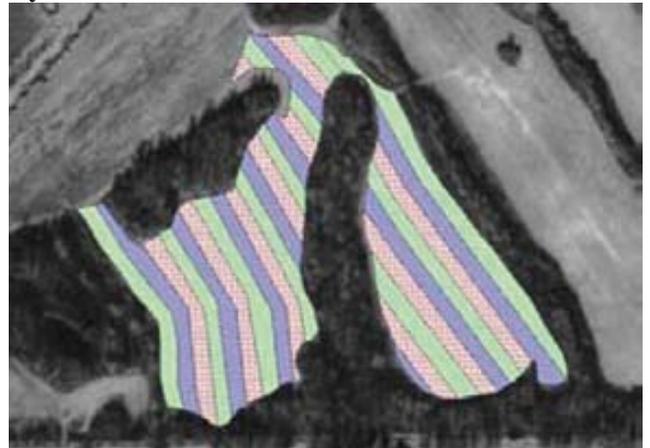


2 year rotation

3-year rotation

1. Divide the field into strips from 30 to 75 feet wide.
2. In year 1, disk every 3rd strip. The disked strips will be separated by strips of undisturbed vegetation that are 2 times the width of the disked strip.
3. In year 2, disk a strip that was previously undisturbed. This will result in disked strips separated from each other by a strip disked the previous year and a strip of undisturbed vegetation.
4. In year 3, disk the remaining strips.
5. Continue the rotation in subsequent years.

3 year rotation



MAINTENANCE

Maintain the disking rotation for as long as an annual plant component is desired as part of the grassland wildlife habitat.

Resources for More Information -

Light Disking to Enhance Early Successional Wildlife Habitat in Grasslands and Old Fields – USDA NRCS Technical Note 190-32, December 2005.

<http://www.fwrc.msstate.edu/pubs/nrcs.pdf>

