

**NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE
CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD**

UPLAND WILDLIFE HABITAT MANAGEMENT

(Ac.)

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 and water 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

A habitat evaluation or appraisal, approved by the NRCS state office, shall be used to identify habitat-limiting factors in the planning area.

Application of this practice shall remove or reduce limiting factor(s) in their order of significance, as indicated by results of the habitat evaluation.

Application of this practice alone, or in combination with other supporting and facilitating practices, shall result in a conservation system that will enable the planning area to meet or exceed the minimum

quality criteria for wildlife habitat established in Section III of the FOTG.

Establish additional criteria for components of this practice including, but not limited to:

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

Plant material specifications shall include only high quality and adapted species.

Site preparation, planting dates, and planting methods shall optimize vegetation survival and growth.

Equipment travel, grazing, haying, habitat management/maintenance practices, and other disturbance to habitat shall be restricted during critical periods such as nesting, brood rearing, fawning or calving seasons. In Mississippi, this critical period is from April 1 to October 1. Exceptions can be allowed to maintain the health of the plant or ecological community being managed for the benefit of wildlife (e.g., mechanical or other means to control noxious vegetation during establishment or restoration of desirable vegetation or use of prescribed fire to mimic natural seasonal occurrence of fire). Exceptions must be approved by an NRCS biologist.

Control of regulated noxious weeds and invasive plants shall be specified.

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

**NRCS, Mississippi
September 2011**

CONSIDERATIONS

The following habitat elements should be considered when assessing wildlife habitat. Not all may apply to every habitat type.

1. Food - Provide a variety of food for the desired kinds of wildlife species to meet year round needs.
 - a. Type
 - b. Amount
2. Cover - Provide a variety of cover types to meet year round and life-cycle needs for the desired kinds of wildlife species, examples include nesting, fawning, loafing, resting, escape, travel lanes, and thermal;
 - a. Type
 - b. Amount
3. Water - Provide drinking and bathing water for the desired kinds of wildlife species.
 - a. Quality
 - b. Quantity
 - c. Accessibility
 - d. Seasonal availability
4. Interspersion and Distance to: (Arrange habitat elements in proper amounts and locations to benefit desired species.)
 - a. Crops
 - b. Grasses and or legumes
 - c. Shrubs
 - d. Trees
 - e. Water
 - f. Openings
5. Migration - Consider habitat linkages and habitat corridors when developing upland wildlife habitat.
 - a. Routes
 - b. Season of use
 - c. Corridors

Consider the problems of habitat fragmentation: create large blocks of habitat verses increased edge which leads to predation and parasitism by some species such as cowbirds. However, increased edge is recommended for some species such as bobwhite quail.

As indicated by the wildlife habitat evaluation, certain habitat elements may be weak or missing. For the desired species, identify the types, amount, and distribution of habitat elements and management actions necessary to achieve the management objectives.

The amount and kinds of habitat elements planned, their location and management shall be identified in a management plan.

The use of native plant materials shall be encouraged.

Vegetative manipulations to restore plant and/or animal diversity shall be accomplished by management/maintenance practices, such as prescribed burning or mechanical, biological or chemical methods, or a combination of the four. Where feasible, light stripdisking or prescribed burning shall be utilized instead of mowing.

This practice may be used to promote the conservation of declining species, including threatened and endangered species.

Consider applying chemical pesticides or other control of noxious weeds on a "spot" basis to protect forbs and legumes that benefit native pollinators and other wildlife and provide insect food sources for grassland nesting birds,

Biological control of undesirable plant species and pests (e.g., using predator or parasitic species) should be implemented where available and feasible.

This practice may affect the target species as well as non-target species though mechanisms such as hunting, predation, disease transmission, nest parasitism, etc. Consider effects of this practice on species with declining populations.

Wildlife population control may be necessary to protect and maintain certain habitats. This is a responsibility of the landowner. State and federal regulations may apply to population control methods.

Undisturbed areas conserved at a sufficient extent during management activities, may sustain disturbance-intolerant animals and plants.

Other conservation practices that may be utilized in conjunction with this practice to create a wildlife management plan.

PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

NRCS shall ensure that plans and specifications for this practice are prepared or reviewed and approved by persons with adequate training in the fields of wildlife management, biology or ecology.

Written specifications, schedules and maps shall be prepared for each planning area and each habitat type.

Specifications shall:

- Identify the amounts and kinds habitat elements, locations and management actions necessary to achieve the client's management objectives.
- Describe the appropriate method, timing and intensity of management needed to produce the desired habitat conditions and sustain them over time.

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

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

The following actions shall be carried out to ensure that this practice functions as intended throughout its expected life:

- Evaluate habitat conditions on a regular basis in order to adapt the conservation plan and schedule of implementation.
- Annually inspect and repair structural or vegetative components of this practice.

REFERENCES

Bolen, Eric and William Robinson. 2002. *Wildlife Ecology and Management* 5th Edition. Prentice Hall, 656 pp.

Bookhout, T.A. (ed.). 1996. *Research and Management Techniques for Wildlife and Habitats*, 5th Ed. Wildlife Society, 740 pp

Rayne, Neil F. and Fred C. Bryant. 1994. *Techniques for Wildlife Habitat Management of Uplands*. McGraw-Hill, Inc., 841 pp.

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