

USDA
NATURAL RESOURCES
CONSERVATION SERVICE

MARYLAND CONSERVATION
PRACTICE STANDARD

**EARLY SUCCESSIONAL
HABITAT DEVELOPMENT/
MANAGEMENT**

CODE 647
(Reported in Acres)

DEFINITION

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

PURPOSE

This practice may be applied for one or more of the following purposes:

1. Increase plant community diversity to provide habitat for early successional species;
2. Provide or restore wildlife habitat for those species that need early successional vegetative habitat.

**CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE
APPLIES**

On all lands that are suitable for the kinds of desired wildlife and plant species.

CONSIDERATIONS

Managing for early successional plant communities is beneficial, and may be essential, for less mobile animal species. The less mobile the species, the more important it is to provide all the habitat requirements in a small area.

When planning practices that will be managed for early successional habitat, consider that wildlife habitat purposes often require lighter seeding or planting rates than specified for erosion control.

Consider that this practice will need to be applied periodically to maintain the desired early successional plant community.

Consider a treatment layout that will best facilitate operation of all machinery used to manage the area. Whenever possible, lay out plantings to allow multiple or full width passes by all farm implements.

CRITERIA

Management shall be designed to achieve the desired plant community in density, vertical and horizontal structure and plant species diversity for the desired wildlife species.

Vegetative manipulations to restore plant diversity and provide for wildlife habitat shall be accomplished by selected herbicide techniques, selective cutting, disking, mowing, prescribed burning, prescribed grazing, or a combination of these practices, as appropriate.

Where planting is needed, native regionally adapted plant materials shall be used whenever feasible.

Contamination by pesticides, herbicides, and other chemicals shall be avoided. If weed control is necessary, preference shall be given to mechanical rather than chemical methods, whenever feasible. Frequent monitoring of the habitat area and adjacent areas should minimize the need to control invasive plant species. Noxious weeds shall be controlled as required by state law. Control undesirable invasive species and nuisance species to the extent feasible.

Management practices and activities shall not disturb cover during the primary nesting period for grassland species (April 15 – August 15). Exceptions may be allowed for periodic burning, disking, selected herbicide techniques, selected mechanical removal or mowing when essential to maintain the health of the plant community.

To benefit insect food sources for grassland nesting birds, spraying or other control of noxious weeds during the nesting season shall be done on a “spot” basis to protect grasses, forbs and

Conservation practice standards are reviewed periodically, and updated if needed. To obtain the current version of this standard, contact the [Natural Resources Conservation Service - Maryland](#) or visit the [electronic Field Office Technical Guide \(eFOTG\)](#).

legumes that benefit native pollinators and other wildlife.

If this practice will be used to maintain or improve habitat for declining species or threatened and endangered species, consult with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, as appropriate.

Note: Specific cost-sharing programs or other funding sources may dictate criteria in addition to, or more restrictive than, those specified in this standard.

PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

Plans and specifications for establishment of this practice shall be prepared in accordance with the previously listed criteria. Plans and specifications shall contain sufficient detail concerning habitat management activities to ensure successful implementation of the practice. Documentation shall be in accordance with the section "Supporting Data and Documentation" in this standard.

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

An operation and maintenance (O&M) plan shall be prepared for each early successional management site. Appropriate Job Sheet(s) may be used to serve as the management plan as well as supporting documentation, and shall be provided to the land user. At a minimum, the following components shall be addressed in the O&M plan, as applicable:

1. Extent of management needed to maintain the desired plant community; and time of year restrictions on disking, burning, etc., as applicable;
2. Inspect periodically (at least annually) to determine whether the desired vegetation is present in suitable quantity, quality, and distribution to meet the objectives of the project.

SUPPORTING DATA AND DOCUMENTATION

The following is a list of the minimum data and documentation to be recorded in the case file:

1. Identify the wildlife species desired and the type of habitat to be managed. Provide the field location, extent of the practice, and assistance notes. Also note the location of the practice on the conservation plan map;
2. Completed copy of the appropriate Job Sheet(s) or other specifications, and management plans.

REFERENCES

1. Best, L. B., K. E. Freemark, J.J.Dinsmore and M. Camp. 1995. *A Review and Synthesis of Bird Habitat Use in Agricultural Landscapes of Iowa*. Am. Midl.Nat. 134:1-29.
2. Burger, L.W. 2002. *Quail Management: Issues, Concerns, and Solutions for Public and Private Lands - A Southeastern Perspective*. Proceedings of the National Quail Symposium 5.
3. Hamrick, R.G., and J.P. Carroll. 2002. *Response of Northern Bobwhite Populations to Agricultural Habitat Management in South Georgia*. Proceedings of the 9th Annual Conference of the Wildlife Society 9:129.
4. Roseberry, J.L. 1992. *Effects of Emerging Farm Practices and Practices on Habitat Quality for Upland Game: Upland Game Habitat Associations*. Cooperative Upland Research, Illinois Department of Conservation.