



# Habitat Buffer for Upland Birds (CP33)

Conservation Reserve Program

Jobsheet

- Applications accepted all year
- Farm owners and operators can enroll
- Payments offered for seeding native plants
- No ranking or competition for funding
- Land rental, cost-share and management payments provided
- Bonus payment for new enrollment
- 10-year contracts
- Maintains present-use value tax assessment

**Habitat Buffers for Upland Birds** are strips of established native vegetation, or volunteer fallow vegetation located around crop field edges to provide nesting and brood cover for bobwhite quail and other upland birds. These buffers also can protect water quality, reduce agricultural production input costs and support integrated pest management.

The CRP Continuous Signup allows enrollment of eligible land throughout the year.

## How Much Money's At Stake?

The CRP payment will be based on soil rental rate, signing incentive, and practice incentive, if applicable. Cost sharing for the required habitat management is also available. These CRP contracts are 10-years in length.

## Who and What's Eligible?

Land owners or tenants may enroll in CRP. Land must have been cropped in at least four years during 2008 to 2013.

## Need More Information?

Contact a local office of the USDA's Farm Service Agency for information about your eligibility, the actual payments you might receive from a CRP contract, and other questions about upland bird habitat buffers.

## What's Expected?

Establish and maintain early succession buffers

with an average width of 30 to 120 feet.

Controlling undesirable plants such as tall fescue, Bermuda grass and other undesirable species as part of establishment process.

Managing habitat using one of the following methods on 1/2 of the total buffer acreage each year:

- fall or winter disking
- prescribed burning

Mark buffer/field boundaries using PVC pipes  $\geq$ 1-inch diameter by 5-foot tall pipes, driven at least 1-foot into the soil to limit production encroachment into buffer and identify management areas.

Control woody plants, and exotic grasses with spot-applied herbicide as needed.

Utilize cool season small grain cover crop, like wheat, where needed to limit erosion.

## Important Limitations

Buffers are not wildlife food plots.

Buffers are not for agricultural production.

Buffers are not used for turn rows, roads, or storage areas for crops or equipment.

Buffers must be protected from all disturbance during nesting season, April 15-September 15.



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## Specifications for Habitat Buffer for Upland Birds (CP33)

The planner must ensure specifications provided meet CP33 guidelines and applicable criteria of NRCS e-FOTG 386 and 647.

### Planting

Establish and manage naturally occurring (volunteering) grass and forbs at locations indicated on your detailed practice plan map. Establish native habitat forming grasses and forbs at locations indicated in your conservation plan map using the seeding specification indicated below.

### Site Preparation

- Use herbicide to control existing vegetation.
- Prepare planting site (including removal of rocks, stumps and other obstructions) to ensure close contact of seeds with the soil and to ensure safe and efficient operation of equipment.
- Amend soil cautiously and avoid nitrogen during establishment. High soil fertility can promote weed growth and competition for recently seeded native vegetation. Most native species find the fertility they need on set-aside cropland.
- Firm conventional seedbeds enough to hardly reveal adult footprints before seed is planted.
- Other instructions:

Seeding

Planting Rate

Planting Date

Planting Depth

### Marker Posts

Install 1-inch by 5-foot (or larger) pipes, driven at least 1-foot into the soil to identify habitat boundaries, and provide "aiming sticks" for equipment operators at locations indicated on plan map.

### Habitat Management and Maintenance

Disturbance at scheduled intervals is so important for producing good early succession habitat that it is a requirement for CP33 contracts. Disking or prescribed burning are used to manage the habitat- sometimes in combination. Participants choose which method(s) best suit their site. Herbicide is applied to control persistent trees and shrubs, so the desired grassy habitat is not overtaken.

Disking Buffer to Manage Habitat



Prescribed Burning Buffer to Manage Habitat

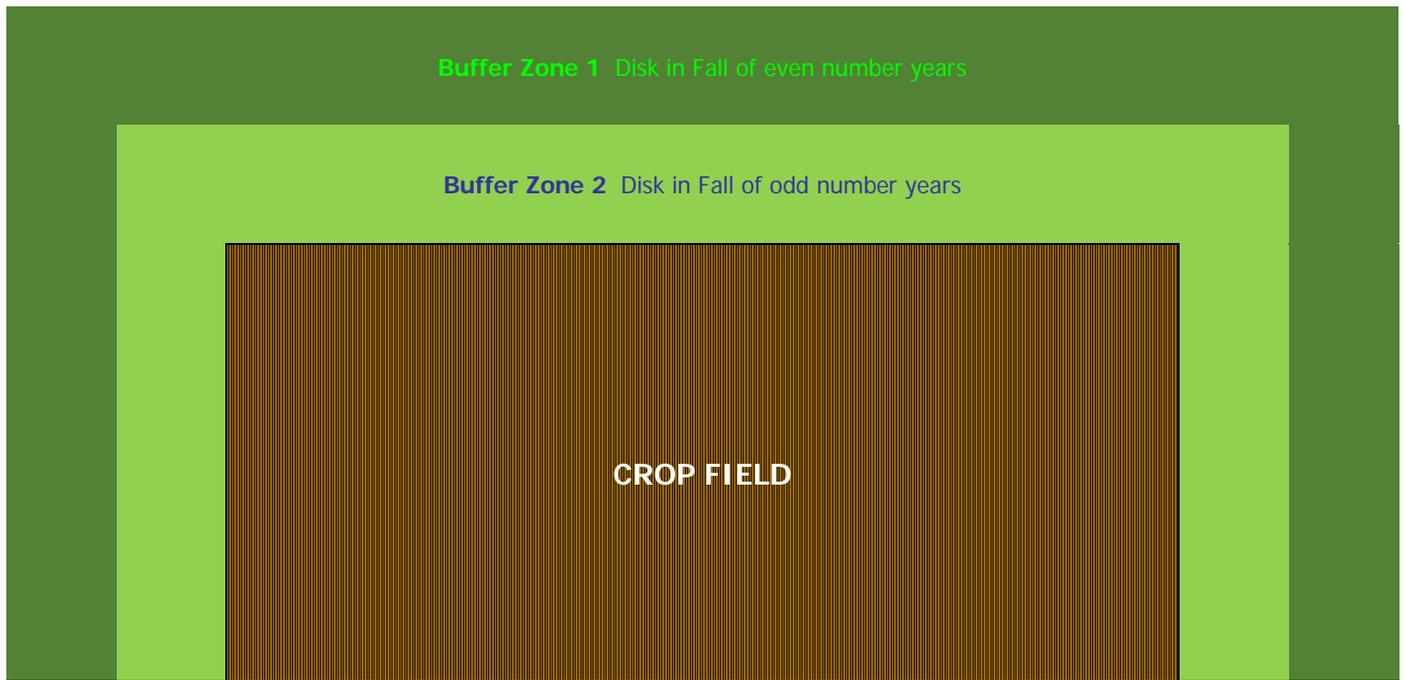


## Management Specification

Begin management one year following practice establishment according to the following specification:

1. Manage habitat using one or more of the following disturbance methods on 1/2 of the buffer area each year between September 16<sup>th</sup> and April 14<sup>th</sup>
  - lightly disk to chop and stir plant residue (leaving about 50% ground cover remaining), or
  - prescribed burn
2. If needed to control soil erosion in spots after disking, broadcast wheat or oats on the erosion prone spots.
3. Apply herbicide according to it label's directions to control trees, shrubs, woody vines, Bermudagrass and Tall fescue that remain after disturbance. Trees and shrubs must never be allowed to exceed 10% of the buffer's canopy and woody vines, Bermudagrass and Tall fescue must not exceed 25% of the buffer's groundcover.

**Example:** This buffer is divided into 2 zones. Disturbance is applied by lightly disking half of the field border acreage each fall. Woody vegetation is be spot treated as needed to maintain a grassy and herbaceous dominated habitat.



## Maintenance Specification

1. Maintain original width and length of the buffer.
2. Protect buffers from all disturbance during the nesting season (April 15- September 15).
3. Inspect marker pipes annually and as needed. Do not plant wildlife food plots in buffers.
4. Do not use buffers for production of hay, forage, or crops.
5. Do not use buffers for turn rows, roads, or storage areas for crops, soil amendments or equipment.
6. Inspect for erosion after major storms, remove accumulated sediment and re-grade washouts, stabilize repaired area by planting a small grain cover crop.
7. Control trees, shrubs, woody vines, Bermudagrass, Tall fescue and noxious or invasive plants in the buffer whether or not the treatment is cost-shared.
8. Stay in contact with natural resource professionals to ensure high quality habitat.
9. **Enjoy** the varied species of wildlife that visit your buffer.

**Hand Drawn Sketch Map of Buffer** *(use by conservation planner is optional)*

