United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

Animal Enhancement Activity – ANM33 – Riparian buffer, terrestrial and aquatic wildlife habitat

State Criteria (same as NATIONAL CRITERIA)
Additional Criteria for Nebraska

EXISTING FOREST BUFFERS

Eligible riparian zones for existing forest buffers include:
Seasonal or Intermittent Streams – must have a defined bed and bank with <2% slope and 30 cumulative days of flow per year causing hydrophytic vegetation in the stream bed OR a scoured, non-vegetated channel.
Perennial Streams/Rivers – must have flow throughout the year in most years.
Wetlands – provided that they are either semi-permanently flooded (surface water present throughout the growing season in most years) or wetter AND are located within the floodplain of a stream or river.

General Elements (required for all managed riparian forest buffers and correlated to the national criteria):

1) Width of the forested riparian zone must be a minimum of 35 feet OR 2.5 times the width of the stream/river channel – whichever is greater.
2) Manage species diversity using one of the options listed below (or a combination of them):
   - Invasive species will be removed/suppressed as a part of the management plan. These species include: saltcedar, Russian olive, Eastern red cedar, phragmites, purple loosestrife, hybrid cattail, and reed canarygrass.
   - Conduct thinning to remove undesirable tree species (i.e. Siberian elm, white mulberry, honeylocust, etc.) in order to favor desired tree species (i.e. oaks, cottonwood) or release understory plants (i.e. native shrubs, grasses, and forbs or legumes). These removed trees can be used to create brush piles.
   - Specific management practices approved by NRCS and intended to improve plant diversity and vigor are allowed on larger herbaceous areas but are not required during the CSP contract period. These activities include prescribed burning, tillage and interseeding, and site-specific herbicide treatments to accommodate interseeding desired grasses, forbs, or legumes.
   - Improve diversity of riparian forest buffer by planting woody or herbaceous species on a minimum of 25% of the buffer using requirements outlined below.
     Requirements for plant materials used to improve diversity:
     - ✓ Woody species to be planted to maintain/improve diversity will only consist of native (based on Vegetative Zone) deciduous trees and shrubs which are adapted to the site conditions. Use of coniferous trees is not acceptable with this enhancement. One flowering shrub, identified in the pollinator enhancement (PLT01) must currently exist or be planted within all riparian forest buffers.
     - ✓ Herbaceous seedings will include a minimum of 5 species of grasses and forbs or legumes used in combination to meet the (393) Filter Strip or (390) Riparian Herbaceous Cover standards. This requires a minimum seeding rate of 40 PLS/ft^2 for grasses and 60% of the grass mixture shall consist of sod-forming, stiff-stemmed species. Acceptable grass species are located on the "wildlife friendly" plant list. All herbaceous seedings must contain forbs and/or legumes at a seeding rate of 10% to 25% of the grass mixture (4 PLS/ft^2 to 10 PLS/ft^2). Acceptable species are located on the "wildlife friendly" plant list.
     - ✓ Projects that require interseeding into existing vegetation will need specifications developed to suppress growth during the period of establishment for seeded species including techniques such as tillage, herbicides, prescribed burning, etc. Site preparation must be documented on the NE-CPA-8 Grass Seeding Job Sheet. Seeding rates can be lowered to accommodate existing vegetation that is desired and will be maintained.

3) Create snags (standing dead tree) by cutting through cambium layer of undesirable trees. A minimum of one snag should exist per acre of riparian forest buffer with an optimum density of three snags per acre. Each snag should be a minimum of six feet tall and at least six inches in diameter at breast height (4.5 feet above the ground) with an occasional snag being at least ten inches in diameter.
4) Manage the riparian zone according to the following haying/grazing criteria to maintain adequate cover.
   The following activities are allowed for operation/maintenance and management:
   No haying or grazing is allowed within any zone planted to trees and shrubs.
   Haying is permitted on herbaceous areas ("openings" within the riparian forest buffer) up to once per three year period (following establishment) provided it is conducted after July 15th and prior to September 1st.
   Grazing is permitted on larger herbaceous areas up to once per three year period (following establishment) provided it is conducted after July 15th and does not exceed a 30 day period during the growing season OR a 60 day period during the dormant season.
5) Use of heavy equipment is allowed for the initial treatment to accomplish invasive species control.

Documentation Requirements (SEE NATIONAL ENHANCEMENT ACTIVITY JOBSHEET)
Complete the Table below:

To be completed by NRCS and Producer during planning						To be completed by Producer during certification			
1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**
Tract	Field	Acres Plan-ned	Lin. Ft. Plan-ned	Pro-posed Activity	Approx-imate Time-frame	Acres Applied	Lin. Ft. Applied	Applied Activity	Date Applied
Ex.100	*2b*	*3.0 Ac.*	*13,075*	*Remove E. red cedar from cottonwood understory*	*August 2014*	*3.o Ac.*	*13,075*	*Cut cedars and created small brush piles for wildlife*	*Aug.-Sept. 2014*

EX= EXAMPLE, COLUMNS 1-6 NRCS COMPLETES, COLUMNS 7-10 PRODUCER COMPLETES

Buffers enrolled into the Nebraska Buffer Strip Program are eligible for this enhancement. Lands enrolled into the Conservation Reserve Program are not eligible to enroll in the Conservation Stewardship Program.

EXISTING NON-FORESTED BUFFERS

Eligible riparian zones for existing non-forested buffers include all seasonal, intermittent, and perennial streams; all wetlands (temporary to permanent); all ponds and lakes.

General Elements (required for all managed non-forested-riparian buffers):

Mixture planted to improve the diversity of native or natural vegetation must contain the following:
A minimum of 5 species of grasses and forbs or legumes used in combination to meet the (393) Filter Strip or (390) Riparian Herbaceous Cover standards. This requires a minimum seeding rate of 40 PLS/ft^2 for grasses and 60% of the grass mixture shall consist of sod-forming, stiff-stemmed species. Acceptable grass species are located on the "wildlife friendly" plant list. All seedings must contain forbs and/or legumes at a seeding rate of 10% to 25% of the grass mixture (4 PLS/ft^2 to 10 PLS/ft^2). Acceptable species are located on the "wildlife friendly" plant list. Native shrubs (based on Vegetative Zone) and adapted to the site may also be included with plantings designed to improve diversity of the buffer.

Projects that require interseeding into existing vegetation will need specifications developed to suppress growth during the period of establishment for seeded species including techniques such as tillage, herbicides, prescribed burning, etc. Site preparation must be documented on the NE-CPA-8 Grass Seeding Job Sheet. Seeding rates can be lowered to accommodate existing vegetation that is desired and will be maintained.

Select from one of the following to meet the requirements of this enhancement:

1. Control invasive plant species within the riparian zone from the following list: saltcedar, Russian olive, Eastern red cedar, phragmites, purple loosestrife, hybrid cattail, and reed canarygrass. Attach specifications for adequate control. This will often require multiple treatments used in combination (i.e. mowing followed by spraying, etc.).
2. Limit livestock use of the riparian zone through a prescribed grazing management plan (following establishment of seeded species). Examples include:
    a. Targeting the suppression of invading cool-season grass (Kentucky bluegrass) by conducting "heavy grazing" pressure within the riparian zone for a short period of time (14 days or less) between April 1st and May 1st of each year and again between September 1st and October 1st of each year. The riparian area would be deferred from grazing the remainder of the year.
    b. Permitting grazing up to once per three year period (following establishment) provided it is conducted after July 15th and does not exceed a 30 day period during the growing season OR a 60 day period during the dormant season.
3. Control access of people, machinery, and livestock to the riparian zone with fencing. This requires that no vehicle trails or storage areas for machinery/building materials/hay/etc. exist within the riparian zone and that haying occur not more often than once every three years (following establishment of seeded species) with cutting done after July 15th and prior to September 1st. No livestock grazing (other than using "water gaps") is allowed under this management action.
4. Provide off-site watering source(s) for livestock to remove reliance on the stream, pond, lake or wetland for watering livestock. This will require that a new water source using a tank be developed a minimum of 300 feet from the stream, pond, etc. AND that livestock access to the stream, pond, etc. be limited by fencing (such as in #3 above) or rotational grazing strategies (such as those used in #2 above) to exclude livestock.

Documentation Requirements (SEE NATIONAL ENHANCEMENT ACTIVITY JOBSHEET)
Complete the Table below:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Tract	Field	Acres Planned	Lin. Ft. Planned	Proposed Activity	Approximate Timeframe	Applied Acres Applied	Lin. Ft. Applied	Applied Activity	Date Applied
Ex.100	*2b*	*3.0 Acres*	*13,075*	*Control phragmites with mow-spray method*	*Mow – 4/ 2014 Spray – 8/ 2014*	*3.0*	*13,075*	*Mowed phragmites in March and sprayed regrowth in August*	*Mow-4/2014 Spray-8/2014*

EX= EXAMPLE, COLUMNS 1-5 NRCS COMPLETES, COLUMNS 7-10 PRODUCER COMPLETES

I certify that the enhanced riparian buffer meets these specifications including the following documentation as applicable:

- Map with enhanced riparian buffer clearly identified (highlighted, outlined, etc.).
- Site-specific plan for either Invasive Species Control or Grazing Management (attach to this document) which provides the basic information noted below (include job sheets/receipts, etc.):
  Invasive Species Control – species being targeted, timing of activities, herbicides used, application method, environmental considerations (i.e. migratory birds), follow-up evaluation.
  Grazing Management Plan – number and class of livestock, timing and duration of grazing events, rotations used, infrastructure needed (i.e. fence and tanks), monitoring parameters.
- Completed NE-CPA-8 Grass Seeding Job Sheet and associated seed tags, and bills as required.
- Completed NE-CPA-15 Tree Planting Job Sheet and associated invoices for trees/shrubs, as required.
- Documentation of the management activity performed – (completed table above).

Certified by: _____ Date:_____

URL for "wildlife friendly" plant list:
http://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov/references/public/NE/Wildlife_Friendly_Plant_List_2012.pdf