

Animal Enhancement Activity –ANM08- Improve the plant diversity and structure of non-cropped areas for wildlife food and habitat



Enhancement Description

Improve the plant diversity and structure of non-cropped areas for wildlife food and habitat through the planting and/or management of native plant species.

Land Use Applicability

The enhancement is applicable to cropland and pasture land.

Benefits

Intensively managed agricultural land does not provide the habitat required for many species of birds and animals. By establishing or improving the composition and structure of native plant species in non-cropped areas, essential habitat will provide wildlife, including pollinators, with food and cover for nesting, fawning, loafing, roosting, travel and escape from predators and adverse weather.

Criteria to improve the plant diversity and structure of non-cropped areas for wildlife food and habitat

1. Vegetation type will primarily be native to the site or recognized by NRCS standards as suitable wildlife and pollinator habitat. Vegetation density will be sufficient to control erosion, retard sediment from leaving the site, and to permit runoff water to be of high quality. Livestock will be excluded from the site unless prescribed grazing is identified in the management prescription.
2. If the non-cropped area is being managed as early successional habitat, it will be maintained by prescribed fire, periodic disking or suitable mechanical disturbance, prescribed grazing, or selective herbicide application. Maintenance activities will be conducted outside of the nesting/fawning season or by NRCS prescription. The non-cropped area will not be smaller than 0.1 acre and there will be 1 acre of habitat for every 40 acres of cropland.
3. If the non-cropped area is being managed as woodland, tree species typically associated with natural site conditions will be planted and/or maintained. Woodland patches will not be smaller than 1 acre and minimum width will be 90 feet. Woodland patches included in this enhancement will not be harvested or cut for firewood during the contract. Natural understory vegetation snags and down woody material will be maintained naturally.
4. Any existing wetlands used as the non-cropped areas for wildlife will be at least ½ acre in size and will be surrounded by a minimum of 33 feet of vegetation. See number 1 above.
5. Invasive, exotic vegetation must be controlled in all managed non-cropped habitat.



Documentation Requirements for Improve the plant diversity & structure of non-cropped areas for wildlife food and habitat

- Map showing areas and size to be treated.
- Identify what type of land use applies to each area.
- Documentation of the existing plant species.

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State Criteria

Habitat areas that currently consist of those species determined to be acceptable on the “wildlife friendly” list AND support a minimum of 25% forbs/legumes can be managed to maintain and improve plant diversity. A minimum of one management activity must be implemented during the contract period.

Habitat areas that are comprised of those species on “List B – Other Plants” must be converted to a mixture of desired plant species as noted under mixture requirements below. Management practices should be designed to completely destroy the existing stand prior to re-seeding the area to the desired plant mixture.

Habitat areas dominated by mature trees should follow the basic requirements found under Forest Stand Improvement for Habitat and Soil Quality (ANM15).

Mixture planted to improve plant diversity following management activity:

A minimum of 2 species of grasses, forbs or legumes (or more if needed) must be used in combination in order to meet a total of 5 desirable species within the stand. A plant species must constitute 10% of the stand and be present throughout the area to be considered toward the total diversity. Acceptable grass and legume species are located on the “wildlife friendly” plant list and appropriate native forbs are listed on the pollinator enhancement (PLT01).

All seedings must contain forbs and/or legumes at a seeding rate of 50% of the total mixture (100% forbs/legumes is acceptable provided adequate grass species are present). Minimum seeding rate for interseeding is 10 PLS/ft² but may be increased to improve success of establishment.

Mixture planted to reseed areas being converted from unsuitable species:

A minimum of 5 species of grasses, forbs or legumes must be used in combination. A plant species must constitute 10% of the seed mixture to be considered toward the total diversity. Acceptable grass and legume species are located on the “wildlife friendly” plant list and appropriate native forbs are listed on the pollinator enhancement (PLT01).

All seedings must contain forbs and/or legumes at a seeding rate of 25% of the total mixture. Minimum seeding rate for reseeded is 10 PLS/ft² on non-erosive sites and may be increased up to 30 PLS/ft² total to address areas subject to erosion (i.e. concentrated flow, etc.).

Choose one of the following management activities to complete prior to interseeding or reseeded mixture:

Tillage – The use of disking or other similar tillage method to create a minimum bare ground of 33% (50% bare ground to be used on sites with sod-forming, cool-season grasses). No tillage will be conducted May 1-July 15 to protect ground-nesting birds.

Prescribed Burning – Typically, this is only effective on sites dominated by warm-season grasses where introduced legumes are interseeded. Spring burns are the most common but fall burns are acceptable. No burning will be conducted May 1-July 15. A prescribed burn plan and burn permit must be obtained.

Herbicide Application – (This will likely be the option used to convert unsuitable species to the appropriate mixture. In those instances, “full rates” of herbicide will be used to completely remove existing vegetation.)



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Apply contact herbicide (i.e. glyphosate) at the appropriate time and rate to suppress existing vegetation to the extent that newly seeded species can become established. This will often require a pre-application treatment such as haying, mowing, or burning to remove residual growth and improve translocation of the herbicide.

The following activities are allowed for operation/maintenance:

Haying is permitted up to once per three year period (following establishment) provided it is conducted after July 15th and prior to September 1st.

Grazing is permitted 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.

Documentation Requirements

- Grass Seeding Job Sheet (NE-CPA-8) providing documentation of site preparation, seeding method, and composition of species planted or inter-seeded to meet requirements.
- Map with habitat area clearly identified (highlighted, outlined, etc.).
- Approved maintenance/management activities noted in table below intended to improve plant diversity and vigor.

Tract	Field	Acres	Proposed Activity	Approximate Timeframe
100	2b	6.0	Prescribed Burning and Interseeding	March of 2013

I certify that the following information meets specifications and have been provided to NRCS:

1. Written documentation consisting of a completed NE-CPA-8 Grass Seeding Job Sheet and associated seed tags, as required.
2. Map with habitat area clearly identified (highlighted, outlined, etc.).

Certified by: _____ **Date:** _____