

Plant Enhancement Activity – PLT06 - Renovation of a Windbreak, Shelter Belt or Hedgerow for Wildlife Habitat



Renovation of a Windbreak, Shelter Belt or Hedgerow for Wildlife Habitat

This enhancement is for the renovation of existing sites that are declining in vigor, need additional woody plants (trees or shrubs) or otherwise no longer provide wildlife habitat benefits. Existing rows of woody plants may be thinned, removed or replaced with new plantings. Existing woody plants may be pruned, either branches or roots or both, to improve windbreak function, health and vigor.

Land Use Applicability

This enhancement is applicable on cropland and pasture land.

Benefits

Renovation restores the function of existing windbreaks, shelterbelts or hedgerows to provide wildlife habitat benefits as well as other benefits such as reduced wind erosion, pesticide drift, mitigation of odor and noise and controlled snow deposition. Species composition may be upgraded by adding trees or shrubs that produce wildlife food and shelter as well as wood products and visual quality, such as spring blossoms or fall colors. Woody species threatened by pests such as emerald ash borer can be replaced with more resilient species that provide wildlife habitat benefits.

Criteria

- Identification of wildlife species to be benefited by the renovation.
- Develop a plan for new trees and/or shrubs that will provide the desired habitat and windbreak or shelter belt functions.
- Removal of dead or dying trees that do not provide the desired habitat unless habitat for cavity nesting wildlife is desired.
- Removal of other trees or invasives that do not provide the desired habitat.
- Replacement of removed trees by planting new trees or shrubs that will provide the desired habitat while serving the required windbreak or shelter belt function.
- Pruning or thinning of less desirable trees to encourage the growth of trees that will provide wildlife habitat and windbreak or shelter belt functions.

Documentation Requirements

- Brief written description of the tasks completed with dates and any receipts for planting stock, herbicides, etc.
- Delineations on a map or aerial photo of renovated windbreak



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State Criteria

Implementation of this enhancement requires that the following elements have been met:

Targeted Wildlife Species:

Select from one of the categories noted below or specify species or guild (group of species) being targeted.

Common Songbirds (American robin, Northern cardinal blue jay, American goldfinch, house wren, dark-eyed junco, cedar waxwing)

Woodland-dependent Songbirds (Northern oriole, white-breasted nuthatch, black-capped chickadee, rose-breasted grosbeak, yellow warbler)

Woodpeckers/Cavity Nesters (Northern flicker, red-headed woodpecker, downy woodpecker, hairy woodpecker, Eastern bluebird)

Grassland-dependent Birds (Bell’s vireo, Henslow’s sparrow, McCown’s longspur, greater prairie chicken, long-billed curlew, mountain plover)

Upland Game Birds (Northern bobwhite quail, ring-necked pheasant, sharp-tailed grouse, wild turkey mourning dove)

Raptors (Eastern screech owl, American kestrel, sharp-shinned hawk)

Small Mammals (Eastern cottontail rabbit, fox squirrel, raccoon)

Other (specify) _____

General Elements (required for all renovations):

All renovated windbreaks/shelter belts will consist of a minimum of three rows (either maintained or planted) following the renovation. At least one row will consist of shrubs.

Invasive woody species will be removed/suppressed as a part of the renovation. These species include: Amur honeysuckle; Autumn olive; Russian olive; European buckthorn; multi-flora rose which are on the Nebraska Department of Agriculture Watch List.

Species to be planted (replacement rows or added rows) will only consist of native (based on Vegetative Zone) deciduous trees and shrubs which are adapted to the site conditions. Coniferous species listed as medium or high wildlife value in the FOTG can also be used provided they are adapted to site conditions. They include Rocky Mountain juniper, Eastern red cedar, ponderosa pine, pinyon pine, white fir, Douglas fir, blue spruce, and Norway spruce.

Optional Elements (a minimum of one must be selected for all renovations):

Increase width of windbreak/shelter belt by adding one row of native shrubs adapted to site conditions.

(Recommended for Common Songbirds and Upland Game Birds)

Increase diversity of windbreak/shelter belt by adding/replacing one row with mast-producing, native tree species adapted to site conditions. *(Recommended for Woodland-dependent Songbirds and Small Mammals)*



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Natural Resources Conservation Service

NE-PLT06

Create snags (standing dead tree) by cutting through cambium layer of undesirable trees. A minimum of three snags should exist per acre of windbreak/shelter belt and, on larger windbreaks/shelter belts, a minimum of three snags per acre. Each snag should be a minimum of six feet tall with two out of three being at least six inches in diameter at “breast height” (4.5 feet above the ground) and the remaining snag being at least ten inches in diameter. (Recommended for Woodpeckers/Cavity Nesters)

Create small brush piles and scatter limbs loosely within the windbreak/shelter belt using downed material and/or removed trees and pruned limbs. Desired brush pile size is approximately five feet tall and 15 feet in diameter. At least one brush pile should exist per acre of windbreak/shelterbelt. (Recommended for Raptors and Small Mammals)

Remove or “top” trees greater than 20 feet tall in existing windbreaks/shelter belts within or immediately adjacent to grassland habitats which are 20 acres or larger. (Recommended for Grassland-dependent Songbirds)

Additional Elements (included as agreed upon between cooperator and NRCS planner):

Describe the activity being completed and the intended benefit to wildlife habitat conditions:

Documentation Requirements

- Tree Planting Job Sheet (NE-CPA-15) providing documentation of site preparation, planting method, and composition of species planted to meet requirements.
- Map with renovated windbreak/shelter belt clearly identified (highlighted, outlined, etc.).
- Wildlife species being targeted and associated plan components, as noted above or on attached NE-CPA-14 Wildlife Development/Management Plan.

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

1. Written documentation consisting of a completed NE-CPA-15 Tree Planting Job Sheet and associated invoices for trees/shrubs, as required.
2. Map with renovated windbreak/shelter belt clearly identified (highlighted, outlined, etc.).
3. Documentation of the wildlife species being target and the associated plan components. These are either noted above on this addendum or on NE-CPA-14 Wildlife Development/Management Plan.

Certified by: _____ **Date:** _____