

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE
CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD

RESTORATION AND MANAGEMENT
OF RARE OR DECLINING HABITATS

(Acre)

Code 643

DEFINITION

Restoring and managing rare and declining habitats and their associated wildlife species to conserve biodiversity.

PURPOSE

Provide habitat for rare and declining species.

CONDITION WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES

Sites that previously or currently support the rare or declining habitat targeted for restoration or management. The current condition of the site must either be similar to the original conditions or restorable to the original conditions such that there is a high likelihood of maintaining the desired habitat.

CRITERIA

The restoration or management must achieve all significant characteristics of the targeted habitat (e.g., plant diversity, vegetative structure, interspersion, extent, hydroperiod, landscape setting, and disturbance).

Undisturbed areas will be conserved on a sufficient extent of the area to sustain disturbance-intolerant species.

Methods used will be designed to protect the soil resource from erosion beyond that needed to maintain the desired plant community.

Invasive species and noxious weeds will be controlled. When possible, control will be done on a "spot" basis to protect desirable native plants and wildlife.

Only native, high quality and ecologically adapted plant materials will be used. When feasible, only local ecotypes will be used. Species and seeding rate specifications will be prepared to achieve desired habitat condition.

Site preparation, planting dates and methods, and plant material care and handling will optimize vegetation survival and growth. Use of fertilizers, pesticides and other chemicals will not compromise the intended purpose of this practice.

All activities conducted under this practice will comply with applicable federal, state and local laws and regulations.

A pretreatment assessment of the targeted habitat will be documented to provide a baseline for comparison with post-treatment habitat assessment.

CONSIDERATIONS

Confer with other agencies, organizations or specialists familiar with the desired habitat to develop guidelines and specifications for conserving declining habitats.

Evaluate the site to see whether restoration will require management techniques (mowing, burning, water management), vegetation establishment (seeding or planting), structures or a combination of these. The degree of past disturbance will dictate the measures needed

Consider impacts to threatened and endangered species or species of concern habitats. Evaluate this practice in terms of broader endangered species conservation efforts.

Follow-up habitat assessments will be performed on a regular basis. Management actions based on these assessments will be taken to achieve the desired habitat.

When determining the size and location of the restored area, consider the habitat requirements of target species such as minimum area and habitat interspersion,

Plant materials centers and commercial growers should be encouraged to develop plant materials for habitat restorations.

PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

Specifications for this practice will be prepared for each habitat type. Specifications will be recorded using approved specifications sheets, job sheets, narrative statements in the conservation plan, or other acceptable documentation. For wetland restorations, prepare site specific plans or prepare specifications in accordance with standard 657 (Wetland Restoration) and 644 (Wildlife Wetland Habitat Management). For upland habitats, prepare site specific plans or use specifications from 645 (Upland Wildlife Habitat Management) or other practices, as applicable.

Specifications will include:

- Site map indicating habitat type and acreage.
- Management practices needed to restore existing vegetation to the desired condition.
- Site preparation sufficient to establish and grow selected species.
- Species selection and seeding/planting rates to accomplish the planned purpose.
- Planting dates, care, and handling of the seed and other plant materials to ensure that they have an acceptable rate of survival.
- Statement that only viable, high quality and regionally adapted seed and plant materials will be used.

Plans for periodic inspections to determine the need for additional management actions or reseeding/replanting.

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

An operation and maintenance plan will be provided to and reviewed with the landowner. It should be emphasized that establishment of habitats with plant diversity similar to that of native habitat can take many years and require regular or intense management. Management during the initial years is very important in determining the success of the project. As the vegetation matures and goes through successional stages, changes in management practices including the introduction of new species may be required to maintain and enhance the desired habitat type.

The operation and management plan will include the following items and others as appropriate:

- Control and removal of undesirable vegetation as needed.
- Control of access by humans which might lead to undesired habitat alteration.
- Eliminate or control access by livestock unless used to manage the site.
- Use of mowing, burning or other disturbance to maintain desired habitat; this should include timing, frequency and intensity of these actions.
- Use of spot spraying or other chemical control of undesirable vegetation, including noxious weeds.

REFERENCES

Anderson, Dennis M. 1982. *Plant communities of Ohio: A preliminary description*. ODNR, Division of Natural Areas and Preserves. 183 pp.

Gordon, Robert B. 1969. *The natural vegetation of Ohio in pioneer days*. Bull. Of the Ohio Biological Survey. 109 pp.

Lafferty, Michael B. (ed.) 1979. *Ohio's natural heritage*. Ohio Academy of Science. 324 pp.

Noss, Reed F.; Edward LaRoe and Michael J. Scott. 1995. *Endangered Ecosystems of the United States: A preliminary assessment of loss and degradation*. US Department of the Interior, National Biological Survey, Biological Report 28.