

Texas Supplement

SHORT AND MID-GRASS PRAIRIES OF THE HIGH AND ROLLING PLAINS MLRA's 77 AND 78

RESTORATION AND MANAGEMENT OF DECLINING HABITATS CODE 643

This supplement is designed to provide requirements for restoring and managing short and mid-grass habitats in MLRA's 77 and 78. These sites historically were comprised of a plant community of predominantly grasses with smaller percentages of forbs and few to moderate amounts of woody species. These historical plant communities were not a precise percent of species. These communities fluctuate due to natural disturbances, soils, topography, and moisture conditions. The keystone wildlife species for these habitats are lesser prairie chicken and black-tailed prairie dogs

RESTORATION

Range Planting – If rangeland habitat is so degraded that management alone will not restore it, or the site is cropland or pastureland, then seeding is needed. The following seeding mixtures are developed as guidance for areas needing reseeding (cropland, pastureland and rangeland that is badly degraded).

Conservation Reserve Program – When utilizing this practice for CP-25, *Rare and Declining Habitats*, the following guidance should be followed. FOTG Conservation Cover Practice Standard will be the guidance for carrying out the practice. All required species (denoted with an *) must be included in the CRP seeding mixture. The remaining species will be optional and selection can be made to complete required CRP seeding mixture. Forbs, legumes, and woody plants must make up 5 to 15% of the CRP seeding mixture, depending on location and soil types. These percentages are denoted in following mixtures.

HIGH PLAINS (Clay, Clay Loam and Loamy Soils)

SPECIES	PERCENT OF COMMUNITY
Sideoats Grama*	5-15%
Blue Grama*	40-60%
Buffalograss *	10-20%
Vine-Mesquite	0-5%
Sand Dropseed	0-5%
Western Wheatgrass	0-5%
Little Bluestem	0-5%

The following species should make up 5%-10%

Engelmannndaisy	Skunkbush Sumac
Western Ragweed	Prairie Coneflower
Purple Prairie Clover	

NORTHERN HIGH PLAINS & ROLLING PLAINS (Sandy Loam, Loamy Sand and Sand Soils)

SPECIES	PERCENT OF COMMUNITY
Little Bluestem*	20-25%
Sand Bluestem*	25-30%
Switchgrass	0-5%
Indiangrass	0-5%
Giant Dropseed	0-5%
Sand Dropseed	0-5%
Plains Bristlegrass	0-5%
Sideoats Grama *	5-10%
Sand Lovegrass	0-5%
Canada Wildrye	0-5%

The following species should make up 10-15%

Western Ragweed	Skunkbush Sumac
Partridge Pea	Sand Plum
Prairie Clovers	Illionis Bundleflower

SOUTHERN HIGH PLAINS (Sandy Loam, Loamy Sand and Sand Soils)

SPECIES	PERCENT OF COMMUNITY
Little Bluestem*	5-15%
Sand Bluestem *	15-25%
Blue Grama	2-5%
Switchgrass	0-5%
Indiangrass	0-5%
Giant Dropseed	0-5%
Sand Dropseed *	5-15%
Plains Bristlegrass	0-5%
Sideoats Grama*	15-20%
Sand Lovegrass	0-5%

The following species should make up 5-15%

Annual Sunflower	Skunkbush Sumac
Illinois Bundleflower	Sand Plum
Engelmannndaisy	Western Ragweed

The keystone wildlife species habitat is also characterized by a moderate amount of native forbs such as wild buckwheat, sand lily, *Gaura* spp., *Aster* spp., western indigo, snoutbean, trailing wildbean, prairie acacia, sensitive briar, lead plant and scarlet globemallow. Small to moderate percentages of native shrubs such as shinnery oak, sand sagebrush, skunkbush sumac, yucca, and catclaw are also present.

MANAGEMENT

Management treatment consist of the application of a combination of conservation practices. These include Prescribed Grazing, Brush Management, Fencing, Water Facility, Prescribed Burning, Use Exclusion and Upland Wildlife Habitat Management.

Prescribed Grazing – Must be carried out to improve health, vigor and improve plant composition and to provide food and cover for animals of concern. Key grazing plants should be selected that are the highest successional plants and comprise at least 15% of the present plant community. Rotation grazing must be carried out to obtain improvement in existing plant community. Recovery period following grazing period is very important. Ninety days for rapid growth periods is needed and 150 plus days during slow periods of growth is needed.

Brush Management – These sites generally contained less than 20% woody species. Some sandy soils probably contained up to 40 percent sand shinnery. When used to reduce woody species, chemical and mechanical methods should be carried out to regain these percentages. Care should be taken to protect sites such as riparian areas and other special use areas. Dune areas (generally Tivoli soils) should not be treated with brush management as they can become active if brush is removed.

Fencing – Utilize fences to manage livestock and wildlife to protect new seeded areas and manage plant communities. Consider wildlife movement when locating and building fences. For antelope habitat the bottom wire should be 18 inches above ground surface. For deer habitat space the top two wires 10 inches apart to reduce the hazard of catching deer in the fence. Fences can also be utilized to protect sensitive areas such as riparian areas and wetlands.

Watering Facility – Facilities should be provided for livestock and wildlife at selected locations that will protect or improve habitats through proper distribution of grazing, protect riparian areas and other sensitive areas. Facilities should be designed for use by all classes and ages of wildlife.

Prescribed Burning – Prescribed burning must be carried out utilizing an approved NRCS burn plan. Burns can be utilized to change plant communities and maintain desired plant species. Burns should be conducted to leave unburned areas to provide nesting and escape cover plus food. Frequency of burns should be no more than once every 8 to 15 years in most cases.

Use Exclusion – This practice should be utilized to prevent or control access to areas such as riparian areas, wetlands, areas with excessive erosion and wildlife habitat, such as leks for lesser prairie chicken and black-tailed prairie dog towns.

Upland Wildlife Habitat Management – Utilize where habitat improvement techniques are needed to develop food and cover for individual species. This practice provides needed detailed information.

Wildlife Watering Facility - Utilize where specialized facilities are needed for specific wildlife species and design plans.

REFERENCES

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 Date

