

**NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE  
CONSERVATION PRACTICE SPECIFICATION**

**RESTORATION AND MANAGEMENT OF DECLINING HABITATS**  
(acre)

Code 643  
**Texas Supplement, Zone 3**

**Tamaulipan Thornscrub of the Coast Saline Prairie, Central Rio Grande Plains,  
and Lower Rio Grande Valley. MLRA's 83C, 83D, and 150B**

This supplement is designed to provide requirements for restoring and managing Tamaulipan thornscrub communities and associated wild species such as ocelot and jagarundi, which were once common to this landscape. These sites historically were comprised of a plant community of predominantly mixed, shrubby woody species with smaller percentages of forbs and some mid-grasses. These plant communities fluctuate due to natural disturbances, soils, topography, and moisture conditions. Most of this plant community has been lost to urban sprawl and intensive row-crop and orchard agriculture.

## **RESTORATION**

Range Planting-Where rangeland habitat is degraded primarily due to past mechanical manipulation of woody species, re-establishment of those woody species is essential. A list of woody species is provided for planting purposes in Table 1. In most instances, planting will require use of nursery seedlings due to non-availability of commercial seed.

Conservation Reserve Program-When utilizing this practice for CP-25 Rare and Declining Habitats, the following guidance should be followed. Field Office Tech Guide Conservation Cover Practice Standard will be the guidance for carrying out the practice. All required species (denoted with an \*) should be included in the CRP planting mixture where soil type allows. The remaining species will be optional and selection can be made to complete the required CRP planting plan. A minimum of 10 different species will be planted. Species from Table 1 shall be used.

Site Preparation-Grassy or weedy species present in the field to be planted must be controlled or suppressed prior to planting. Introduced herbaceous species such as buffelgrass, guinea grass, King Ranch and Kleberg bluestem are especially competitive. Woody species such as Baccharis are also invasive and competitive. Control/suppression may be accomplished through burning, shredding, herbicides, disking or a combination of the above. In cases where existing desirable forbs or woody species (e.g. mesquite, huisache, twisted acacia), have established among the introduced grasses, grass-specific herbicides may be used. These herbicides may best be used in combination with prescribed burning. If native grasses have established on the site, herbicides should not be used, but shredding should be done to reduce competition with thornscrub seedlings.

Planting Specifications-Seedlings will be planted at a minimum density of 250 plants per acre. Seedlings can be spaced 6-10 feet apart on portions of the field planted depending on desired density. Seedlings may be planted in bedded or unbedded rows or randomly as desired. Desirable minimum acreage to be planted is 25 acres and blocks of 50 acres or more would be most desirable. Seedlings may be planted by hand, with augers, or with a tree planter designed for that purpose. Seedlings should be planted at the proper depth (i.e. top of plant band level with or slightly lower than ground level). Seedlings will be planted in late fall or early winter, typically from October 15<sup>th</sup> through December 15<sup>th</sup>. Where irrigation is available, seedlings should be irrigated once or twice to aid in establishment.

Management-Post-planting management of thornscrub is minimal and should be aimed toward establishment of the seedlings. As introduced grasses re-establish, they may be controlled with grass-specific herbicides or by mowing. Prescribed burning should not be planned on the area until the planting is at least six years old. All grazing is prohibited. The overall goal of management on thornscrub planted acreage is to establish a minimum canopy cover of 80%, with an average canopy height of 6.5 feet over a 10-20 year planning horizon. A second goal is re-establishment of habitat and corridors that will be utilized by the endangered ocelot which is indigenous to this portion of the state.

### **References:**

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. November, 1988. Tamaulipan Brushland of the Lower Rio Grande Valley of South Texas: Description, Human Impacts and Management Options. Biological Report 88 (36).

Harveson, Tewes, Anderson, Laack. Habitat Use by Ocelots in South Texas: Implications for Restoration. 2004. Wildlife Society Bulletin, 2004, 32 (3) 948.954.

Everitt, James H., Drawe, Lynn D., and Lonard, Robert I., Trees, Shrubs, and Cacti of South Texas. 1993. Texas Tech University Press.

### Approval and Certification

**Practice Specifications Approved:**

**/s/ Russell Castro** **10/11/2005**

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**State Biologist** **Date**

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**/s/ Susan Baggett** **10/11/2005**

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**State Resource Conservationist** **Date**

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These practice specifications are needed in the \_\_\_\_\_ Field  
Office Technical Guide.

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District Conservationist Date

**Certification:**

Reviewed and determined adequate without need of revision.

**/s/ Stan Reinke**

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Zone 3 Wildlife Biologist

10/11/2005

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Date