

**NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE
CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD**

UPLAND WILDLIFE HABITAT MANAGEMENT

**(acre)
Code 645**

DEFINITION

Creating, restoring, maintaining or enhancing areas for food, cover, and water for upland wildlife and species which use upland habitat for a portion of their life cycle.

PURPOSE

Several conservation practices may be applied as part of a wildlife system to accomplish one or more of the following resource management objectives:

- A. Provide a variety of food for the desired kinds of wildlife species;
- B. Provide a variety of cover types for the desired kinds of wildlife species, examples include nesting, fawning, loafing, resting, escape, travel lanes, and thermal;
- C. Provide drinking water for the desired kinds of wildlife species.
- D. Arrange habitat elements in proper amounts and locations to benefit desired species.
- E. Manage the wildlife habitat to achieve a viable wildlife population within the species home range. Population control which is the responsibility of state and

federal wildlife agencies and the landowner may be necessary to protect and maintain certain habitats.

CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES

On lands that are suitable for the kinds of wildlife habitat that are needed within the range of the desired species or the natural community under consideration.

CRITERIA

General:

Food and cover requirements for wildlife may be provided by habitat elements that are part of other existing or proposed management systems or land uses. The habitat elements fulfilling the food and cover requirements and their management must be identified in the management plan.

Development and management options, to achieve the above, will be based on a wildlife habitat appraisal or evaluation. The appraisal or evaluation procedure will be used to determine a habitat suitability for individual fields, home range areas, habitat type or natural community as well as to provide an overall evaluation for the entire property or operating unit. The need for

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drinking water throughout the year will be considered.

Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Guide:

1. The property, operating unit, habitat type or home range area will be appraised, using a Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Guide (WHEG) for the desired species. The WHEG will result in a quality rating for habitat. This will consider the type, amount, and distribution of habitat elements required. The quality rating will be compared to the quality criteria in Section III of the FOTG as follows:

(a) If the evaluation indicates a level below the acceptable quality, alternatives will be recommended that will result in the necessary changes in habitat elements or their management to bring the rating up to the minimal acceptable or above.

(b) If the evaluation is at the minimum or above, alternatives will be recommended that will result in the necessary management to preserve, maintain or improve the existing habitat in its present state or toward optimum conditions. Various combinations of criteria, described under Habitat Elements, may be used to preserve or improve an area for the food, cover and water component of an ecosystem.

2. When the necessary measures or criteria required in items a or b above have been established on the land, Wildlife Upland Habitat Management (645) will be considered to be applied for that property or operating unit.

3. Habitat Elements

Following are examples of habitat elements that may be considered:

1. Food

a. Type

- (1) grain or seed crops
- (2) domestic grasses and legumes
- (3) woody
- (4) native grasses, forbs and legumes
- (5) other essential sources of food such as prey, carrion, insects, etc.

b. Amount

- (1) quantity
- (2) accessibility
- (3) variety
- (4) seasonal availability

2. Cover

a. Type

- (1) grain or seed crops
- (2) domestic grasses and legumes
- (3) trees and shrubs
- (4) native grasses, forbs and legumes
- (5) snags and downed woody material
- (6) rocks, cliffs and talus slopes
- (7) manmade structures

b. Amount

- (1) quality
- (2) size
- (3) shape
- (4) variety
- (5) seasonal availability
- (6) successional stages

3. Water

- a. quality
- b. quantity
- c. accessibility
- d. seasonal availability

4. Interspersion and Distance to

- a. crops
- b. grasses and or legumes
- c. shrubs
- d. trees
- e. water
- f. openings

- (2) wildlife watering facility
- (3) spring development
- (4) modify livestock or irrigation water development for wildlife

- 5. Migration
 - a. routes
 - b. season of use
 - c. corridors

Development and Management of Wildlife Habitat:

As indicated by the Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Guide, certain habitat elements may be weak or missing. Management or development of habitat to provide for or strengthen the weak or missing elements may be accomplished by the following conservation measures are described in the appropriate standards general specifications, technical guides, job sheets, etc.

Examples include:

- a. Managing existing food or cover
 - (1) prescribed grazing
 - (2) proper or selective mowing
 - (3) prescribed burning
 - (4) brush management
 - (5) selective thinning
 - (6) woodland opening
 - (7) livestock grazing management
 - (8) disking
 - (9) unharvested grain
 - (10) wildlife population management
 - (11) food plots
- b. Planting
 - (1) grasses, legumes and forbs
 - (2) trees
 - (3) shrubs
- c. Drinking Water
 - (1) pond

CONSIDERATIONS

All land uses provide habitat for wildlife, but there is great variability in the quality (condition) of the land to support wildlife. A land use may provide one or more of the habitat elements necessary for a particular species during specific seasons of the year.

Manipulation of habitat may impact more than the desired kinds of wildlife. These possible effects will be evaluated and taken into consideration during the planning process. This practice will be used to promote the conservation of declining species, including threatened and endangered species.

Habitat Diversity - The interspersing or the intermixing of the various wildlife habitat components is habitat diversity. Numerous habitat types in small units provide a maximum amount of diversity or edge, however, this could result in habitat fragmentation for some wildlife species and adversely affect them. Smaller blocks of cover and increased edge lead to increased predation and parasitism by some species such as cowbirds. The amount of diversity providing food is generally correlated with higher wildlife population numbers, especially for small birds and mammals. However, larger blocks of habitat are more beneficial to some native songbirds (neotropical migrants, etc.) and other species of wildlife such as large mammals.

Habitat Linkages - Linking fragmented habitats or cover types with corridors may greatly increase the use of an area by the

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species of concern. In general, the larger the width of the corridor the more species will use it.

Daily and Season Ranges - Each individual animal has a home range. All the requirements for its livelihood must be found within this range. Food must be present and in sufficient quantity, quality and have the structure and composition to be usable for the species daily and seasonal needs.

Limiting Factor - Some conditions will limit population growth within the home range of each animal. Remove or improve that condition and numbers will increase to the point where another condition sets the limit. These conditions can be grouped into two categories (1) those which can be influenced or changed, such as the vegetative elements of habitat which impose limits through food supply, protection, and reproduction: and (2) those which are difficult or cannot be influenced such as climate or topography.

Plant Communities - Many wildlife species prosper at some early plant successional stage. Others are dependent on climax communities. Knowledge of the local plant communities, the plant species in the successional stages, and the associated animals is essential for providing accurate wildlife management assistance.

Where wildlife management is an objective, the food and cover value of the planting can be enhanced by using an approved habitat evaluation procedure to aid in selecting plant species and providing for other habitat requirements necessary to achieve the objective

Plans and specifications shall be prepared in accordance with the criteria of the standard and shall describe the requirements for applying the practice to achieve its intended use.

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

Actions will be carried out to ensure that this practice functions as intended throughout its expected life.

This practice will be inspected periodically and restored as needed, to maintain the stated purpose. Additional operation and maintenance requirements will be developed on a site specific basis to assure performance of the practice as intended.

PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS