United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

2014 Ranking Period 1

Animal Enhancement Activity – ANM35 – Enhance wildlife habitat on expired grass/legume covered CRP acres or acres with similar perennial vegetated cover managed as hayland

Enhancement Description
Implement a focused habitat management plan for the benefit of selected wildlife species on expired CRP grass/legume covered acres that has CRP conservation cover or acres with similar perennial vegetated cover managed as hayland.

Land Use Applicability
Crop (hayland)

Benefits
Acres of preexisting conservation cover from expired CRP contracts or acres of similarly vegetated perennial conservation cover implemented as a component of an operation's conservation plan have utilitarian value when managed for both wildlife and forage production. Targeted management of wildlife species on working lands will maintain valuable cover on sensitive lands for continued reductions in soil erosion while providing habitat for recreational and economically important wildlife as well as species of broader conservation interest.

Conditions Where Enhancement Applies
This enhancement only applies to hayland acres in the crop land use where a predominance of perennial grass/legume conservation cover vegetation exists and a hayland management system can be demonstrated or documented.

Criteria
1. Identify the targeted species or suite of species (e.g., Lesser prairie chicken, Greater sage grouse, Bobwhite quail, etc.) described in need of action within the State Wildlife Action Plan or other reputable wildlife conservation plan(s).
2. Defer 66% of the enrolled land use acres from haying during the nesting/fawning season each year. Annually, rotate the deferred acres on the enrolled land use acres as much as practical.
3. Develop and implement a focused wildlife habitat management plan that identifies the following:
   a) Targeted wildlife species and wildlife management objectives for the hay land,
   b) Critical nesting and fawning period for targeted species,
   c) The location and number of acres to be deferred each year,
   d) A schedule for the year of deferment, and
   e) Any unique management scenarios to promote diverse vegetation composition and structure for targeted wildlife while maintaining plant health.

4. Utilize both of the following techniques (A and B) to protect wildlife during haying activities.
   a) Defer haying. The producer *will apply the following* management actions specifically for improving or protecting grassland functions for the state identified targeted wildlife species.
      i. Do not cut hay on at least 2/3 of the hay acres each year. Uncut blocks must be at least 30 feet wide.
      ii. Hay cutting must be either before and/or after the primary nesting or fawning seasons based on state established dates for the targeted species.
      iii. Increase forage heights after mowing to state specified minimum heights for the targeted species on all hayed acres.
   b) For all haying, the producer will implement *the following* mowing procedures:
      i. A flush bar attachment will be required on the mower
      ii. All mowing will be done during daylight hours
      iii. Haying pattern will be either:
         a. Begin on one end of the field and work back and forth across the field, or
         b. Begin in the center of the field and work outward

Adoption Requirements

The enhancement is considered adopted when each of the criteria above has been fully implemented on the enrolled land use acre.

Documentation Requirements

1. A schedule of when haying activities occurred documenting that haying activities were deferred on a minimum of 66% of the available acreage.
2. A map showing the acreage where these activities are applied and the location of the deferred hay acreage.
3. Technique A – A picture showing residual heights of hay after mowing
4. Technique B – A picture showing the flush bar attachment on tractor

References

Greene, C. 2007. Reducing Mortality of Grassland Wildlife during Haying and Wheat-Harvesting Operations. Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources, Oklahoma State University, OSU Extension Wildlife and Forestry, NREM-5006. http://www.okrangelandswest.okstate.edu/files/wildlife%20pdfs/NREM-5006.pdf .

Herkert, J. R., D. W. Sample, and R. E. Warner. 1996. Management of midwestern grassland landscapes for the conservation of migratory birds. Pages 89-116 in F. R. Thompson, III, ed. Management of midwestern landscapes for the conservation of neotropical migratory birds. U.S. For. Serv., Gen. Tech. Rep. NC-187. North Central For. Exp. Sta., St. Paul, MN. http://nrs.fs.fed.us/pubs/gtr/other/gtr-nc187/index.html

Sample, David W., and Michael J. Mossman. 1997. Managing habitat for grassland birds - a guide for Wisconsin. Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Madison, WI, PUBL-SS-925-97. 154 pp. Jamestown, ND: Northern Prairie Wildlife Research Center Online. http://www.npwrc.usgs.gov/resource/birds/wiscbird/index.htm (Version 03JUN2002)

USDA-NRCS. 2010. Management Considerations for Grassland Birds in Northeastern Haylands and Pasturelands by Noah Perlut, Allan Strong and Therese Donovan. Wildlife Insight No. 88. Washington, D.C. http://directives.nrcs.usda.gov/OpenNonWebContent.aspx?content=27175.wba

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- “Nesting/fawning season” = April 1 through August 1.
- Minimum height for forage after mowing is eight (8) inches.
- “Targeted Species” = Bobwhite Quail, Pheasants, Bobolink, Grasshopper sparrow, Savannah sparrow, or any grassland bird identified using Customer Service ToolKit (i.e. Bat Button) for the planned area.

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