

Animal Enhancement Activity – ANM19 – Wildlife corridors



Enhancement Description

Wildlife corridors are linear strips of vegetation that connect two or more patches of suitable wildlife habitat. Participants will establish vegetative corridors as described below.

Land Use Applicability: Cropland, pastureland, rangeland and forestland.

Benefits

Corridors connect habitats providing additional life requisites (e.g., feeding, nesting, roosting, escape cover, etc.) as well as interaction among local populations for reproduction or other social behaviors. Fragmentation of habitat with resultant loss of connectivity threatens the continued existence of fish and wildlife populations.

Criteria

1. Continuity –corridors must be uninterrupted strips (i.e., no paved roads (unpaved farm roads no wider than 20 feet are acceptable), vegetative or physical barriers, etc.) connecting 2 or more patches of suitable habitat. Wildlife friendly fencing is not considered a barrier. Suitable habitat may consist of grasslands, rangelands, forests, wetlands, shrubby areas, or natural substrates suitable for use by wildlife species adapted to the landscape and site conditions and conforming to the composition and quality criteria below.
2. Composition - corridor vegetation must be suited to natural site conditions, consistent with the larger natural landscape context, and appropriate for the kinds of wildlife present, hence native vegetation is highly preferred. Vegetation in the “patches of suitable habitat” (above) must also meet these criteria.
3. Where habitat already exists but wildlife is prevented from moving by man-made barriers, the installation or modification of structures to allow wildlife movement will be acceptable under this enhancement. Examples include rangeland and the installation of wildlife friendly fencing, wetlands or riparian areas and the installation of aquatic organism passages and other types of habitat that are cutoff by paved roads and the installation of wildlife passages under the roads. The dimensions defined in #5 below do not apply to this criterion. Base sizing on the target species.
4. Quality – invasive exotic vegetation must be controlled
5. Dimension –the average width must be ≥ 30 feet with no section < 20 feet wide. Since context is so important no one size fits all conditions, however wider corridors are better and irregular boundaries (or borders) are preferred over straight.



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2011 Ranking Period 1

Operation and Maintenance

Management activities must be conducted as necessary to ensure the corridor functions as the planned habitat.

Documentation Requirements

1. Map showing location of wildlife corridors connecting suitable habitats with required dimensions
2. Brief descriptions of the habitats to be connected
3. Description of the vegetation composition

Michigan Supplement

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Wildlife corridors will be established utilizing native shrubs or a combination of native trees and shrubs. Refer to the following NRCS eFOTG standards for establishment: Tree/Shrub Establishment (612), Tree/Shrub Site Preparation (490), Hedgerow Planting (422), and Upland Wildlife Habitat Management (645).

For Michigan, the minimum width for this enhancement will be 33 feet, as described for travel corridors in the Hedgerow Planting (422) practice standard. The maximum width will be 198 feet.

At a minimum, four rows of shrubs will be planted. If trees are desired, shrubs must comprise a minimum of 20% of the planting. Shrubs will be planted on 6' x 8' spacing and trees will be planted on 10' x 12' spacing. Where both trees and shrubs will be planted, they can also be intermixed, if desired, and planted on 8' x 8' spacing, alternating trees and shrubs within and between rows. If kept separate, plant the central rows of the corridor to trees and the outside rows of the corridor to shrubs to simulate natural ecotones.

At least one berry or nut producing tree or shrub species will be included in the planting.

Use the Conservation Tree/Shrub Suitability Groups (CTSG) tool located in eFOTG, Section II, Folder K to select appropriate tree and shrub species. Only those species native to Michigan will be allowed. Be sure that selected tree and shrub species are suited to the local soil types and moisture regimes. Additional information regarding selection of appropriate tree species may be found in the MNFI Publication "Natural Communities of Michigan: Classification and Description," which is available at: <http://web4.msue.msu.edu/mnfi/> under the "Data Resources" menu item.

Avoid fragmenting contiguous grasslands > 25 acres in size that may be harboring grassland bird communities. Grassland birds include, but are not limited to: northern harrier, short-eared owl, upland sandpiper, sedge wren, Henslow's sparrow, grasshopper sparrow, LeConte's sparrow, savannah sparrow, bobolink and eastern and western meadowlarks. Grassland bird species are experiencing significant declines in population and their habitats should be preserved wherever possible.

Wildlife Friendly Fencing

If existing fencing bisects the proposed wildlife corridor, that portion within the corridor must comply with the following law and criteria in order to be eligible for this enhancement:

In Michigan, The Wildlife Conservation Order under Act 256 of the Public Acts of 1988 mandates passage for wildlife in known travel lanes shall be accommodated using perimeter fencing less than 52 inches in height and the bottom of the fence is spaced at least 4-inches above the ground. Alternatively, constructing passage areas 40 feet wide, 52 inches or less in height, and no more than 660 feet from the next passage will allow wildlife passage. This order does not apply to an exclusion structure which does not kill, harm, capture, trap, or collect animals and which is constructed to deter or prevent damage by wild animals to private property, including but not limited to fences to protect livestock, poultry, and other birds, including captive-reared game birds; farm crops; orchards; and gardens. A Michigan Department of Natural Resources permit is needed when constructing fence for temporary enclosure of wild, free-ranging deer, elk, bear, or moose.

Wildlife friendly fences should be low enough for adult animals to jump, high enough for animals to crawl under, and minimize the chance of tangling. Also design the fence with:

- A top wire or rail preferably no more than 40" above the ground, and absolutely no more than 52";
- At least 12" between the top two wires;
- At least 18" between the bottom wire or rail and the ground;
- No vertical stays;
- Posts at \leq 16.5-foot intervals;
- Gates, drop-downs, or other passages where wildlife concentrate and cross.

References:

Paige, C. 2008. A Landowner's Guide to Wildlife Friendly Fences. Landowner/ Wildlife Resource Program, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, Helena, MT. 44 pp.

Managing Michigan's Wildlife: A landowner's guide (Online).

http://www.michigandnr.com/publications/pdfs/huntingwildlifehabitat/Landowners_Guide/index.htm

National Audubon Society Audubon-at-Home, USDA-NRCS, Appleton-Whittell Research Ranch, Arizona Antelope Foundation. Wildlife Friendly Fence (Online).

<http://www.audubonresearchranch.org/PDFs/FenceBrochure-May2008.pdf>