United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

2012 Ranking Period 1

Animal Enhancement Activity – ANM 21 – Prairie restoration for grazing and wildlife habitat

Enhancement Description
This activity consists of restoring/renovating prairie habitat by establishing native vegetation and managing the restored plant community.

Land Use Applicability
Cropland, Pastureland, Rangeland

Benefits
Establishing and managing native prairie vegetation will provide food, cover, and nesting habitat for adapted species, especially grassland nesting birds.

Conditions Where Enhancement Applies
This enhancement applies to sites that have soils that indicate it was once a prairie or can sustain native prairie species.

NOTE: this enhancement can only be initiated in the 1st or 2nd year of the contract to ensure the activity has time to establish before the end of the contract.

Criteria

1. The resulting plant community will consist of at least 4 species of native perennial grasses and at least 4 species of native forbs adapted to the soils. In areas where seed availability and site adaptability is an issue, the NRCS State Office can modify the seeding combinations to meet local conditions.
2. Seeding must be done in a properly prepared seed bed as determined by the NRCS State Office.
3. Species appropriate fungal and microbial inoculants will be used during establishment where appropriate. Additional planting conditions may be specified if an ecological site description has been developed for the area.
4. During the establishment phase, weeds shall be controlled on the site.
5. After establishment:
   a. The site will be protected from grazing and disturbance during the primary nesting and fawning season as defined by the NRCS State Office.
   b. The site will be deferred from use for up to 3 years.
6. A grazing management plan will be developed and implemented.

Adoption Requirements
This enhancement is considered adopted when the applicant has successfully established the minimum number of native perennial grasses and forbs to the subject area.

Documentation Requirements
Following implementation of this activity, the participant must:

1. Document the list of the species planted,
2. Maintain the receipts for the seeds purchased,
3. Document the seeding dates,
4. Document the area (acres) restored by delineating the location of the restored prairie on a map or aerial photograph, and
5. Document the grazing management plan was implemented.

Michigan Supplemental Information

ANM 21

Plant Selection

Select plant materials for the livestock intended to graze the prairie restoration as well as the intended wildlife. Tables 1 and 2 offer recommendations for cool and warm season grasses. Switchgrass should not be used if intended livestock are horses or sheep.

Table 3 lists recommended legumes and forbes to benefit wildlife as part of the prairie restoration. Some of the forbs listed in Table 3 may be grazed as forage when in a young vegetative stage. The intensity of grazing use by livestock is not known.

Appropriate fungal and microbial inoculants must be used. Bacterial inoculants are especially important when seeding legumes.

TABLE 1: Recommended Native Cultivars and Ecotypes for Prairie Restoration

Warm Season Species	Cultivar or Ecotype	Geographic Zone
Switchgrass	Forestburg	Statewide
	Shelter	Statewide
	Trailblazer	Statewide
	Southlow	Southern MI
Indiangrass	Tomahawk	Statewide
	Rumsey	Statewide
	Southlow	Southern MI
Little Bluestem	Blaze	Southern MI
	Aldous	Statewide
	Southlow	Southern MI
Big Bluestem	Roundtree	Southern MI
	Bonilla	Statewide
	Bonanza	Statewide
	Bison	Statewide
	Niagra	Statewide
	Southlow	Southern MI

Table 2. Recommended Seeding Mixtures for Prairie Restoration

Species	Livestock Use	% of Mix	Seeds per Sq Ft. (lb/ac)	pH Min	Wet Soils 1/	Drought Tolerance 2/	Flood Tolerance
Big Bluestem	Yes	10-50	3.8	>5.5	Yes	Moderate	Good
Indiangrass	Yes	10-50	4.0	>5.5	No	Moderate	Moderate
Little Bluestem	Yes	10-30	6.0	>5.5	No	Good	Poor
Prairie Sandreed	No	0-30	6.6	>5.5	No	Excellent	Poor
Canada Wildrye	Yes	5-20	2.6	>5.5	Yes	Moderate	Moderate
Switchgrass	Cattle only	0-5	9.0	>5.5	Yes	Poor	Good
Canada Bluejoint	Yes	0-5	9.0	>5.5	Yes	Poor	Excellent
Prairie Cordgrass	No	0-5	3.8	>5.5	Yes	Fair	Excellent

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Table 3. Forbs and Legumes for Prairie Restoration				
Species		Value to Wildlife 1/	Seeding Rate PLS Oz/Acre	Seeds Per Square Ft 2/
DRY				
Dotted Blazingstar	*(Liatris punctata)*	EX	1.0	0.3
Silky Aster	*(Aster sericeus)*	EX	1.0	0.6
Purple Coneflower	*(Echinacea angustifolia)*	EX	2.0	0.25
Showy Penstemon	*(Penstemon grandifloris)*	G	1.0	0.25
Bush Clover	*(Lespedeza capitata)*	G	1.0	0.25
DRY to MESIC				
Leadplant	*(Amorpha canescens)*	EX	1.0	0.4
Butterfly Weed	*(Asclepias tuberosa)*	EX	2.0	0.2
Smooth Aster	*(Aster laevis)*	EX	1.0	1.0
Heath Aster	*(Aster ericoides)*	EX	1.0	1.0
Stiff Tickseed	*(Coreopsis palmata)*	EX	1.0	0.3
Showy Goldenrod	*(Solidago speciosa)*	G	1.0	1.2
Rough Blazingstar	*(Liatris aspera)*	EX	1.0	0.3
Compass Plant	*(Silphum laciniatum)*	G	2.0	0.1
Hoary Vervain	*(Verbena stricta)*	G	1.0	7.5
Prairie Smoke	*(Geum triflorum)*	G	1.0	1.0
MESIC to WET				
Rattlesnake Master	*(Eryngium yuccifolium)*	EX	2.0	0.4
Giant Sunflower	*(Helianthus giganteus)*	EX	1.0	0.3
Common Ox-eye	*(Heliopsis helianthoides)*	EX	2.0	0.4
Tall Blazingstar	*(Liatris pycnostachya)*	EX	1.0	0.3
Yellow Coneflower	*(Ratibida pinnata)*	EX	1.5	0.9
Golden Alexanders	*(Zizia aurea)*	G	1.0	0.3
Canada Tick Trefoil	*(Desmodium canadense)*	G	3.0	0.3
Wild Bergamot	*(Monarda fistulosa)*	EX	1.0	1.25
WET				
Swamp Milkweed	*(Asclepias incarnata)*	EX	2.0	0.2
Panicled Aster	*(Aster lanceolatus)*	EX	1.0	0.75
Boneset	*(Eupatorium perfoliatum)*	EX	1.0	N/A
New England Aster	*(Aster novae-angliae)*	G	1.0	1.3
Joe-pye Weed	*(Eupatorium maculatum)*	G	1.0	2.0
Blue Vervain	*(Verbena hastata)*	G	1.0	1.0
DRY to WET				
Yarrow	*(Achillea millefolium)*	EX	1.0	1.0
Maximillian Sunflower	*(Helianthus maximiliani)*	EX	1.0	1.0
Black-eyed Susan	*(Rudbeckia hirta)*	EX	1.0	2.5
Stiff Goldenrod	*(Solidago rigida)*	EX	1.0	1.0
Purple Prairie Clover	*(Dalea purpurea)*	EX	1.0	1.0

EX- excellent G- good

Grazing Management

The grazing schedule will include rest of deferment of use of key areas or paddocks during primary nesting and fawning dates from April 15 through August 1. A written grazing management plan will detail the schedule of use. Outside of the primary nesting season, grazing intensity will **never** exceed Moderate Use. Grazing records documenting date of record, dates of actual use, the livestock numbers and grazing heights in and out of the key areas or paddocks are required. Managers can use the Grazing Record Sheet that follows.

Table 4. Grazing Intensity Indicators defines light and moderate grazing use based on removal of forage. Numbers of livestock may need to change to accomplish moderate or lighter grazing in the restored acres. Light grazing will have fewer head on more acres to accomplish grazing of the tops of desirable plant materials only. Moderate grazing allows more use of the desirable forage plants and some use of the lesser quality forage plants. Grazing management will include monitoring forage plant height to determine when to move livestock.

Table 4. Grazing Intensity Indicators

Grazing Intensity	Uniform Grazing	Stand Utilization	Forage Plants Used	Seed Stalks Present	Trailing
Light	No, obvious areas not grazed throughout area	< 40%	30- 50% of Desirable Forages	60-80% of plants have stalks	None
Moderate	Yes on most of the key area	40-50%	70% Desirable forages <10 % Undesirable forages	15-25% of desirable forages have stalks	Little

When planning stocking rates for light and moderate grazing, use a utilization factor in the appropriate formula. Light grazing has a factor of 0.40 and moderate grazing uses a factor of 0.50.

1. Animal Number = $\frac{\text{(total forage production * acres* utilization factor)}}{\text{(average animal weight* intake rate* days of grazing planned)}}$

2. Carrying capacity= $\frac{\text{(total forage production* utilization factor)}}{\text{(average animal weight* intake rate* length of grazing season)}}$

3. Grazing period stocking density=

$$\frac{\text{(Available forage present * utilization factor)}}{\text{(Average animal weight * intake rate* length of grazing rotation)}}$$

Monitoring grazed forage heights as an indicator of grazing intensity will be needed at least weekly and more frequently as the end of the grazing period approaches. Key species to monitor are the native grasses and forbs. Big Bluestem is a key species in a warm season grass mix as it is grazed preferentially over the other grasses and can disappear over time.

Grazing heights of 8 inches will be maintained over the key area or paddock.