



Conservation Reserve Program Habitat Buffers for Upland Birds

CP33

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

10/11

Landowner _____

Purpose

The primary purpose of this practice is to provide food and cover for quail and upland bird species in cropland areas

Description

Upland habitat buffers are field borders planted around crop fields to provide food and cover for quail, upland birds, and other wildlife species. Grassland dependent bird species have



suffered significant population declines due primarily to the loss of habitat. Habitat buffers around crop fields can provide critical nesting, brood rearing, and security cover. For additional information on the Northern Bobwhite Quail, see NRCS Fish and Wildlife Guide sheets at:

www.mn.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/ecs/wild/guide.htm

Practice Requirements

- Buffers shall be established utilizing native plant materials per requirements of NRCS practice 327 – Conservation Cover.
- Allowed buffer width can be from a minimum of 30 feet up to the maximum average width of 120 feet.
- Buffers can be established on eligible cropland around field edges suitable for quail and upland birds.
- Buffers can be located either around the entire perimeter of the field or along one or more sides of the field but at a minimum they must be located wherever runoff enters or leaves the field.
- Shrub plantings are optional and shall NOT exceed 10% of contract acreage.

Specifications

Grass and forb component:

The seeding mixes that are beneficial to quail for CP-33 shall consist of native species with a minimum of 4

species of grasses and minimum of 5 species of forb/legume component.

Legumes shall be a minimum of 25 - 50% of the forb/legume component. Seeding rates shall achieve no more than 20 grass seeds PLS/sq. ft. and no less than 10 forb seeds PLS/ sq. ft.

The following seeding recommendation is designed to foster a clumpy, open buffer that is a preferred habitat type for broods of small upland birds such as quail. Additional mixtures may be developed in consultation with the MDNR – Section of Wildlife with concurrence by the NRCS State Resource Conservationist.

GRASSES	RATE
Little Bluestem <i>Schizachyrium scoparium</i>	1.5 lb/ac.
Side oats Grama <i>Bouteloua curtipendula</i>	1.0 lb/ac.
Rough Dropseed <i>Sporobolus asper</i>	0.5 lb/ac.
Canada Wildrye <i>Elymus canadensis</i>	0.5 lb/ac.
FORB - LEGUME	RATE
Black-eyed susan <i>Rudbeckia hirta</i>	1.0 oz/ac.
Yellow coneflower <i>Ratibida pinnata</i>	2.0 oz/ac.
Wild Bergamot <i>Monarda fistulosa</i>	1.0 oz/ac.
Canada milkvetch <i>Astragalus canadensis</i>	4.0 oz/ac.
Partridge pea <i>Chamaecrista fasciculata</i>	10.0 oz/ac.
Purple prairie clover <i>Dalea purpurea</i>	4.0 oz/ac.
Maximillian sunflower <i>Helianthus maximiliani</i>	2.0 oz/ac.

Seeding Dates

- May 15 - June 30
- Dormant Seeding after November 1

Woody component (optional):

Up to 10% of the CP-33 acres can be planted to woody shrub species either as hedge rows or in clumps. Plantings shall be a minimum of 30' wide and 1,000 square feet.

- Where feasible, utilize rows to connect existing cover.
- Edge feathering can be used in areas of older trees to restore shrubby habitats.

Recommended shrub species:

SPECIES	SPACING (ft)	
	IN ROW	CLUMPS
Dogwoods	3 - 4	5 X 5
American plum	5 -10	5 X 5
Hazelnut	3 - 4	5 X 5
Chokecherry	3 -4	5 X 5
Nannyberry	3 -4	5 X 5

Management Considerations

On highly erodible sites it may be desirable to seed a companion crop with native grasses unless no tilling into a temporary cover crop, row crop residue cover providing at least 70% surface ground cover, or standing small grain stubble.

Companion crops shall be clipped after jointing but before heading out unless otherwise directed by NRCS. A second and subsequent clippings may be necessary when re-growth provides competition during the first year of establishment. Clipping height should be above developing seedlings. Where excessive growth has accumulated, the vegetation should be chopped rather than swathed.

Weed control is critical for the successful establishment of native grasses. Severe infestations of noxious weeds will usually require application of an appropriate herbicide or management action.

Nutrients

Lime and fertilizer are usually not required for native grass species.

Use of Pesticides

Only those pesticides which are labeled for the specific use will be recommended. University and Extension publications and specific label instructions will be used for guidance on herbicide selection and use.

Operation and Maintenance: O&M will include but not be limited to the following:

1. Control annual weeds and other competition the year of establishment, with early and timely clipping

before seed heads appear, or timely application of herbicides.

2. Prevent disturbance of cover during the primary nesting season for wildlife as established by FSA.

3. After the seeding is established control all noxious weeds as identified by state and local laws, by: a) treating with chemicals per label directions, or b) spot mow before seed heads form. When possible delay use of control measures until after August 1st to protect nesting wildlife. Spot treatment on problem areas may be authorized by FSA during the primary nesting season.

4. The seeded area shall not be harvested or grazed by domestic livestock for the life of the CRP-1.

5. Re-seed any areas that do not have adequate permanent cover.

6. Do not use the contract area for turn rows, field borders, field roads, storage of crops or equipment, or other uses that will damage or destroy the cover.

7. Do not use the field for disposal of livestock or organic waste unless that use is authorized in the additional specifications and remarks.

8. Control rodent infestations that adversely affect the perennial ground cover.

9. Grassland management actions are beneficial during the contract to remove duff build up, create open travel areas, control invading woody vegetation, and promote growth of native food plants. ***This practice will have periodic management activities performed. Required management options include (A) prescribed burning or, (B) light disking 3 - 4" in depth. Grassland management will be scheduled and applied in the 3rd and 6th years of the contract.***

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