Animal Enhancement Activity – ANM08 – Improve the plant diversity and structure of non-cropped areas for wildlife food and habitat

Enhancement Description
Improve the plant diversity and structure of non-cropped areas for wildlife food and habitat through the planting and/or management of native plant species.

Land Use Applicability
Cropland and pastureland

Benefits
Intensively managed agricultural land does not provide the habitat required for many species of birds and animals. By establishing or improving the composition and structure of native plant species in non-cropped areas, essential habitat will provide wildlife, including pollinators, with food and cover for nesting, fawning, loafing, roosting, travel and escape from predators and adverse weather.

Criteria

1. Vegetation type will primarily be native to the site or recognized by NRCS standards as suitable wildlife and pollinator habitat. Vegetation density will be sufficient to control erosion, retard sediment from leaving the site, and to permit runoff water to be of high quality. Livestock will be excluded from the site unless prescribed grazing is identified in the management prescription. The managed area will not be smaller than 0.1 acre and there will be a minimum of 1 acre of habitat in or adjacent to each 40 acres of cropland or pastureland.

2. If the non-cropped area is being managed as early successional habitat, it will be maintained by prescribed fire, periodic disking or suitable mechanical disturbance, prescribed grazing, or selective herbicide application. Maintenance activities will be conducted outside of the nesting/fawning season or by NRCS prescription. The managed area will not be smaller than 0.1 acre and there will be a minimum of 1 acre of habitat in or adjacent to each 40 acres of cropland or pastureland.

3. If the non-cropped area is being managed as woodland, tree species typically associated with natural site conditions will be planted and/or maintained. Woodland patches will not be smaller than 1 acre and minimum width will be 90 feet. Woodland patches included in this enhancement will not be harvested or cut for firewood during the contract. Natural understory vegetation snags and down woody material will be maintained naturally.

4. Any existing wetlands used as the non-cropped areas for wildlife will be at least ½ acre in size and will be surrounded by a minimum of 33 feet of vegetation. See number 1 above.

5. Invasive, exotic vegetation must be controlled in all managed non-cropped habitat.

Documentation Requirements

1. Map showing areas and size to be treated
2. Identify what type of land use applies to each area
3. Documentation of the existing plant species