



United States Department of Agriculture  
Natural Resources Conservation Service

## Water Quality and Wildlife Enhancement Activity –ANM07- Extending Existing Field Borders for Water Quality Protection and Wildlife Habitat



### **Extend existing field borders.**

Where existing field borders are utilized, extend them to gain more efficiency in intercepting overland flow and reducing the transport of nutrients, pesticides and agro-chemicals.

### **Land Use Applicability**

This enhancement is applicable on cropland and pasture land.

**Benefits** Widening existing field borders that currently meet NRCS conservation practice standard criteria can provide food and cover for native and game species as well as enhancing wildlife habitat. Additionally, these extended field borders offer more surface area to filter out sediments and agro-chemicals.

Wildlife species utilize transition zones between agricultural fields because they provide a unique combination of cover and often provide important travel corridors. Often times field borders are adjacent to riparian areas and are important for contributing clean water, and habitat areas near by. Extending existing field borders not only enhances wildlife habitat but it increases the effectiveness of water quality protection if the border is next to a stream.

### **Criteria for Extending Existing Field Borders**

Existing field borders must meet minimum state requirements for width. Extend the existing buffer for a total of 60 feet or more to enhance habitat and water quality functions.

The extended field borders must be composed of at least 5 species of non-noxious, wildlife friendly grasses, perennial forbs and /or shrubs best suited to site conditions. Include species that provide pollinator food and habitat where possible.

- All site preparation and plant establishment shall be accomplished according to the appropriate NRCS conservation practice standard criteria and specifications.
- Any use of the field border must not compromise its intended purpose.
- To the extent possible the field border areas and extended field border areas will be vegetated to increase overland flow interception and increase water quality values if they also border a stream or water body.



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### **Operation and Maintenance:**

- Once established, field borders must not be mowed, disked, grazed, or otherwise disturbed, until after the primary wildlife ground nesting period has ended.
- Field border will be regularly maintained for its intended purpose through the life of the contract. This includes any removal of vegetation, including grazing.
- Grazing is allowed if a grazing management plan is used that protects the integrity, diversity and function of the riparian area.
- Field borders will have a wildlife management plan to maintain established plant communities through the life of the contract. The wildlife plan will maintain the plant community and its structural diversity and provide habitat for intended species.

### **Documentation Requirements**

1. A map showing the location and size of enhanced field borders.
2. Documentation of the type and rates of vegetation planted in the new field borders.



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## IDAHO ADDENDUM 2009

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#### **Additional guidance for extending existing field borders:**

Existing field borders must meet NRCS Practice Standard 386 minimum width, which is 12 feet to reduce wind and water erosion, and varies for other purposes. The field border will be extended to at least 60 feet wide.

#### **Wildlife Friendly Species**

Wildlife friendly grass and forb species include all native perennial plant species typically represented by a diverse mixture as described in the representative ecological site description. Native grass species typically include bluebunch wheatgrass, Idaho fescue, Sandberg bluegrass, big bluegrass, Thurber needlegrass, slender wheatgrass, thickspike wheatgrass, western wheatgrass, and basin wildrye. On sandy sites, consider sand dropseed and Indian ricegrass. Consider native forbs and legumes such as western yarrow, arrowleaf balsamroot, buckwheat, flax, milkvetch, lupine, American vetch, penstemon and tapertip hawksbeard. Introduced grass species could include redtop, orchardgrass, meadow brome, creeping foxtail, meadow foxtail, intermediate wheatgrass, pubescent wheatgrass, tall wheatgrass, and Russian wildrye. Introduced forbs and legumes include alfalfa, small burnet, clover (multiple species), sainfoin, cicer mikvetch and yellow sweetclover. **Any use of the field border must not compromise its original intended purpose.**

For additional information, refer to the following documents:

Idaho NRCS Plant Materials Technical Note 24, Grass, *Grass-like, Forb, legume and Woody Species for the Intermountain West*. [ftp://ftp-fc.sc.egov.usda.gov/ID/programs/technotes/tn24\\_seedspecies](ftp://ftp-fc.sc.egov.usda.gov/ID/programs/technotes/tn24_seedspecies)

Idaho NRCS Plant Material Technical Note 24 Supplement: *Intermountain Planting Guide*, USDA-ARS Forage and Range Research Lab/Utah State Extension, AG 510. <ftp://ftp-fc.sc.egov.usda.gov/ID/programs/technotes/tn24supplement>.

USDA Forest Service, Southern Research Station. *Conservation Buffers: Design Guidelines for Buffers, Corridors and Greenways*. General Technical Report SRS-109. [http://www.unl.edu/nac/bufferguidelines/docs/conservation\\_buffers.pdf](http://www.unl.edu/nac/bufferguidelines/docs/conservation_buffers.pdf).

**Site preparation and plant establishment must meet NRCS Practice Standard 386 requirements.**