

Animal Enhancement Activity –ANM11- Patch-burning to enhance wildlife habitat



Patch-burning to enhance wildlife habitat

Use prescribed burning with livestock grazing to create patches of different vegetation structure and species composition for the benefit of wildlife.

Land Use Applicability: This enhancement is applicable to pastureland, rangeland and forest land.

Benefits

Patch-burning is a grassland management activity for landowners interested in improving habitat for wildlife

while still maintaining forage production for livestock. This management activity helps create a mosaic of diverse vegetative structure and plant composition in the same pasture. Livestock also benefit as different plant species may be available, especially during mid-and late growing season vegetation slumps. Patches of different vegetation composition can extend and/or supplement livestock during the grazing season.

Criteria for Patch-burning to enhance wildlife habitat

1. Burn at least 10% and not more than 40% of the pasture in any year.
2. Annual application by burning a different patch each year is acceptable and desirable for many wildlife species. A minimum of two burn treatments should be applied during a 5 year period. For vegetation types with a historic fire frequency greater than 10-15 years, minimum treatment should be two burns applied during a 10 year period.
3. Avoid burning during peak nesting season for targeted wildlife species.
4. A written grazing management plan that identifies:
 - a) Wildlife management objectives describing how patch burning will accomplish those objectives.
 - b) Percentage of area planned to be burned by year.
 - c) Locations, total acres, planned year and season of burns.
 - d) The desired frequency of burning (example: burn same area once every 4 years) should be stated and based on the desired plant community’s adaptation and response to fire.
 - e) Stocking rates that will allow for proper forage utilization.
 - f) Monitoring and adaptive management considerations to address potential multiple years overuse of burned areas, especially for those pastures not receiving some amount of annual burning.
 - g) Areas where fire is to be excluded for habitat considerations, such as desirable shrub stands, stream sides, etc.
5. Prepare a written prescribed burn plan for each prescribed burn that identifies:
 - a) Locations to receive burn treatment and level of patchiness desired



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- b) Time of burn
- c) Firebreaks locations, if needed
- d) Weather parameters for the burn (temperature, wind speed, relative humidity)⁵
- e) Burn plans must be conducted in accordance with all state laws.

Documentation Requirements for Patch-burning to enhance wildlife habitat

- Written prescribed burn plan identifying pasture, acres and dates of prescribed burn.
- A map showing where the activities are applied.



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Additional guidance for patch burning to enhance wildlife habitat:

Avoid burning during the nesting/fawning period, **April 1 through August 1**. Burning on pasture will be in accordance with Idaho Department of Environmental Quality's Crop Residue Burning Program. A permit is required. Burning on rangeland and forest land must follow all local and state laws and regulations.

This activity requires a written grazing management plan (where applicable) and a **prescribed burn plan**.

For additional information, refer to:

NRCS National Range and Pasture Handbook, *Chapter 8 – Wildlife Management on Grazing Lands*. <http://www.glti.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/publications/nrph.html>