



POLLINATOR HABITAT MANAGEMENT

Biology Jobsheet #17

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) – Minnesota

April 2015

WHAT IS POLLINATOR HABITAT MANAGEMENT?

Active management is used to develop and maintain predominantly grassland habitats established to benefit pollinator species. Consider the effects of grassland management on at risk species, including state and federally listed species.



REQUIREMENTS

Knowing what you have, what you want, and developing a plan to improve your habitat is the essence of a successful project. Management actions shall occur prior to May 15 or October 1 to protect late flowering plants.

MANAGEMENT

Pollinator habitat may be managed by one or a combination of the following methods: Mechanical disturbance or Prescribed Fire.

Recommended frequency of management for all methods:

Managing the entire pollinator patch can severely impact pollinators and leave them with limited opportunities to recolonize the site. Manage no more than 1/3 of the pollinator habitat each year over a three year period.

Mechanical Management includes mowing or light disking.

Recommended Timing:

Mechanical disturbance shall occur in the fall (October – early November) when flowers have died back or are dormant. Disturbance at this time will also minimize disruption to nesting bumble bees.

Mowing

- Use a rotary or flail mower to evenly distribute grass clippings. Do not swath, as the windrows will smother seeding. Clippings may also be baled, removed from the field.
- Mow no shorter than 12-16 inches.
- Reduce mower speed to 8 mph or less.
- Use a flushing bar to move wildlife out of the mowing path.
- Avoid mowing at night

Light Disking/Harrowing

Light disking or harrowing (2-4" deep) of existing stands can increase the amount of open ground and encourage pollinator nesting areas and a diverse plant community of annuals and perennials.

Prescribed Burning

Pollinator habitat may also be managed through periodic burning.

Low intensity prescribed burns can allow germination of seed bearing annuals, increase plant species diversity, control unwanted woody vegetation, and open up the stand for pollinator nest sites.

Timing to promote pollinator habitat:

- Early or late in the day is preferred.
- Fall (October-Early November) burns tend to favor pollinator habitat.

It is highly recommended that burning be done according to burn plans prepared by technically qualified and adequately insured individuals. Burning will be done according to the requirements of a vendor/agency developed burn plan, or for a landowner implemented prescribed burn, in accordance with a valid "Minnesota Open Burning Permit" as issued by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) or their designee. Landowners are also encouraged to view the MDNR video "Prescribed Burning in Grassland" which is available at your local DNR Forestry Office.

Landowners and/or vendors are responsible for obtaining all necessary permits prior to burning and for complying with all applicable laws in carrying out the burning. Costs associated with obtaining required permits and other necessary approvals, notification of neighbors and governmental units are entirely the landowner's responsibility.