



CONSERVATION ENHANCEMENT ACTIVITY

E512M

CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

Forage plantings that improve wildlife habitat cover and shelter or structure and composition

Conservation Practice 512: Forage and Biomass Planting

APPLICABLE LAND USE: Pasture, Associated Ag Land

RESOURCE CONCERN: Plants and Animals

ENHANCEMENT LIFE SPAN: 5 years

Enhancement Description

Establishing adapted and/or compatible species, varieties, or cultivars of herbaceous species suitable for pasture, hay, or biomass production that can provide cover and shelter or structure and composition for wildlife.

Criteria

- Wildlife species of concern for cover and shelter will be specified on the state's approved NRCS Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Guide (WHEG) and will be a species that would be present for at least part of their life cycle in the geographical/physiographic region.
- The state's WHEG will be completed by an NRCS or partner wildlife biologist. Cover and shelter habitat requirements for the wildlife species of concern will be specified on the WHEG. The total WHEG score after installation of this practice will be 0.60 or greater.
- Select native, perennial, grass/forb/legume plant species (all species must be native) and their cultivars based on climatic conditions, soil condition, landscape position and resistance to disease and insects, which meet the cover and shelter needs for wildlife species of concern when they will be present.

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- Recommendations for planting rates, methods, depths, and dates from land grant/research institutions, plant materials program, extension agencies, or agency field trials will be followed.
- Seeding medium that does not restrict plant emergence will be provided, and planting will take place when soil moisture is adequate for germination and establishment.
- Federal, state, or local noxious species will not be planted.
- Plant nutrients and/or soil amendments for establishment purposes will be applied according to a current soil test. Legume seed will be pre-inoculated or inoculated with the proper viable strain of Rhizobia immediately before planting.
- Plants will be selected that help meet cover and shelter habitat requirements for specified wildlife species during times that normal farm/ranch forage production is inadequate. Plant selection will help to increase scores on the state's approved NRCS habitat evaluation procedure for the wildlife species of concern.



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Documentation Implementation Requirements

Participant will:

- Prior to implementation, select a perennial species or grassland mixture for establishment. (NRCS will provide technical assistance, as needed.)

Species	Forage category (grass, legume, forb)

- Prior to implementation, select planting technique, seeding rates and timing appropriate for the site and climatic conditions. (NRCS will provide technical assistance, as needed.)

Planting date	
Planting method	
Seeding rate	

- If livestock are included in the grazing system, prior to implementation a grazing plan must be developed to keep grazing periods sufficiently short to allow for plants to recover before re-grazing occurs.



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- During implementation, keep the following documentation:
 - Records and photographs of planting preparation and any materials purchased or materials on hand used for the implementation of the enhancement.
 - Documentation of seed (Pure Live Seed) and any fertilizer or soil amendments used for the implementation of the enhancement.
 - If livestock are included in the grazing system, *documentation and* photographs of turn in/turn out grazing records for each field.
- After implementation, make the forage planting and grazing records available for review by NRCS to verify implementation of the enhancement.

NRCS will:

- Prior to implementation, complete the state's approved NRCS Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Guide (WHEG). **Target Species:** _____
WHEG score before implementation: _____
WHEG score after implementation: _____
- As needed, prior to implementation, NRCS will provide technical assistance:
 - Planning site preparation and establishment specifications meeting NRCS Conservation Practice Standard Forage and Biomass Planting (Code 512).
 - Prepare specifications for applying this enhancement for each site using approved specification sheets, job sheets, technical notes, and narrative statements in the conservation plan, or other acceptable documentation.
 - If livestock are included in the system, develop a grazing plan to keep grazing periods sufficiently short to allow for forages to recover before re-grazing occurs.

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- During implementation, evaluate any planned changes to verify they meets the enhancement criteria.
- After implementation, verify the grassland mixture was established to specifications developed for the site.

NRCS Documentation Review:

I have reviewed all required participant documentation and have determined the participant has implemented the enhancement and met all criteria and requirements.

Participant Name _____ Contract Number _____

Total Amount Applied _____ Fiscal Year Completed _____

NRCS Technical Adequacy Signature

Date

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**IOWA SUPPLEMENT TO CONSERVATION
ENHANCEMENT ACTIVITY
E512M**

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Additional Criteria for Iowa

- In Iowa, native forbs and legumes are readily available and must be used.
- By applying this enhancement within pasture or associated ag land landscape according to the Iowa Wildlife Action Plan the follows species will benefit but are not limited to: Northern Bobwhite, Barn Owl, Grasshopper Sparrow, Henslow Sparrow, Dickcissel, Bobolink, Eastern Meadowlark, Western Meadowlark.
- If applicant is managing for a species of concern not contained in the above list, reference the [Iowa Wildlife Action Plan](#) and contact Biologist.
- Plant nutrients and soil amendments for stand establishment will be based on a current soil test and follow Iowa State University Extension Publication [PM869](#), which references to use [PM1688](#) for soil test result categories and lime recommendations.
- Use Agronomy Tech Note 34 to develop a seeding plan that will be documented on IA-CPA-4 or the national enhancement documentation section.
- Switchgrass cannot be seeded at more than 20% of the mixture and is not recommended.
- Livestock Exclusion is required until plants are well established. Refer to [PM569](#) section “Management During Establishment” for guidance.
- Use [Iowa Wildlife Working Lands Habitat Evaluation](#) for the WHEG.
 - For Pasture use Grassland Habitat -Permanent Pastureland
 - For Associated Ag Land use Grassland Habitat -- Idle Grasslands.



United States Department of Agriculture

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