



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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SOUTH DAKOTA (SD) SUPPLEMENT TO CONSERVATION ENHANCEMENT ACTIVITY

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

Additional Criteria for SD:

In addition to the criteria specified in the national job sheet E512M, the following additional criteria apply in SD:

- As referenced from Biology Tech Note No 15, page 3, “All plant species ***native to the ecological site are considered acceptable wildlife habitat*** and provide wildlife food, cover, shelter, and space. Additionally, plant species identified in SD Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) wildlife fact sheets are acceptable wildlife habitat. Plant community heterogeneity (vertical and horizontal structure) and periodic disturbance provides the key components to sustainable wildlife habitat.”
- See the SD Range Technical Note No. 4 (found in Section 1 of the SD Technical Guide at <http://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov>) for information on approved varieties, seeding rates, species characteristics and adaptability, and allowable species by forage suitability group and Major Land Resource Units (MLRA).
- If current forage base is more than 70 percent (%) native species, interseeding of native grasses, forbs, and/or legumes may meet the requirements of this enhancement. The following criteria can be applied in this situation:
 - Prior to planting, competition from existing vegetation should be reduced through intensive grazing, mowing, burning, low herbicide rates, or light tillage (the intent is to temporarily set back the existing vegetation, not kill it all).
 - If current forage base is less than 70% native species, total destruction and replanting of stand is required. Refer to SD Range Tech Note 4 for establishment guidelines.

If planting is to be grazed after establishment, criteria related to the written grazing management plan (see National Jobsheet for more information also):

- Start of grazing period will be changed by a minimum of 2 weeks in each pasture/paddock each year during the growing season.
- Adequate recovery periods must be provided:



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- Minimum of 30 days between grazing events on pasture. Longer recovery periods will be needed during slow growth period and during drought.
- Maximum utilization will not exceed 50% by weight of the total current year's growth.

If planting is to be hayed after establishment, additional criteria:

- Provide suitable habitat for one or more wildlife species identified as common species for your geographical area. Please see Biology Technical Note No. 15 Attachment's A (Minimum Habitat Requirements for Selected Non-Game Species) and B (Minimum Habitat Requirements for Selected Game Species). Any species Identified by the producer and the planner as lacking habitat needs on the Planned Land Unit (PLU) will be eligible for this enhancement.
- Consult the local NRCS office to determine the wildlife and/or pollinator requirements. Wildlife life cycle requirements are found in Biology Technical Note No. 15, including attachments. The local NRCS office shall follow and use the species or guild habitat requirements as identified in Biology Technical Note No. 15 and its attachments.
- The state specified minimum mowing height is six inches for all species of forage.
- Nesting/fawning dates in SD are May 1 through August 1.

Additional Documentation Requirements for SD:

In addition to the documentation requirements specified in the national job sheet E512M, the following additional documentation requirements apply in SD:

- Complete the SD Seeding Tool (SD-CPA-4).
- Complete the SD Wildlife Habitat Quality Rating Worksheet (SD-CPA-19).
- Complete the SD Grazing Tool (SD-CPA-39 Forage/Animal Inventory, Grazing Schedule using the SD-CPA-15 or similar form, and SD-CPA-16 or similar grazing records document) *if applicable*.
- Complete a drought contingency plan using the SD Drought Tool or provide the participant with a copy of the example drought contingency plan located within the SD Prescribed Grazing Technical Note 9 *if applicable*.