United States Department of Agriculture

CONSERVATION ENHANCEMENT ACTIVITY

E647A

CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

Manipulate vegetation on fields with captured rainfall for waterfowl & wading bird winter habitat

Conservation Practice 647: Early Successional Habitat Development /Management

APPLICABLE LAND USE: Crop (Annual & Mixed)

RESOURCE CONCERNS: Animals

ENHANCEMENT LIFE SPAN: 5 years

Enhancement Description:

Harvested and idled agricultural lands, notably those occurring within rice rotations, contain high densities of residual (i.e., waste) grain and natural seeds following harvest. Seed densities in harvested rice fields may rival those documented in intensively managed moist-soil units, especially in the Gulf Coast and Central Valley of California. When flooded to shallow depths during fall and winter, these agricultural fields provide ideal foraging habitat for myriad species of waterfowl and wading birds. In addition, flooded conditions promote establishment of aquatic invertebrate populations, thus providing protein-rich food sources for shorebirds as well as waterfowl and wading birds. In many cases, light manipulation of dense vegetation is needed to improve the accessibility of food resources to waterfowl, wading birds, and shorebirds.

Criteria:

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This enhancement applies to crop land use acres with leveed fields that contain robust vegetation (e.g., post-harvest rice stubble, annual grasses and sedges) and are capable of holding water at an average depth of 6 to 18 inches for the duration of the activity.

- Develop a wildlife habitat management plan for the suite of species targeted.
- Manipulation vegetation by either lightly disking or bush hogging or rolling the majority (50-80 percent) of the contracted acres during early to late fall.
    - For fields where harvest of the crop occurs later (e.g., ratoon rice), manipulation must be conducted within 7 days following harvest.
    - Manipulation shall not be done in a large, continuous block. Strip disking and/or mowing in mosaic or other irregular patterns is required.
    - Manipulation can occur prior to or during the water holding period, but manipulation must not affect greater than 80 percent of the field.
- A Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Guide (WHEG) specific to shallow water habitat on cropland must be used to show that implementation of the Enhancement will improve wildlife habitat value from fair (planning criteria = 0.5) to good (planning criteria greater than 0.5 and less than or equal to 0.6) or from good to very good (planning criteria greater than 0.6).

Note: This Enhancement may be paired with E646A - Close structures to capture and retain rainfall for waterfowl and wading bird winter habitat or E646B – Extend retention of captured rainfall for migratory waterfowl and wading bird late winter habitat.

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Documentation and Implementation Requirements:

Participant Will:

- ☐ Prior to implementation, meet with NRCS to review results of the wildlife habitat assessment conducted by NRCS and discuss range of management alternatives that would improve wildlife habitat conditions.
- ☐ Prior to implementation, meet with NRCS to obtain and review the Wildlife Habitat Management Plan.
- ☐ During implementation, follow the Wildlife Habitat Management Plan.
- ☐ During implementation, maintain a field log to include:
  - Crops grown and the harvest date for the crops grown on the applicable acres;
  - Date/time and description of all habitat management actions taken;
  - Digital photographs documenting the condition of the habitat provided
- ☐ After implementation, provide the field log to NRCS for review to verify enhancement was implemented to meet criteria.

NRCS Will:

- ☐ As needed, provide additional technical assistance to the participant.
- ☐ Prior to implementation, verify this enhancement will be applied to crop acres with leveed fields that contain robust vegetation (e.g., post-harvest rice stubble, annual grasses and sedges) and are capable of holding water at an average depth of 6 to 18 inches for the duration of the activity.
- ☐ Prior to implementation, assess habitat condition using the Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Guide to calculate current WHEG score and anticipated WHEG score after implementation of Enhancement. **Existing WHEG score = _____ Planned Post Implementation WHEG score = _____**
- ☐ Prior to implementation, review results of the wildlife habitat evaluation with participant and discuss range of management alternatives that would improve wildlife habitat conditions.
- ☐ Prior to implementation, develop a Wildlife Habitat Management Plan for targeted suite of species.
- ☐ Prior to implementation, meet with participant to review the Wildlife Habitat Management Plan.

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- ☐ After implementation, reassess habitat condition using Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Guide; **Post Implementation WHEG score = _____**
- ☐ After implementation, review the field log to verify enhancement was implemented to meet criteria.

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

USDA United States Department of Agriculture

SD SUPPLEMENT TO CONSERVATION ENHANCEMENT ACTIVITY

CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

E647A

Additional Criteria for SD:
In addition to the criteria specified in the national job sheet E647A the following additional criteria apply in SD:

- All chemicals will be applied according to label restrictions.
- The Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Guide (WHEG) in SD is the SD-CPA-19, located at: https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detailfull/sd/home/?cid=nrcs141p2_036610