

Conservation Programs & Practices for: *Early Successional* Wildlife Habitat

Species of Benefit

Wildlife that benefit from early successional forests include:

- Bees, butterflies, bats, and other pollinators
- Quail, field sparrows, prairie warblers, American woodcock, and other ground-nesting birds

The purpose of habitat restoration and management is to maintain or re-establish the attractiveness and productivity of healthy wildlife systems. Effective wildlife management can add value to outdoor recreational activities and the aesthetics of your property, as well as ecological importance. Though no one acre or one area can be all things to all wildlife, through careful planning and discussion we can make the best management choices for species with declining populations.



Well maintained meadows or old fields with a diversity of flowering plants can provide excellent habitat for pollinators.



Bobwhite quail flock to habitats comprised of native grasses, forbs and shrubs.

Photo credit: Gary Kramer/NFWF

Early successional habitats containing grasses, forbs, and shrubs provide unique and important habitat for many wildlife; especially pollinators and ground-nesting birds such as quail, field sparrows, prairie warblers, and American woodcock.

Due to the abandonment of farms and suppression of natural disturbances, much of the historical early successional land in the Maryland has grown into mid- and late-successional forests. Early successional habitat is one of the most endangered ecosystems in the United States, and it is important that landowners take an active role in managing these habitats for the variety of plants and animals that inhabit them.

NRCS offers technical and financial assistance to farmers to restore and manage early successional habitat in Maryland through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).

What will EQIP pay for?

EQIP provides payments to restore and manage early successional habitat through activities such as:

- Establishing habitats consisting of native forbs, grasses, and shrubs on crop fields, non-native pasture, and abandoned mine fields.
- Managing existing early successional habitats to maintain or enhance the vegetative community.
- Removal and control of invasive species to maintain or facilitate the establishment of native vegetative communities.

Restoration Requirements

- The conservation plan shall be developed to provide foraging, nesting, and cover habitat components.
- All herbaceous plantings must be diverse and native to support wildlife and beneficial insects, including pollinators.
- The woody component of the plan shall not comprise more than 50% of the habitat, except where applicable for American woodcock habitat.
- Avoid creating forest openings in high quality large contiguous forests that provide habitat for forest interior dwelling species, except where targeting species of conservation concern.
- Mowing and management activities should be deferred as late as possible into the winter, but conducted no earlier than after the end of the primary nesting season (August 15).

NRCS Conservation Programs for Early Successional Habitat

About NRCS

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) works with farmers, ranchers, and partners to ensure a sustainable, nutritious and abundant food supply, as well as ensure clean water and healthy soil for generations to come.

For over 75 years, NRCS has provided agricultural producers and private landowners with locally-led assistance to help them implement voluntary conservation practices that protect our state's natural resources while maintaining production and economic opportunities.

Contact your local NRCS service center for more information and assistance.

Allegany: 301-777-1494
 Anne Arundel: 410-571-6757
 Baltimore County: 410-527-5920
 Calvert: 410-535-1521
 Caroline: 410-479-1202
 Carroll: 410-848-6696
 Cecil: 410-398-4411
 Charles: 301-934-9588
 Dorchester: 410-228-5640
 Frederick: 301-695-2803
 Garrett: 301-334-6950
 Harford: 410-838-6181
 Howard: 410-489-7987
 Kent: 410-778-5353
 Montgomery: 301-590-2855
 Prince George's: 301-574-5162
 Queen Anne's: 410-758-1671
 St. Mary's: 301-475-8402
 Somerset: 410-651-0370
 Talbot: 410-822-1577
 Washington: 301-797-0500
 Wicomico: 410-546-4777
 Worcester: 410-632-5439

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

EQIP helps promote farm and forest production by enhancing the environmental quality of soil, water, air, plants and animals.

Farmers can apply for financial and technical assistance for over 100 conservation practices to benefit their land and operations through EQIP.

Conservation Practices for Early Successional Habitat Restoration and Management

Conservation Practice:	Purpose:
Access Control	Restrict or control livestock access to wildlife habitat
Brush Management	Remove woody species using herbicides, mechanical methods, or grazing animals
Conservation Cover	Establish diverse native plantings of grasses, forbs, and legumes
Deep Tillage	Site preparation on abandoned mines for cover establishment
Early Successional Habitat Development and Management	Create forest openings using mechanical methods, or manage ESH by disking or mowing
Fence	Exclusion of livestock from wildlife habitat and sensitive areas
Field Border	Establish areas of grasses, forbs, and shrubs along field edges
Firebreak	Temporary or permanent firebreak installed to conduct prescribed burns
Forest Stand Improvement	Create wildlife openings or set back succession through selective harvest or herbicide application
Hedgerow	Establish linear shrubby features with or without grasses and forbs to break up fields
Herbaceous Weed Control	Mechanical or herbicidal treatment of invasive or undesirable herbaceous species, or treatment using grazing animals
Prescribed Burning	Maintain early successional habitat or site preparation for tree and shrub establishment
Prescribed Grazing	Maintain early successional habitat using grazing animals
Restoration and Management of Rare and Declining Habitats	Install and maintain wildlife structures (usually nest boxes)
Tree and Shrub Establishment	Establish areas of trees and shrubs as part of a system that includes herbaceous cover
Tree and Shrub Site Preparation	Mechanical or herbicidal treatment to prepare a site for establishment of trees and shrubs
Upland Wildlife Habitat Management	Install and maintain wildlife structures or control herbaceous or woody species that require successive yearly treatments

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