



## Upland Wildlife Habitat Management Fact Sheet

Applicable to conservation practice 645 Upland Wildlife Habitat Management, and associated conservation practices for establishing and maintaining perennial herbaceous or woody cover.

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service - North Dakota

March 2004



*Native herbaceous cover planting on floodplain easement site in Pembina County, ND*

**What is Upland Wildlife Habitat Management?** It is the practice of creating, restoring, maintaining, or enhancing areas for food and cover for upland wildlife species and other species which use upland habitat for a portion of their life cycle. Examples of cover types needed for healthy populations include nesting, fawning, loafing, escape, travel lanes, and thermal.

**How it helps:** The purpose of the upland wildlife habitat management practice is to plan and manage habitat for upland-dependent wildlife. Good quality habitat provides a variety of food and cover types for the desired kinds of wildlife. Habitat value depends on the quality, quantity, and interspersion of food, water, cover, and living space. Species that will benefit from this practice include upland game birds, big game, furbearers, waterfowl, amphibians, reptiles, and other species of upland wildlife. Providing upland wildlife habitat will positively impact water quality in the watershed of the planned or managed area.

**To apply this practice:** Consideration for planning a unit should take a holistic approach and strive to conserve a diversity of upland and wetland species. Habitat manipulation for a single species may adversely affect other species. Details for implementing this practice, which includes guidance for establishment of herbaceous and woody cover plantings, are recorded in the Upland Wildlife Habitat Management Design and Installation Guide and the 645 Practice Standard in Section IV of the Field Office Technical Guide. More specific details of the habitat needs for individual wildlife species can be found on the Wildlife Habitat Management Institute's Website <http://www.whmi.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/leaflet.htm>.

**Potential methods for implementing this practice:**

- Connect upland habitats to other habitats by establishing corridors to reduce edge effect.
- Consider the impact of elevated wildlife uses on adjacent lands (i.e. crop depredation).
- Locate food adjacent to or within one-quarter mile of winter cover. Food plots, when necessary, should be located on the leeward side of protected areas. If not located on the leeward side of protected areas, snow drifting into food plots can be lessened by establishing snow traps.
- Where wildlife is a secondary land use, grain and seed crops can provide food and cover for some species. If food plots are not planted, waste grain is essential for resident wildlife species during fall and winter. Minimize or eliminate fall tillage to leave crop stubble standing using conservation tillage to increase available food. Leave strips of unharvested crop adjacent to winter cover.
- Other beneficial cropland practices include: leave at least 4 weeks between tillage passes to allow ground-nesting birds to raise a brood; ad winter wheat or winter rye to the crop rotation instead of spring grains where feasible.



**Maintaining Upland Wildlife Habitat:** Timely operation and maintenance is essential to ensure the practice is functioning as intended. Operation and maintenance items that should be addressed in the plan include:

- Incorporate management practices, such as 338 Prescribed Burning, 528 Prescribed Grazing, and 595 Pest Management (weed control), needed to maintain optimum cover. Guidance for applying associated practices is in Section IV of the Field Office Technical Guide.
- Plan and schedule other management activities (such as mowing or haying) to minimize adverse impacts on wildlife. Consider applying wildlife cover management activity on a rotational basis, so that a portion of the habitat is still available and undisturbed each season.
- Annually evaluate impacts by wildlife on the habitat in order to plan for managing populations in cooperation with State/Federal wildlife agencies.



**Where to get help:** For assistance in planning, designing and establishing wildlife habitat on your farm, contact your local NRCS or SCD office for a site-specific plan.

*Proper management of native rangeland and riparian areas is the key to healthy wildlife populations.*