



**CONSERVATION ENHANCEMENT ACTIVITY**

**E645C**

**CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM**

**Edge feathering for wildlife cover**

**Conservation Practice: 645 Upland Wildlife Habitat**

**APPLICABLE LAND USE: Crop (Annual & Mixed), Crop (Perennial), Range, Pasture, Forest, Associated Ag Land, Farmstead**

**RESOURCE CONCERN: Animals**

**ENHANCEMENT LIFE SPAN: 1 Year**

**Enhancement Description**

Selected trees are cut, and brush clipped along the border between a wooded area and a grassland, cropland, or idle land, creating a dense woody cover of interlocking branches at ground level. The feathered edge will be an average of 30 feet wide and a minimum of 50 feet long, resulting in an area of 1500 square feet. The width of the strip will vary to follow topographic features and to create a wavy border; the design will also consider aesthetics. Vegetative composition and cover will vary within the edge, ranging from areas with no trees and shrubs to areas with scattered trees and extensive shrub cover. The variation in vegetation structure along with variable width of the edge will create feathering. The edge may include shrub plantings for wildlife food and aesthetics.

**Criteria**

- Select an area to edge-feather where many of the existing trees can be cut without damaging the ecological or economic value of the property.
- Design the configuration of the edge to correspond with topographic variation, so that the edge may be wider on ridgetops, narrower in valleys, and discontinuous to allow for forested riparian buffers.
- Treat invasive plant and animal species and noxious weeds if present on the area to be edge feathered. Where possible, control will be limited to that necessary to



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control undesirable species while still protecting habitat that benefit native pollinators and other fish and wildlife species that depend on the site for food, cover, and water.

- Limit disturbance during wildlife nesting and rearing seasons.
- Mark trees to retain in the feathered edge, selecting from among mast producing species, wolf trees, trees with cavities and/or loose bark, or other trees with desirable habitat or aesthetical characteristics. Consider the location of retained trees so they blend gradually with the adjacent forest, being taller and more closely spaced on the side toward the forest. Cut all other trees over 12 feet tall in the area to be edge feathered using hand tools such as chainsaws. Woody residue will be left lying in the feathered edge to provide wildlife cover.
- Treat cut stumps of undesirable hardwood trees with an approved herbicide. Leave native shrub species if they are less than 12 feet tall. If they are taller than 12 feet, cut them at ground level but DO NOT treat the shrub stumps.
- Exclude livestock from edge feathered areas. Use prescribed fire to manage and maintain feathered edges in appropriate forest types.
- Inspect edge feathered areas on an annual basis to determine maintenance activities. Treat invasive and/or undesirable plant species and noxious weeds as needed. Add woody debris to the site as the wood decomposes and is worn down.



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### Documentation and Implementation Requirements

#### **Participant will:**

- Prior to implementation, provide a map showing the location and design of proposed edge-feathering.
- Prior to implementation, select a suite of desired wildlife species that benefit from feathered edges, with the aid of NRCS or a biologist.
- Mark trees to be retained in the feathered edge with the assistance of NRCS, or a biologist and/or forester.
- During implementation, follow management guidance provided by NRCS in the state specifications for NRCS Conservation Practice Standard Upland Wildlife Habitat (Code 645).
- During implementation, follow and document progress on the state approved Implementation Requirements sheet.
- Following implementation, provide NRCS with photo documentation.
- Following implementation, inspect edge feathered area on an annual basis and carry out maintenance activities as needed.

#### **NRCS will:**

- Prior to implementation, identify a desired suite of wildlife species and appropriate desired conditions for edge feathered areas. Document on the state approved Implementation Requirement sheets.
- Prior to implementation provide technical assistance on site selection, tree species selection, design, and other specifics.
- Prior to implementation, provide and explain State specifications for NRCS Conservation Practice Standard Upland Wildlife Habitat (Code 645).
- Prior to implementation, provide and explain the state approved Implementation Requirements sheet for this practice.
- After implementation, verify successful completion of management (per criteria above).



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**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

