



**CONSERVATION ENHANCEMENT ACTIVITY**

**E647B**

**CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM**

**Provide early successional shorebird habitat between first crop and ratoon crop**

**Conservation Practice 647: Early Successional Habitat Development /Management**

**APPLICABLE LAND USE: Crop (Annual & Mixed)**

**RESOURCE CONCERN: Animals**

**PRACTICE LIFE SPAN: 5 years**

**Enhancement Description:**

Many declining suites of wildlife species rely on early successional habitats for at least part of their life cycle needs. Migratory shorebird species in particular rely on open, moist soil or shallowly flooded conditions for foraging and security. Rice farms support many migratory and resident water bird species. The first rice crop harvest often coincides with the arrival of early migrating shorebirds. This time of year, is also the highest rainfall months. If standing rice stubble from the first crop is rolled to push above-ground stalks level with the soil surface, the first component of this type of habitat is met. When moisture is added to this situation, short-term habitat is available until the ratoon crop initiates growth to a height beyond that which would provide benefit to the early successional species.

**Criteria:**

This enhancement applies to crop land use acres with leveed fields where a ratoon crop is grown.

- Develop a wildlife habitat management plan for the suite of species targeted.

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- Immediately after first crop rice harvest, the standing rice stubble is forced to the soil surface with a rolling implement.
- Close water control structure affecting the planned area no later than two days after harvest.
- Capture ephemeral moisture and/or encouraged moist soil conditions.
- 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 grouped 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 and E647A – Manipulate vegetation on fields with captured rainfall for waterfowl and wading bird 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 where a ratoon crop is grown.
- 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 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