



**CONSERVATION ENHANCEMENT ACTIVITY**  
**E390B (with Montana Supplement)**

**CONSERVATION**  
**STEWARDSHIP**  
**PROGRAM**

**Increase Riparian Herbaceous Cover Width to Enhance Wildlife Habitat**

**Conservation Practice 390: Riparian Herbaceous Cover**

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

**RESOURCE CONCERN: Animals**

**ENHANCEMENT LIFE SPAN: 5 Years**

Where an existing herbaceous riparian buffer is located along a river, stream, pond, lake, or other waterbody, increase the diversity of native species, control invasive species, install fencing and relocate equipment operations, trails, and livestock, and increase the width of the buffer.

**MT: Riparian herbaceous cover applies to areas adjacent to permanent or intermittent watercourses or water bodies where the natural plant community is dominated by herbaceous vegetation that is tolerant of periodic flooding or saturated soils. For seasonal or ephemeral watercourses and water bodies, this zone extends to the center of the channel or basin. For riverine systems, this enhancement should be applied to upper stream reaches (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> order streams) that are not forested.**

**Locate riparian herbaceous buffers where channel and stream bank stability is adequate to support this practice.**

**Riparian herbaceous cover is applicable on sites where the riparian area has been altered and the potential natural plant community has changed.**

**This enhancement will focus on enhancing wildlife habitat by establishing riparian herbaceous cover dominated by native grasses, sedges, rushes, ferns, legumes and other**

E390B – Increase riparian herbaceous cover width to enhance wildlife habitat <b>with Montana Supplement (bold)</b>	July 2019 <b>Montana Supplement February 2020</b>	Page   1
--	--	----------



## CONSERVATION ENHANCEMENT ACTIVITY

### E390B (with Montana Supplement)

## CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

forbs tolerant of intermittent flooding or saturated soils, established or managed as the dominant vegetation in the transitional zone between upland and aquatic habitats. Habitat diversity, habitat linkage, daily and seasonal habitat ranges and limiting factors for wildlife will be considered in the design of this enhancement.

#### Criteria

- Existing buffer width shall be at least 35 feet or (if applicable) the minimum State buffer-width requirement, whichever is greater. Maximum enhancement buffer width may be increased up to the greater of 100 feet or the State-allowed maximum width. **MT: The maximum width of the enhancement buffer will be 100 ft., but no greater than the width of the geomorphic floodplain.**
- The management plan shall consider habitat and wildlife objectives such as habitat diversity, habitat linkages, daily and seasonal habitat ranges, limiting factors, and native plant communities.
- Select native species adapted to the site. Selected species should have multiple values such as those suited for biomass, wintering and nesting cover, aesthetics, forage value for aquatic invertebrates, and tolerance to locally used herbicides.
- Density of the vegetative stand established shall be managed for targeted wildlife habitat requirements and shall encourage plant diversity. The location, layout and vegetative structure and composition of the buffer should complement natural features.
- Corridor configuration, establishment procedures and management should enhance habitats for threatened, endangered and other plant or animal species of concern, where applicable.
- Include forbs and legumes that provide pollen and nectar for native pollinators. Utilize a diverse mix of plant species that bloom at different times throughout the year.
- If mowing is necessary to maintain herbaceous cover it will occur outside the

E390B – Increase riparian herbaceous cover width to enhance wildlife habitat <b>with Montana Supplement (bold)</b>	July 2019 <b>Montana Supplement February 2020</b>	Page   2
--	--	----------



## CONSERVATION ENHANCEMENT ACTIVITY

### E390B (with Montana Supplement)

## CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

nesting and fawning season and allow for adequate re-growth for winter cover. To protect pollinators and maintain habitat with a diversity of plant structure, a third or less of the site should be disturbed (mowed, grazed, burned, etc.) each year, allowing for recolonization of pollinators from surrounding habitat.

- Harmful plant and animal pests present on the site will be controlled or eliminated as necessary to achieve and maintain the intended purpose. Pest management will be conducted in a manner that mitigates impacts to pollinators.
- Protect riparian vegetation by reducing or excluding haying and grazing until the desired plant community is well established, with grazing deferred for a minimum of two years.
- Control access of people, machinery, and livestock to the riparian zone with fencing.
- Design the expanded buffer enhancement for an expected life of at least 5 years.
- **MT:**
  - **An inventory of the site or a comparable site will be completed to determine the existing and potential plant species, wildlife species and wildlife habitat in the riparian herbaceous communities. A MT WHEG will be completed as well as other appropriate 644 (Wetland Wildlife Habitat) and/or 645 (Upland Wildlife Habitat) documentation.**
  - **Consideration will also be given to how this enhancement will complement the functions and natural features of adjacent riparian, terrestrial and aquatic habitats. Overland flow interception will be factored into the design of the cover enhancement.**
  - **The selection of the seed mixture is critical to the success of the planting. Where available, use the Montana Ecological Site Descriptions (FOTG – Section II) to determine the appropriate vegetative community phase and vegetative functional groups. Species should be selected for multiple values. For example, biomass production, winter and nesting cover, travel corridor configuration, pollinator food and cover, aesthetics and forage value for aquatic invertebrates.**

E390B – Increase riparian herbaceous cover width to enhance wildlife habitat <b>with Montana Supplement (bold)</b>	July 2019 <b>Montana Supplement February 2020</b>	Page   3
--	--	----------



**CONSERVATION ENHANCEMENT ACTIVITY**

**E390B (with Montana Supplement)**

**CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM**

- Follow the Montana 550 Standard, Specification and Job sheet to design the seed mix and make planting recommendations. Plantings will consist of three or more native grass or sedge species and one or more forb species suited to the site. When selecting forbs, plan a diverse mix that blooms at different times throughout the year to provide pollen and nectar for native pollinators. At least 50% of each planting mix (seed or propagule count) shall be a rhizomatous or moderately rhizomatous grass or sedge species. Species selected will have stiff stems and high stem density near the ground surface to reduce water velocities and facilitate infiltration into the floodplain. The selected species should also provide a deep, binding root mass to strengthen streambanks and improve soil health.
- Reference Montana NRCS Plant Material Technical Note 46 for species and cultivar selection and Technical Note 33 for seeding rates. Plant materials should be adapted to local conditions. Seeding rates will be calculated on a pure live seed (PLS) basis. All seed and planting materials must meet state quality standards. Seed tags must be current.
- Site preparation will be completed in a time and in a manner that ensures survival and growth of selected species while protecting the soil from erosion. The seed characteristics of the species selected will determine planting dates. Spring planting will occur prior to May 15th. Fall planting dates will be October 15 or later, after fall dormancy sets in.
- Use plant density observations from multiple areas in the field(s) to confirm successful establishment two years from the planting date. Reference Montana Technical Note 5 (Revision 1) Evaluating Seeding Success for Pasture and Hay Planting (Code 512) and Range Planting (Code 550). Domestic grazing will be deferred for a minimum of two years or until the desired plant community is well established. Access to the riparian zone will be controlled with fencing.
- If the area is used for livestock or hay production, Prescribed Grazing (Code 528) or Forage Harvest Management (Code 511) will be planned to fulfill the intended purpose of the buffer for the duration of its lifespan (5 years).

E390B – Increase riparian herbaceous cover width to enhance wildlife habitat <b>with Montana Supplement (bold)</b>	July 2019 <b>Montana Supplement February 2020</b>	Page   4
--	--	----------



CONSERVATION ENHANCEMENT ACTIVITY

E390B (with Montana Supplement)

CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

Plant density will be managed for the habitat requirements of the target wildlife species. Where applicable, management should also enhance habitat for threatened, endangered and plant or animal species of concern.

- Mowing will occur Mowing will occur outside the nesting and fawning season. One third or less of the site should be disturbed (mowed, grazed, burned, etc.) each year so that pollinators can re-colonize.
- The use of fertilizers, pesticides and other chemicals will not compromise the intended purpose of the riparian herbaceous cover. Harmful pest will be controlled. Pest management will be performed in a manner that minimizes negative impacts to water quality, wildlife (includes pollinator spp.), etc.
- Alternative water sources or controlled access stream crossings should be established to manage livestock access to the stream and riparian area. Excessive concentrated-flow erosion and/or mass soil movement will be controlled in the adjacent areas and up-gradient of the site to maintain riparian function.
- This enhancement will comply with all applicable federal, state and local laws and regulations, including the Montana Streamside Management Zone (SMZ) Law.
- This enhancement may have the potential to affect cultural resources. Refer to Exhibits 1 and 3 of NRCS Montana’s Prototype Programmatic Agreement (PPA) for Section 106 compliance for additional guidance.

E390B – Increase riparian herbaceous cover width to enhance wildlife habitat <b>with Montana Supplement (bold)</b>	July 2019 <b>Montana Supplement February 2020</b>	Page   5
--	--	----------



# CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

## Documentation and Implementation Requirements

### Participant will:

- Prior to implementation, prepare the planned buffer area for vegetation establishment. Refer to NRCS Conservation Practice Standard Riparian Herbaceous Cover (Code 390). (NRCS will provide technical assistance, as needed.)
- Prior to implementation, in areas that are highly disturbed and unlikely to have existing native seed in the soil, work closely with NRCS to select plant species that are adapted to your specific site. (NRCS will provide technical assistance, as needed.)

Species	Species type (grass, legume, forb)	Rate (Lbs/Ac) PLS

- Prior to implementation, select planting technique and timing appropriate for the site and soil conditions. (NRCS will provide technical assistance, as needed.)

Planting Date	
Planting Technique	
Seeding Depth	

- During implementation, grade the site, as needed, to eliminate concentrated flow through the buffer including that from uphill from the buffer.
- During implementation, conduct planting of selected species according to dates, techniques, depth, and other requirements listed in the plan.
- During implementation, install and maintain erosion control measures as needed, such as silt fencing and mulching.
- During implementation, notify NRCS of any planned changes to allow NRCS to verify that the changes meet NRCS enhancement criteria.
- After implementation, control harmful pests at the site, as necessary, and in a manner that mitigates impacts to pollinators.





# CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

- After implementation, protect the area by reducing haying and excluding grazing until the plant community is established, deferring grazing for a minimum of two years.

### NRCS will:

- Prior to implementation, provide and explain NRCS Conservation Practice Standard Riparian Herbaceous Cover (Code 390) to show how it relates to this enhancement.
- Prior to implementation, verify this enhancement is planned for cropland.
- Prior to implementation, develop a Wildlife Habitat Management Plan for targeted suite of species and meet with participant to review the Management Plan.
- Prior to implementation, verify the enhancement is planned for acres that have been appropriately prepared for riparian herbaceous cover.
- Prior to implementation, verify no plants are on the Federal or state noxious weeds list are included.
- As needed, prior to implementation, NRCS will provide technical assistance:
  - Planned site preparation meets NRCS Conservation Practice Standard Riparian Herbaceous Cover (Code 390).
  - Selecting plant species that meet the habitat needs of targeted wildlife species, and that have multiple values such as those suited for biomass, wintering and nesting cover, aesthetics, forage value for aquatic invertebrates, tolerance to locally used herbicides, and best suited to site saturation and inundation conditions.
  - Select planting techniques and timing that is appropriate for the site and soil conditions.
  - Plan the use of additional erosion control, as needed for the site.
  - Prepare specifications for applying this enhancement for each site using approved state implementation requirements, national technical notes, appropriate state technical notes, and narrative statements in the conservation plan, or other acceptable documentation.

E390B – Increase riparian herbaceous cover width to enhance wildlife habitat <b>with Montana Supplement (bold)</b>	July 2019 <b>Montana Supplement February 2020</b>	Page   7
--	--	----------



# CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

- During implementation, evaluate any planned changes to verify they meet the enhancement criteria.
- During implementation, verify all erosion control needed for the site is functioning and is maintained to specifications developed for the site.
- After implementation, verify the vegetation was established to specifications developed for the site.
- After implementation, verify the planting is protected from pests, has had limited haying, and that grazing is being excluded, if established less than two years.

### 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