



**CONSERVATION ENHANCEMENT ACTIVITY**

**E390B**

**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**

**Enhancement Description**

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.

**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.
- 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.

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- 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 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.

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## 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.



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- 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:
  - o Planned site preparation meets NRCS Conservation Practice Standard Riparian Herbaceous Cover (Code 390).
  - o 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.
  - o Select planting techniques and timing that is appropriate for the site and soil conditions.
  - o Plan the use of additional erosion control, as needed for the site.
  - o 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.

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- 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

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**WASHINGTON SUPPLEMENT TO  
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To meet criteria utilize one or more of the the below references or Technical Notes:

- Washington State’s Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Guide (WHEG) is **Biology Technical Note 14 Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Guide (WHEG)**. It can be found in the NRCS Field Office Technical Guide in Section I/References Lists/Technical Notes by Discipline/Biology folder.
- Use the Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife (WDFW) **Priority Habitats and Species (PHS) database** to identify priority wildlife and habitat in your area.  
<http://wdfw.wa.gov/mapping/phs/>
- For Washington State’s **Sage Grouse Habitat Evaluation Guide (WHEG), and other species WHEGs**, contact the **NRCS State or Area Biologist** for the current guide.
- **Ecological Site Descriptions** and **Forage Suitability Groups** can be found in the **NRCS Field Office Technical Guide** in Section II. For planning unit ecological sites and forage suitability groups see bullet below.
- Refer to Riparian Buffer Conservation Strategy for Working Lands (FOTG Section 1\ Reference Lists,\Conservation Tools) for minimum buffer width based on Resource Concern and Desired Buffer function. Promote larger buffers.
- WA DNR Stream Type designation of S & F will be treated for Habitat as well as Water Quality.
- Plants are suited to a wildlife species or habitat identified in the 2015 Washington **State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP)**. Habitat must be designated as Ecological System of Concern (ESOC) or species must be designated as a Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN). WA State Wildlife Action Plan: <https://wdfw.wa.gov/species-habitats/at-risk/swap>
- If a perennial or seasonal stream is present, riparian buffer must meet minimum of 50 ft wide on 70% of stream length for the reach included in CSP.

\*\* Nesting period is from March 1st to August 1st