



CONSERVATION ENHANCEMENT ACTIVITY

CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

E327A

Conservation cover for pollinators and beneficial insects

Conservation Practice 327: Conservation

APPLICABLE LAND USE: Crop (Annual & Mixed); Crop (Perennial); Forest; Associated Ag Land; Farmstead

RESOURCE CONCERN: Animals

ENHANCEMENT LIFE SPAN: 5 Years

Enhancement Description

Seed or plug nectar and pollen producing plants in non-cropped areas such as field borders, vegetative barriers, contour buffer strips, grassed waterways, shelterbelts, hedgerows, windbreaks, conservation cover, and riparian forest and herbaceous buffers.

Criteria

- Habitat areas must be at least 0.5 acres for each 40 acres of the selected land use. Where the selected land use is less than 40 acres, the required amount of habitat will be reduced according to the ratio of 0.5 acres to 40 acres. Where the selected land use is greater than 40 acres, the 0.5-acre habitat areas(s) may be a single site or interspersed sites in the larger land use areas as agreed to by the NRCS State Biologist.
- Establish habitat for pollinators (A) and beneficial insects (B) as described below:

A. Pollinators

- NRCS at the state level will develop lists of plants suitable for pollinator habitat.

The lists must emphasize as many native species as practical.

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2. The habitat planting will include (as a minimum) three early, three mid, and three late flowering species from the NRCS state list including forbs, legumes, vines, shrubs, and/or trees. Plants that produce toxic nectar will not be planted.
3. Any other use of the pollinator habitat area must not compromise its intended purpose.

B. Beneficial insects

1. Identify pest species and associated beneficial insects targeted for control.
2. Inventory existing conditions on the farm to determine habitat needs of selected beneficial insects, including:
 - (a) Permanent insectary sites,
 - (b) Augmentation of existing hedgerows, field borders or other odd areas adjacent to fields, and/or
 - (c) Trap crop areas.
3. Plant selection should be matched to attract identified beneficial insects.
4. Beneficial insect habitat may include either annual or perennial cover. If annual cover is used, the cover must be replanted each year during the life of the contract.
5. NRCS at the state level will develop lists of plants suitable for beneficial insect habitat. The lists must emphasize as many native species as practical.

C. Planting criteria for both pollinators and beneficial insects

1. Site selection should consider existing weed pressures and available methods of control, delay planting if high weed pressure requires aggressive treatment.
2. Site preparation and plant establishment shall be accomplished according to the appropriate NRCS conservation practice and specifications.
3. Successful establishment is when the planting provides at least 80% soil cover



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when visually estimated and the resultant cover consists primarily of the early, mid, and late blooming species planted for pollinators and/or other beneficial insects.

4. Insecticides should not be used in the habitat planting area.
5. Herbicides are allowed during site preparation (prior to planting) when it is necessary to eliminate competing weeds from a planting area in order for nectar and pollen producing plants to establish.
6. After a pollinator enhancement has been planted, herbicides may be spot-sprayed to remove broad-leaf weeds, or grass-selective herbicides may be applied to larger areas to eliminate persistent weedy grasses. Similarly, the entire site may be mowed in the first year post-planting to reduce annual or biennial weeds that persist (site should be mowed just before dominant annual weeds flower).

D. Operation and maintenance for both pollinators and beneficial insects

1. Management and/or maintenance activities such as mowing, haying, burning, or grazing must be conducted outside of the growing season or bloom period. Maintenance should be done on less than 1/3 of the acreage during any given year, except during the first year post-planting.
2. Insecticides should not be used in the habitat planting area. Even non-synthetic botanical insecticides can harm beneficial insects. If adjacent crop areas are treated with insecticides use one or more of the following actions to limit insecticides in the pollinator habitat area:
 - (a) Create insecticide free buffers in the first 25 feet of crop area,
 - (b) Use application methods that minimize drift to the adjacent habitat,
 - (c) Apply active ingredients in the evening when most insect pollinators are not active.
3. The planted habitat areas must be regularly inspected for invasive and/or noxious plants or other plants that may compromise the purpose of this enhancement. Undesirable species should be controlled using the method least damaging method, for example, spot-spraying with herbicide or physical removal.



4. If habitat is part of an organic farming operation, only materials allowed according to the USDA National Organic Program's National List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances may be used.

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OREGON SUPPLEMENT TO CONSERVATION ENHANCEMENT

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Additional Documentation Requirements and Information for Oregon

If the base practice (327) is being contracted and paid for along with the enhancement, complete an Oregon 327 IR for the project, indicating species and quantities to be seeded/planted. If the base practice has been completed or the site has been inventoried and found to meet or lack specifications, the planner should document this information (such as an IR from a previous contract, WHEG, or some other form of documentation/inventory).

- For Pollinators, use the Pollinator Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Guide (WHEG) to determine pre- and post-enhancement condition at: Oregon: Section 3: Oregon Conservation Planning Documents: Wildlife Habitat Inventory Documents: [Pollinator WHEG](#)
- For Beneficial Insect Habitat Enhancement, use [Habitat Planning for Beneficial Insects, and the Beneficial Insect Guide and Form WHEG documents](#)
- The post-project score should be at least 75% of the total maximum available score after treatment, using the above guides for Pollinator or Beneficial Insect Habitats.
- Present WHEG Score: _____
Planned WHEG Score: _____
- Enhancement parameters should target addition/augmentation with plant species that address a period of inadequate bloom (nectar and/or pollen) or other resources (i.e. nesting habitat) as identified by the WHEG.
- Document (WHEG and narrative) how this enhancement will maintain or enhance the habitat for the pollinators and/or beneficial insects.
- Direct any additional questions to your Basin or State Wildlife Biologist or the State Plant Materials Specialist.

Plant Guidance

Plant species seeded or planted at the site should be suitable to the MLRA (ecoregion) and habitat location (e.g. wet/dry, sun/shade). Planners should consult ecological site information (if available) in helping to determine plant selections. Native plants or seeds used for this enhancement should originate from the same MLRA (or similar climate) as the enhancement location.

Refer to the following documents to help select suitable plants to seed or plant. Other species not contained in these documents may be appropriate for use. For further recommendations in plant species selection for enhancements, please confer with your Basin or State Biologist or the Plant Material Specialist.

- [Plants for Pollinators in Oregon](#)
- [How to Choose a Good Pollinator Seed Mix](#): - plant recommendations are suitable to western Oregon; broad concepts applicable to all seed mixes.
- Use the Oregon Flora Garden portal - <https://oregonflora.org/garden/> - to select potential species to use and see photos and descriptions of the species. Start by selecting, from the left-hand panel, the wildlife support characteristic -under that check the boxes for "pollinator plants" and "beneficial insects". Also, select the ecoregion of your project site and select parameters of desired plants (trees, shrubs, etc.) and the project site. The plant selections on your right will narrow as you select attributes on the left-hand panel. This site only includes native plants.
- Contact Kathy.Pendergrass@usda.gov to request a spreadsheet filtered for a specific Major Land Resource Area (MLRA) – to assist your in plant selections.

Eastern Oregon

- [Plants for Pollinators in the Inland Northwest](#)
- For MLRAs 6, 7 and 8, refer to: [327 OR GD](#)

Western Oregon

- For MLRAs 1, 2, 4, and 5, refer to: [420 OR OTH Wildlife Habitat Planting files](#)
- [Enhancements for Native Bees in Western Oregon and Washington Cranberry Production](#)

Seed and Plant Vendors - places to find plants

Oregon Plant Material Technical Note No. 9 – “Plant and Seed Vendors for Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and Northwest California”

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/plantmaterials/orpmctn9149.pdf>

To be released Summer, 2023 - Oregon Flora Project Website – Gardening Portal – Nurseries that supply native plants: <https://oregonflora.org/garden/>

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Documentation and Implementation Requirements

Participant will:

- Prior to implementation, develop a map showing the location of proposed habitat areas with notes on land use adjacent to proposed habitat areas to discuss with NRCS staff.
- During implementation, purchase specified seed mix or plant materials that meets pollinator-specific seeding or planting requirements provided by NRCS.
- During implementation, follow habitat establishment guidance provided by NRCS in the state specifications for NRCS Conservation Practice Standard Conservation Cover (Code 327).
- After implementation, provide for review by NRCS a list of management and/or maintenance activities carried out to manage the habitat areas and the dates on which those activities occurred.
- After implementation, take and provide for review photographs as documentation of pollinator habitat area condition.

NRCS will:

- Prior to implementation, discuss with participant the proposed habitat areas to verify they are in locations suitable for the enhancement.
- Prior to implementation, provide participant with suitable plant lists.
- Prior to implementation, provide and explain State specifications for NRCS Conservation Practice Standard Conservation Cover (Code 327).
- Prior to implementation, provide participant with a recommended seed mix and planting specifications per above criteria (grass/forb ratio; number of forb species per bloom period for pollinator habitat plantings)
- After implementation, verify successful establishment (per planting criteria above) by review of documentation and photographs.



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.

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Participant Name _____ Contract Number _____

Total Amount Applied _____ Fiscal Year Completed _____

NRCS Technical Adequacy Signature

Date

