CONSERVATION ENHANCEMENT ACTIVITY

E645B

CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

Manage existing shrub thickets to provide adequate shelter for wildlife

Conservation Practice 645 Upland Wildlife Habitat

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

RESOURCE CONCERN: Animals

ENHANCEMENT LIFE SPAN: 5 year

Enhancement Description

Existing shrub thickets provide an instant and important cover for wildlife. Various wildlife species may use shrubs as winter/thermal cover, summer shade, roosting, or as escape cover from predators. Proper management ensures that these shrubs will continue to provide the desired benefits for the local wildlife. A combination of herbicide treatments, cutting and trimming branches, and removal of other competing vegetation will occur. An eligible existing shrub thicket needs to have a canopy cover of 750 square feet, with an end goal of expanding to 1500 square feet. Any existing shrub thicket (not hand planted within the last 5 years) are eligible for this enhancement. Shrub thickets found within fence rows may now be very wide, but still meet the 750 square feet, are eligible.

Criteria

Multiple activities may need to occur to properly manage existing shrubs. Any activities involving tree removal will be coordinated with a Forester. Options for management of existing shrubs are described below:

A. Encouraging new growth on existing plants

1. Pruning and cutting back of plants is best done when the shrubs are dormant. Cutting back shrubs close to the ground encourages growth of new stems at ground level, which provides more protection for animals using the interior of the shrub. Leaving

the cut branches on the ground adjacent to the thicket, will provide cover until new branches grow back .

2. Cutting back dead limbs is best done when the plants are actively growing, in order to observe which branches are alive, and which branches are dead. Leaving the dead branches on the ground and adjacent to the shrub thicket can provide additional cover at ground level.

3. Before cutting branches and leaving them adjacent to the thicket, prepare the ground by creating bare ground for the branches to lay on.

B. Creating bare ground for easier access by wildlife and encourage suckering of new growth.

1. Applying herbicide underneath and adjacent to shrub thicket(s) will create bare ground, which encourages suckering of new plant growth by eliminating vegetation and opening the canopy. Also, bare ground will allow smaller wildlife species to move more freely under the shrubs.

2. Application of herbicide should be timed and applied carefully in order to not harm shrub plants. Pre-emergent or post-emergent herbicides may be desired.

3. Herbicide usage on adjacent agricultural lands should be applied carefully to prevent drift and harm to shrub thickets.

4. Utilization of a slow creeping fire through the shrub thickets will have similar effects and stimulate new growth. Some plants may be killed at the ground level, but new branches and stems will be created.

C. Eliminating predator perches and opening escape paths in and near shrub thickets.

1. All trees found growing within, or close to shrub thickets create predator perches, and eliminates escape routes for bird species which may flush from the shrub thicket.

2. Any trees found growing within shrub thickets shall be removed. Immediate stump treatment to prevent regrowth may be desired for some species.

3. Undesirable trees found adjacent to shrubs (within 50 feet) will also be removed. Stump treatment to prevent regrowth may be desired for some species.

4. Hinge-cutting trees with numerous branches adjacent to thickets can provide additional shrubby type cover. Prepare the ground by creating bare ground prior to dropping and leaving trees. Large tall trees with few branches are not desirable for hinge cutting, and should be removed from the site to prevent creating predator habitat.

D. Additional maintenance activities

1. Exclusion of livestock may be warranted immediately following management activities.

2. Avoid damage (chemical and mechanical) done by adjacent agricultural practices.

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Documentation and Implementation Requirements

Participant will:

- ☐ Prior to implementation, provide a map showing the location of proposed shrub thickets to be managed with notes on land use adjacent to proposed areas to discuss with NRCS staff.
- ☐ During implementation, follow management guidance provided by NRCS in the state specifications for NRCS Conservation Practice Standard Cover Upland Wildlife Habitat (Code 645).
- ☐ After implementation, provide a list of management and/or maintenance activities carried out to manage the habitat areas and the dates on which those activities occurred.

NRCS will:

- ☐ Prior to implementation, assess habitat condition using the appropriate state Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Guide (WHEG) to calculate current WHEG score and anticipated WHEG score after implementation of Enhancement.
  Benchmark WHEG score = _____
  Planned Post Implementation WHEG score = _____
- ☐ Prior to implementation, identify target wildlife species and appropriate desired conditions for existing shrub thickets for target species. Document on the state approved Wildlife Habitat Management Plan.
- ☐ Prior to implementation, provide and explain State specifications for NRCS Conservation Practice Standard Upland Wildlife Habitat (Code 645).
- ☐ After implementation, verify successful completion of management (per criteria above).

NRCS Documentation Review:

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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

OREGON SUPPLEMENT TO CONSERVATION ENHANCEMENT ACTIVITY

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Additional Documentation Requirements for Oregon

In addition to the documentation requirements specified in the National job sheet E645B, the following additional documentation requirements apply in Oregon:

1. Use an Oregon Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Guide to determine general habitat condition.

   eFOTG: Section 3: Oregon Conservation Planning Documents: Wildlife Habitat Inventory Documents

2. Use the Priority Oregon Wildlife Species Slicer or the Oregon Conservation Strategy Species to identify the species of concern.

   Slicer – Priority Oregon Wildlife Species

   Oregon Conservation Strategy Species

Document in the practice specification how this enhancement will maintain or enhance the habitat for the identified wildlife species.