



CONSERVATION ENHANCEMENT ACTIVITY

E643A

CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

Restoration of sensitive coastal vegetative communities

Conservation Practice 643: Restoration & Management of Rare or Declining Habitats

APPLICABLE LAND USE: Range, Forest

RESOURCE CONCERNS: Plants

PRACTICE LIFE SPAN: 5 Years

Enhancement Description:

Enhance the level of restoration in unique and diminishing coastal ecosystems by establishing native herbaceous and woody plants. Protect established vegetation and manage to maintain floristic quality and the provision of environmental services. This enhancement is applied on unique areas with rare and declining habitat conditions, where vegetation has been detrimentally altered by human or natural events. Targeted sites are those that formerly supported vegetative communities that are now declining and/or becoming rare. The sites will vary across the continent. The enhancement will expand and elevate the process of restoring these unique areas, increasing their ecological value and benefits to wildlife. It re-establishes a select group of trees and/or shrubs that are key components in this ecosystem.

Criteria:

States will apply general criteria from the NRCS National Conservation Practice Standard Restoration of Rare or Declining Natural Communities (Code 643) as listed below, and additional criteria as required by the NRCS State Office.

- When feasible, plant only tree and shrub seedlings grown from local seed sources. These plants should be the most adapted plants for the site.
- Place protection around each tree or shrub, or groups of trees and/or shrubs, to prevent damage and allow the plant to become established.

CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

- Plant desired trees or shrubs at the time of year to give the plants the optimum chance of survival.
- All necessary local, state, and federal permits shall be obtained by the landowner (or designee) prior to the restoration.
- Methods used shall be designed to protect the soil resource from erosion and compaction.
- Invasive plant and animal species and noxious weeds shall be controlled. When possible, control will be limited to that necessary to control undesirable species while still protecting habitat that benefit native pollinators and other fish and wildlife species that depend on the site for food, cover, and water.
- Undisturbed areas, if present, shall be conserved on a sufficient extent of the area to sustain disturbance-intolerant species.
- Plant species and seeding rate specifications will be prepared to achieve desired habitat condition.
- Only high quality and ecologically adapted plant materials will be used. When feasible, only local ecotypes will be used.
- Site preparation, planting dates and methods, and plant material care and handling shall optimize vegetation survival and growth.
- A pre-treatment assessment of the targeted habitat will be documented to provide a baseline for comparison with post-treatment habitat conditions. Use the appropriate State specific habitat assessment tool(s). Goals or success criteria will be established using reference sites for guidance and comparison. Where no such reference site exists, use ecological site description or historic data to establish restoration goals.
- The enhancement will comply with state required Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Guide (WHEG) or other state approved tool. Post treatment WHEG assessment must indicate improved conditions as compared with the pre-treatment WHEG assessment.
- Use of fertilizers, pesticides and other chemicals shall not compromise the intended purpose of this practice
- The enhancement will comply with all applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations, and with States' Forestry Best Management Practices for Water Quality.
- If the area has been grazed, or if grazing will occur within the target area, a grazing management plan must be in place.
- Inspection documentation of the protective devices to ensure that they are in place and functioning, and monitoring data on survival of the trees and/or shrubs.



- Documentation that invasive species and noxious weeds are being controlled. When possible, control will be done on a “spot” basis to protect native forbs and legumes that benefit native pollinators and other wildlife. Vegetation may be treated by chemical methods such as spraying or single stem treatments.

CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM





Documentation and Implementation Requirements:

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PROGRAM**

Participant will:

- Prior to implementation, an evaluation must be conducted on the landscape targeted for treatment. Assess habitat condition using a Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Guide, or other state approved assessment tool to calculate current benchmark Habitat score and anticipated Habitat score after implementation of Enhancement.

Benchmark score = _____ Planned Post Implementation score = _____

- If applicable ,prior to implementation, obtain any permits required to work in the coastal areas.
- Prior to implementation, if the site is, or will be grazed, a grazing management plan must be developed for the operation.
- Prior to implementation, survey the area and identify any invasive plants that maybe present on the site. If chemical treatments are necessary to control invasive plants, obtain recommendations for appropriate treatments from an approved source.
- Prior to implementation, identify appropriate sources of trees suited for the site.
- Prior to implementation, determine the appropriate method of tree planting following NRCS Conservation Practice Standard Tree and Shrub Establishment (Code 612) specifications.
- During implementation, ensure that trees are planted following NRCS Conservation Practice Standard Tree and Shrub Establishment (Code 612) specifications.
- During implementation, ensure that trees selected for planting are in good condition.
- During implementation, protect desirable vegetation.
- After implementation, notify and provide NRCS with completion date(s), methods used, and representative photos of the treated area.

NRCS will:

- Prior to implementation, review and confirm the findings of the Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Guide (WHEG) and how this information will help improve wildlife habitat.
Benchmark score = _____ Planned Post Implementation score = _____
- Prior to implementation, provide technical assistance in identifying appropriate trees for this unique habitat and the proper method of planting these trees. Provide and explain NRCS Conservation Practice Standard Tree and Shrub Establishment (Code 612) and specifications.



CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

- Prior to implementation, if the site is, or will be grazed, provide technical assistance as needed in the development of a grazing management plan for the operation.
- If applicable, prior to implementation, provide technical guidance on the management and control of invasive plants. If chemical treatments are used, be sure that the participant obtains appropriate recommendations for an approved source.
- During implementation, provide technical assistance if requested by the participant.
- After implementation, certify that the enhancement was completed according to the NRCS Conservation Practice Standard Tree and Shrub Establishment (Code 612) specifications.
- After implementation, assess post treatment habitat condition using a Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Guide or other state approved assessment tool to score after implementation of enhancement. Assessment must indicate improved conditions as compared with the pre-treatment WHEG assessment. **Post Implementation score = _____**

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



**WASHINGTON SUPPLEMENT TO
CONSERVATION ENHANCEMENT ACTIVITY
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PROGRAM**

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.