



CONSERVATION ENHANCEMENT ACTIVITY

E647137Z1

**CONSERVATION
STEWARDSHIP
PROGRAM**

Manipulate vegetation on fields where rainfall is to be captured and retained to provide enhanced cover and shelter for wildlife

Conservation Practice 647: Early Successional Habitat Development /Management

APPLICABLE LAND USE: Crop (Annual & Mixed)

RESOURCE CONCERN ADDRESSED: Fish & Wildlife – Inadequate Habitat

PRACTICE LIFE SPAN: 5 years

Enhancement Description:

Harvested and idled agricultural lands, notably those occurring within rice rotations, contain high densities of residual (i.e., waste) grain and natural seeds following harvest. Seed densities in harvested rice fields may rival those documented in intensively managed moist-soil units, especially in the Gulf Coast and Central Valley of California. When flooded to shallow depths during fall and winter, these agricultural fields provide ideal foraging habitat for myriad species of waterfowl and wading birds. In addition, flooded conditions promote establishment of aquatic invertebrate populations, thus providing protein-rich food sources for shorebirds as well as waterfowl and wading birds. In many cases, light manipulation of dense vegetation is needed to improve the accessibility of food resources to waterfowl, wading birds, and shorebirds.

Criteria:

This enhancement applies to crop land use acres with leveed fields that contain robust vegetation (e.g., post-harvest rice stubble, annual grasses and sedges) and are capable of holding water at an average depth of 6 to 18 inches for the duration of the activity.

- Develop a wildlife habitat management plan for the suite of species targeted.



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- Manipulation vegetation by either lightly disking or bush hogging, or rolling the majority (50-80 percent) of the contracted acres during early to late fall.
 - For fields where harvest of the crop occurs later (e.g., ratoon rice), manipulation must be conducted within 7 days following harvest.
 - Manipulation shall not be done in a large, continuous block. Strip disking and/or mowing in mosaic or other irregular patterns is required.
 - Manipulation can occur prior to or during the water holding period, but manipulation must not affect greater than 80 percent of the field.
- A Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Guide (WHEG) specific to shallow water habitat on cropland must be used to show that implementation of the Enhancement will improve wildlife habitat value from fair (planning criteria = 0.5) to good (planning criteria greater than 0.5 and less than or equal to 0.6) or from good to very good (planning criteria greater than 0.6).

Note: This Enhancement may be paired with E646137Z1-Close structures to capture and retain rainfall for waterfowl and wading birds during winter or E646137Z2 -Close structures and extend retention of captured rainfall to provide enhanced food sources and late winter habitat for migratory waterfowl and shorebirds.

Documentation Requirements:

- Copy of the wildlife habitat management plan for the targeted species suite (including the WHEG scores for present and planned conditions).
- Field log to include:
 - Crops grown and the harvest date for the crops grown on the applicable acres;
 - Date/time the water control structure was closed;
 - Date/time of each field visit and observed water levels;
 - Date/time when the water control structures were opened;
 - Date/time and method used to manipulate vegetation.



- The percent of field manipulated and the pattern in which it was manipulated.
- Representative digital photographs of the manipulated habitat.

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The enhancement is considered adopted when vegetation has been manipulated on the land use acre as specified in the criteria.