



**CONSERVATION ENHANCEMENT ACTIVITY**

**E647139Z2**

**CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM**

Provide early successional habitat between first rice crop and ratoon crop to support space and continuity 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:**

Many declining suites of wildlife species rely on early successional habitats for at least part of their life cycle needs. Migratory shorebird species in particular rely on open, moist soil or shallowly flooded conditions for foraging and security. Rice farms support many migratory and resident water bird species. The first rice crop harvest often coincides with the arrival of early migrating shorebirds and can provide necessary habitat continuity and space. If standing rice stubble from the first crop is rolled to push above-ground stalks level with the soil surface, the first component of this type of habitat is met. When moisture is added to this situation, short-term habitat is available until the ratoon crop initiates growth to a height beyond that which would provide benefit to the early successional species.

**Criteria:**

This enhancement applies to crop land use acres with leveed fields where a ratoon crop is grown.

- Develop a wildlife habitat management plan for the suite of species targeted.
- Immediately after first crop rice harvest, the standing rice stubble is forced to the soil surface with a rolling implement.



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- Close water control structure affecting the planned area no later than two days after harvest.
- Capture ephemeral moisture and/or encouraged moist soil conditions.
- 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 grouped with E646139Z1-Close structures to capture and retain rainfall for waterfowl and wading birds during winter or E646139Z2 -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:
  - Date of harvest (if applicable);
  - Date the first crop stubble was rolled level to the soil surface;
  - Date the structures were closed;
  - Date/time of each field visit and observed water levels.
- Representative digital photographs of the manipulated habitat.

The enhancement is considered adopted when the majority (>80 percent) of rice stubble is at or below the soil surface on the land use acre, and when water control structures are in place to capture rainfall to affect the same land use acre.