



**CONSERVATION ENHANCEMENT ACTIVITY**

**E511139Z2**

**CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM**

Forage harvest management that helps maintain wildlife habitat continuity (space)

**Conservation Practice 511: FORAGE HARVEST MANAGEMENT**

**APPLICABLE LAND USE: Crop (Annual & Mixed); Crop (Perennial); Pasture**

**RESOURCE CONCERN ADDRESSED: Fish & Wildlife – Inadequate Habitat**

**ENHANCEMENT LIFE SPAN: 1 year**

**Enhancement Description**

The timely cutting and removal of forages from the field as hay, green-chop, or ensilage in such as way and time frames so as to optimize both forage yield/quality and wildlife cover and shelter for habitat and/or continuity between otherwise disconnected habitats.

**Criteria**

- Wildlife species of concern for cover and shelter will be specified on the state's approved NRCS Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Guide (WHEG), and will be a species that would be present for at least part of their life cycle in the geographical/physiographic region.
- The state's WHEG will be completed by an NRCS or partner wildlife biologist. Cover and shelter habitat requirements for the wildlife species of concern will be specified on the WHEG. The total WHEG score after installation of this practice will be 0.60 or greater.
- Proposed wildlife habitat locations involve hayfields or other habitats connected by this enhancement.

<b><u>E511139Z2 – Forage harvest management that helps maintain wildlife habitat continuity (space)</u></b>	December 2017	Page   1
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## CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

- Forage will be harvested at a frequency and height that optimizes the desired forage stand, plant community, and stand life. Harvest forage at the stage of maturity that provides the desired quality and quantity to the degree possible while still providing suitable habitat for the desired wildlife species, and without compromising plant vigor and stand longevity.
- Harvest silage/haylage within the optimum moisture range for the type of storage utilized. Follow Cooperative Extension Service recommendations for moisture content. For optimal dry hay quality, rake at 30 to 40 percent moisture and ted or invert swaths when moisture is above 40 percent. Bale field cured hay at 15 to 20 percent moisture.
- Cut forage at a height that will promote the vigor and health of the desired forage species. Follow Cooperative Extension Service recommendations for proper stubble heights to avoid winterkill of forage species in cold climates.
- Appropriate harvest schedules, cover patterns, and minimum plant heights to provide suitable habitat for the specified wildlife species should be implemented and maintained. Time harvests to benefit the desired wildlife species by following state guidelines.



# CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

## Documentation and Implementation Requirements

Participant will:

- Prior to implementation, ensure that forage harvesting tool/machinery is capable of cutting the forage at the height required to provide suitable habitat for the desired wildlife species, and without compromising plant vigor and stand longevity.
- Prior to implementation, review the map delineating the fields selected for improving wildlife cover and shelter and enrolled in the enhancement.
- Prior to implementation, develop a plan to harvest forage in a manner that protects stand longevity and also maintains or improves wildlife habitat. Plan must include specifications detailing the wildlife protection measures, such as time periods to avoid forage harvest to protect wildlife and ensuring that suitable wildlife habitat exists during critical nesting periods. Refer to NRCS Conservation Practice Standard Forage Harvest Management (Code 511).
- During implementation, take photographs of forage cutting heights with fields and date of harvest identified.
- During Implementation, keep the following documentation:

Field	Forage species selected for harvest	Harvest height (inches)	Harvest Date

- After implementation, make documentation and photographs of forage cutting heights available for review by NRCS to verify implementation of the enhancement.



# CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

NRCS will:

- As needed, provide technical assistance to meet the criteria of the enhancement.
- Prior to implementation, provide and explain NRCS Conservation Practice Standard Forage and Biomass Planting (Code 512) as it relates to implementing this enhancement.
- Prior to implementation, complete the state's approved NRCS Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Guide (WHEG) as certified by an NRCS or partner wildlife biologist when applicable. Specific bird species targeted will be notated on the WHEG, and total score after implementation will equal 0.60 or greater.

<b>Wildlife Species of Concern</b>	
<b>Cover &amp; Shelter Requirements</b>	
<b>Total WHEG Score Planned after implementation</b>	

- Prior to implementation, verify a map has been developed delineating the fields selected for improving wildlife habitat continuity (space) and delineating the connectivity corridors, which will have the enhancement implemented.
- Prior to implementation, NRCS will provide technical assistance, as needed to:
  - Develop a plan to harvest forage in a manner that protects stand longevity, while also maintaining or improving wildlife habitat. Plan must meet requirements of NRCS Conservation Practice Standard Forage Harvest Management (Code 511).
  - Develop specifications detailing the wildlife protection measures, such as time periods to avoid forage harvest to protect wildlife and ensuring that suitable wildlife habitat exists during critical nesting periods.



# CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

- During implementation, evaluate any planned changes to verify they meet the enhancement criteria.
- After implementation, verify the planned forage harvest was completed to specifications developed for the fields delineated.
- After implementation, review documentation and photographs of forage cutting heights to verify implementation of the enhancement.
- After implementation, if changes were made complete the state's approved NRCS Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Guide (WHEG).

<b>Wildlife Species of Concern</b>	
<b>Cover &amp; Shelter Requirements</b>	
<b>Total WHEG Score after implementation</b>	

### 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 \_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_

NRCS Technical Adequacy Signature

Date