Animal Enhancement Activity – ANM35 – Enhance wildlife habitat on expired grass/legume covered CRP acres or acres with similar perennial vegetated cover managed as hayland

Enhancement Description
Implement a focused habitat management plan for the benefit of selected wildlife species on expired CRP grass/legume covered acres that has CRP conservation cover or acres with similar perennial vegetated cover managed as hayland.

Land Use Applicability
Cropland (hayland)

Benefits
Acres of preexisting conservation cover from expired CRP contracts or acres of similarly vegetated perennial conservation cover implemented as a component of an operation’s conservation plan have utilitarian value when managed for both wildlife and forage production. Targeted management of wildlife species on working lands will maintain valuable cover on sensitive lands for continued reductions in soil erosion while providing habitat for recreational and economically important wildlife as well as species of broader conservation interest.

Conditions Where Enhancement Applies
This enhancement only applies to hayland acres in the crop land use where a predominance of perennial grass/legume conservation cover vegetation exists and a hayland management system can be demonstrated or documented.

Criteria
1. Identify the targeted species or suite of species (e.g., Lesser prairie chicken, Greater sage grouse, Bobwhite quail, etc.) described in need of action within the State Wildlife Action Plan or other reputable wildlife conservation plan(s).
2. Defer 66% of the enrolled land use acres from haying during the nesting/fawning season each year. Annually, rotate the deferred acres on the enrolled land use acres as much as practical.
3. Develop and implement a focused wildlife habitat management plan that identifies the following:
   a) Targeted wildlife species and wildlife management objectives for the hay land,
   b) Critical nesting and fawning period for targeted species,
   c) The location and number of acres to be deferred each year,
   d) A schedule for the year of deferment, and
   e) Any unique management scenarios to promote diverse vegetation composition and structure for targeted wildlife while maintaining plant health.
4. Utilize both of the following techniques (A and B) to protect wildlife during haying activities.
   a) Defer haying. The producer will apply the following management actions specifically for improving or protecting grassland functions for the state identified targeted wildlife species.
      i. Do not cut hay on at least 2/3 of the hay acres each year. Uncut blocks must be at least 30 feet wide.
      ii. Hay cutting must be either before and/or after the primary nesting or fawning seasons based on state established dates for the targeted species.
      iii. Increase forage heights after mowing to state specified minimum heights for the targeted species on all hayed acres.
   b) For all haying, the producer will implement the following mowing procedures:
      i. A flush bar attachment will be required on the mower
      ii. All mowing will be done during daylight hours
      iii. Haying pattern will be either:
         a. Begin on one end of the field and work back and forth across the field, or
         b. Begin in the center of the field and work outward

Adoption Requirements
The enhancement is considered adopted when each of the criteria above has been fully implemented on the enrolled land use acre.

Documentation Requirements
1. A schedule of when haying activities occurred documenting that haying activities were deferred on a minimum of 66% of the available acreage.
2. A map showing the acreage where these activities are applied and the location of the deferred hay acreage.
3. Technique A – A picture showing residual heights of hay after mowing
4. Technique B – A picture showing the flush bar attachment on tractor

References


**Georgia Addendum: Animal Enhancement Activity – ANM35 – Enhance wildlife habitat on expired grass/legume covered CRP acres or acres with similar perennial vegetated cover managed as hayland**

1. No disturbance during the nesting/fawning season from May 1st through September 1st.
2. Residual plant heights shall not be less than 6 inches.
3. Document haying and deferral activities below.
4. See attached documents for flush bar and harvest pattern information.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field ID</th>
<th>Activity Performed: Hayed/Deferred</th>
<th>Dates of hay harvest and/or deferral dates</th>
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Certification of Enhancement Completion:

________________________   _______________________
Signature of Producer Date

Attach required photos and maps.
A wide variety of wildlife species make use of agricultural hayfields. In the spring and early summer, many species of waterfowl, game-birds and songbirds use hayfields for nesting habitat. Other wildlife such as white-tailed deer and rabbits use this habitat for food and cover. Many farmers can recall sad stories of cutting early season hay near wetlands and woodlots and having ducks, fawns, and songbirds fall victim to the hay mower.

A wildlife flushing bar allows for normal hay cutting practices while "flushing away" wildlife in hayfields. This simple implement is mounted to the front of a tractor and has a horizontal metal bar with chains or bars hanging down to rustle the grass as the tractor and mower pass along. Not only do these devices save a large number of wildlife they also help to reduce damage to expensive farm equipment.

In Southern Ontario, the optimum hay cutting period is between June and July, which unfortunately is when most waterfowl are nesting. A hen's instincts are to sit and hide on the nest until the noisy intruder passes by. The action of the chain or bar "tickling" through the hay will alert the hen to the imminent danger causing her to fly off safely. The flushing bar will not save the nest or its eggs from being destroyed but it will save the nesting female and allow her to re-nest.
In 1994 Ducks Unlimited Canada studied the effectiveness of wildlife flushing bars on waterfowl nesting success. Using monitored hay fields they discovered that 48% of all nesting duck hens were killed by standard hay-cutting techniques. When a wildlife flushing bar was used, an incredible 100% of the duck hens survived.

Another option is to delay the cutting of hay adjacent to wetland areas until after July 15. This will allow nesting waterfowl time to hatch their brood. After this time the hay can be cut allowing enough time to grow and be healthy to over winter and be ready for the new season. Traditionally hay fields are cut from the outside in. This tends to concentrate wildlife into an ever shrinking area of cover. Eventually wildlife will fall victim to the cutter or escape into an open area with possible predators. Simply cutting hay from the inside out towards the edge of the fields will help save wildlife by allowing them to use the remaining hay as escape cover. Cutting “back and forth” across a field also works very well to allow wildlife to escape and not interfere with haying.

Wildlife flushing bars and modifying how hayfields are cut are examples of tools that the Headwaters Healthy Wetlands project is making available to farmers in the headwater regions of the Grand and Saugeen river watersheds. If you have wetland habitat on your farm and would like more information on the design and use of these simple tools please give us a call.

**Headwaters Healthy Wetlands Project** is a three year (2006 – 2009) partnership initiative to help raise the awareness of the value and function of wetlands in the mid and upper Grand River watershed and the upper Saugeen River watershed. This project will help landowners through financial and technical assistance to promote beneficial management practices that showcase how agriculture and wetlands can co-exist. For more information on The Headwaters Healthy Wetlands Project please contact: Robert Messier, Project Coordinator at 519-621-2763 Ext. #2310 or r_messier@ducks.ca
Ducks Unlimited (Canada)

SKETCH OF

FLUSHING BAR
FRONT VIEW

NOTES:

1. FRONT MOUNT HOLES THROUGH MOUNTING BRACKET
2. SIDE MOUNT BRACKETS - 4" CHANNEL WELDED TO FRONT BRACKET
3. FLUSHING CHAIN 1/4" DIA. LINK GALVANIZED COAT
   LIFT THE BAR BOOM TO FORM APPROX. 10° ANGLE
The submitted information accurately reflects the implementation of this enhancement

PARTICIPANT SIGNATURE: ________________________________ Date: ____________