United States Department of Agriculture

Conservation Enhancement Activity

E528C

CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

Incorporating wildlife refuge areas in contingency plans for wildlife

Conservation Practice 528: Prescribed Grazing

APPLICABLE LAND USE: Pasture; Range

RESOURCE CONCERN: Animals

ENHANCEMENT LIFE SPAN: 1 year

Enhancement Description

A prescribed grazing plan that includes 12 month (or longer) rest (non-grazing period equal or greater than one year) of a grazing unit that consists of native grasses and/or legumes and/or perennial forbs for the purpose of meeting the needs for drought/disaster contingency plans that will also provide wildlife habitat or wildlife access to water for a period of time.

MT: This enhancement will be contracted for a minimum of 3 years in order to address the identified resource concerns.

Criteria

- A written plan for matching the forage quantity and quality produced with the grazing and/or browsing demand by livestock and wildlife will be followed.
- Enhance diversity of rangeland plants to optimize delivery of nutrients to the animals by incorporating the intensity, frequency, timing and duration of grazing and/or browsing needed as determined by a planning process that includes:
    - Clear objectives,
    - A resource inventory of structural improvements, existing resource conditions, and forage inventory.

- Grazing plan, and
- A contingency plan
- A monitoring plan

- Supplemental feed and/or minerals will be balanced with the forage consumption to meet the desired nutritional level for the kind and class of grazing and/or browsing livestock.
- Identify wildlife species of concern in the objectives of the prescribed grazing plan.
- An area that constitutes at least 15% of the planned enhancement acreage (or a minimum of ten acres, whichever is larger) that is predominantly native grasses and/or legumes and/or perennial forbs will be rested from all harvest by livestock or prescribed burning for a period of 12 months or longer.
- The rested area must be a grazing unit (or located in a grazing unit) that scores a minimum of 0.5 on the state NRCS Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Guide (WHEG).
- The rested area can be used to stockpile forages to build reserves for livestock forage after the 12-month rest period.
- In the event the designated refuge area gets utilized by livestock during a drought/disaster emergency or other contingency situation, during the life of the contract, it must be restored or let recover or another pasture designated and rested for 12 months following the emergency utilization.
- Water must be made available for the wildlife species of concern designated in the grazing plan in the refuge area or nearby where the refuge provides needed cover for water access.

Documentation and Implementation Requirements

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Participant will:

- ☐ Prior to implementation, review NRCS Conservation Practice Standards Prescribed Grazing (Code 528) and Upland Wildlife Habitat Management (Code 645), including any state approved job sheets or work sheets.
- ☐ Prior to implementation, work with NRCS to complete an assessment of the site using the state's approved NRCS Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Guide (WHEG).
- ☐ Prior to implementation, provide locations of water access.
- ☐ Prior to implementation, obtain grazing/wildlife habitat management plan specifying what species the enhancement is targeting and how grazing management is being modified to benefit that species. The written grazing plan must describe the management and harvest of vegetation with grazing and/or browsing animals, what conditions create the need to implement a contingency plan, and what monitoring method(s) will be used.
    - The grazing plan will include a minimum of a 12-month rest period on 15% of enrolled acres incorporated into grazing strategy. Supporting documentation identifying baseline conditions will be based on state NRCS Conservation Practice Standard Prescribed Grazing (Code 528) specifications.
- ☐ During implementation, keep actual use records (dates, time, and number of head).
- ☐ During implementation, maintain water in the refuge area or nearby where the refuge provides needed cover for water access.
- ☐ During implementation, collect monitoring data used to determine contingency activation such as precipitation, drought, fire, and flooding or forage availability.
- ☐ During implementation, consult with NRCS to adjust and adapt the plan to current conditions to verify the changes meet enhancement criteria. Changes to the plan will be documented in writing.
- ☐ After implementation, make the follow items available for review by NRCS to verify implementation of the enhancement:
    - Grazing/wildlife habitat management plan.
    - Monitoring data and actual use records.

- Any documented changes to the plan as result of contingency or monitoring data.

NRCS will:

☐ As needed, provide technical additional assistance to the participant as requested.

☐ Prior to implementation, provide and explain NRCS Conservation Practice Standards Prescribed Grazing (Code 528) and Upland Wildlife Habitat Management (Code 645) as they relate to implementing this enhancement, including any state approved job sheets or work sheets.

☐ Prior to implementation, complete an assessment of the site with the participant using the state's approved NRCS Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Guide (WHEG).
Species of Concern: _____
WHEG score before implementation: _____
WHEG score after implementation: _____

☐ Prior to implementation, assist the participant with development of a grazing plan, if requested. If NRCS does not assist with plan development, the plan(s) will be reviewed by NRCS for approval prior to implementation to confirm the written objectives meet the criteria of the enhancement.

☐ After implementation, review actual use and monitoring data used to implement grazing strategy and provide recommendations for adjustments, or additional practices to facilitate future improvements in wildlife habitat.

☐ During implementation, as requested, assist the participant with adapting the grazing strategy and plan to current conditions.

☐ After implementation, review grazing plan, records, and documentation to verify the enhancement was implemented to meet the criteria.

☐ After implementation, complete an assessment of the site with the participant using the state's approved NRCS Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Guide (WHEG).
WHEG score after implementation: _____

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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