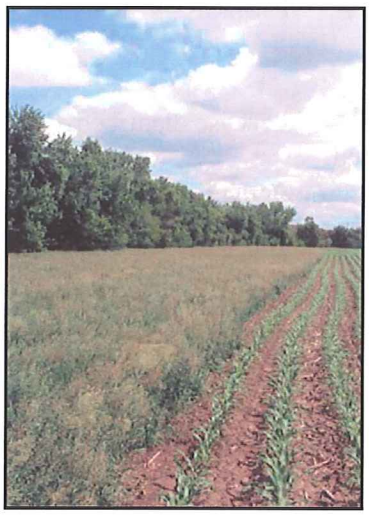
United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

Water Quality and Wildlife Enhancement Activity –*ANM06- Extending Existing Riparian Herbaceous Cover for Water Quality Protection and Wildlife Habitat*



Extend existing Herbaceous Riparian Buffers
Where existing buffers are utilized, extend them to gain more efficiency in intercepting overland flow and reducing the transport of nutrients, pesticides and agro-chemicals.

Land Use Applicability
This enhancement is applicable on cropland and pasture land.

Benefits
Widening existing herbaceous buffers that currently meet NRCS conservation practice standard criteria can provide food and cover for native and game species as well as enhancing aquatic habitat by providing shade, input of carbon to the stream, and stabilizing streambank conditions. Additionally, these extended buffers offer more surface area to filter out sediments and agro-chemicals.

Riparian herbaceous habitats are important transition zones between terrestrial landscapes and aquatic zones. Wildlife species utilize these transition zones because they provide a unique combination of cover, access to water and often provide important travel corridors. Extending existing buffers not only enhances wildlife habitat but it increases the effectiveness of water quality protection they provide to the streams.

Criteria for Extending Existing Riparian Herbaceous Buffers
Existing buffers must meet minimum state requirements for width. Extend the existing buffer for a total of 60 feet or more to enhance habitat and water quality functions.

The extended buffer must be composed of at least 5 species of non-noxious, wildlife friendly grasses and/or perennial forbs best suited to site conditions. Include species that provide pollinator food and habitat where possible.

- All site preparation and plant establishment shall be accomplished according to the appropriate NRCS conservation practice standard criteria and specifications.
- Herbaceous riparian buffers shall consist of a diversity of plant species of which the majority are capable of producing nutritious food sources to wildlife.
- Any use of the herbaceous buffer must not compromise its intended purpose.

- To the extent possible the buffer areas and extended buffer areas will be vegetated to increase overland flow interception and increase water quality values of the stream or water body.

For full implementation of this enhancement, continuous buffers (herbaceous or forested) must be used on all lands adjacent to streams, lakes and ponds where annual crops are produced.

Operation and Maintenance:

- Once established, buffers must not be mowed, disked, grazed, or otherwise disturbed, until after the primary wildlife ground nesting period has ended.
- Buffers will be regularly maintained for its intended purpose through the life of the contract. This includes any removal of vegetation, including grazing. Grazing is not permitted unless a grazing management plan is in effect.
- Buffers will have a wildlife management plan to maintain established plant communities through the life of the contract. The wildlife plan will maintain the plant community and its structural diversity and provide habitat for intended species, remove duff, and control woody vegetation.
- Grazing is not permitted unless a grazing management plan is in effect that maintains the buffer's intended purpose.

Documentation Requirements

1. A map showing the location and size of enhanced riparian herbaceous buffers.
2. Documentation of the type and rates of vegetation planted in the new riparian herbaceous buffers.

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Reference:

645 – Upland Wildlife Habitat Management

- ***Biology Jobsheet 9 – Establishment of Native Grasses and Forbs***

643 – Restoration and Management of Declining Habitats

- ***Biology Jobsheet 12 – Tall Grass Prairie***

393 – Filter Strip

The extended filter strips must be composed of at least 5 species of non-noxious, wildlife friendly grasses and/or perennial forbs best suited to site conditions.

NATIVE GRASSES, FORBS AND LEGUMES

Native grass seed origin shall be within a 200 mile radius of the project site, unless otherwise identified as an acceptable cultivar.

The following are native grasses that are considered wildlife friendly:

Big Bluestem
Indiangrass
Green Needlegrass
Little Bluestem
Sideoats Grama
Prairie Sandreed
Canada Wildrye
Slender Wheatgrass
Western Wheatgrass
Blue Grama
Switchgrass
Canada Bluejoint
Prairie Cordgrass
Virginia Wildrye
Kalms Brome

FORBS AND LEGUMES

Forbs and legumes with origins native to Minnesota are preferred. When local Minnesota seed sources are not available, native forbs and legume seed shall originate from Wisconsin, northern Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, northern Iowa, and the Canadian provinces of southern Manitoba and Ontario. If the true origin of the seed can be certified as one of the accepted states or provinces, then there would be no restriction on where the seed is grown. Certification must be provided by the grower, and responsibility for obtaining certification rests with the producer.

The following list identifies native forbs and wildflowers beneficial to upland wildlife and native habitat restoration. The list is not inclusive, and identifies those species, which are readily available through private vendor seed supplies.

DRY	MESIC to WET	DRY to WET
Bush Clover	Canada Tick Trefoil	Black-eyed Susan
Dotted Blazingstar	Common Ox-eye	Illinois Bundleflower
Purple Coneflower	Giant Sunflower	Purple Prairie Clover
Showy Penstemon	Golden Alexanders	Maximillian Sunflower
Silky Aster	Partridge Pea	Stiff Goldenrod
DRY to MESIC	Rattlesnake Master	Yarrow
Butterfly Weed	Tall Blazingstar	
Compass Plant	Wild Bergamot	
Hoary Vervain	Yellow Coneflower	
Leadplant	**WET**	
Prairie Smoke	Blue Vervain	
Rough Blazingstar	Boneset	
Showy Goldenrod	Joe-pye Weed	
Smooth Aster	New England Aster	
Stiff Tickseed	Panicled Aster	
	Swamp Milkweed	