



# Rare and Declining Habitat (LAKEPLAIN WET PRAIRIE)

## Michigan CONSERVATION RESERVE PROGRAM

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

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Photo courtesy of USDA NRCS

### WHAT IS A RARE AND DECLINING HABITAT (LAKEPLAIN WET PRAIRIE)?

The Rare and Declining Habitat (LAKEPLAIN WET PRAIRIE) practice is a native grass and wildflower planting in wet areas that provides soil erosion protection and water quality enhancement, as well as habitat for a variety of wildlife, especially waterfowl, upland game birds and songbirds.

Lakeplain wet prairies were found along the Great Lakes shoreline throughout Southern Michigan prior to European settlement. Michigan lakeplain wet prairies were diverse wet areas of native grasses, sedges, and wildflowers. Grasses and wildflowers common to lakeplain wet prairies evolved to be fire tolerant, and relied on periodic fires to maintain this plant diversity. Today, Michigan has lost over 99% of its original lakeplain wet prairies.

Native grasses found in lakeplain wet prairies were present in Michigan when Europeans arrived. Some of the more common native grasses that grow well in Michigan include warm-season grasses such as Big Bluestem, Indian grass, and Switchgrass; native cool season grasses like Canada and Virginia Wild Rye, and native sedges. Common wildflowers include New England Aster, Cardinal Flower, Swamp Milkweed, and others.

Lakeplain wet prairie plantings of warm-season species provide excellent nesting and winter cover for wildlife. These tall, stiff, upright grasses stand up well to snow and ice. These grasses put most of their growth on in the heat of the summer, unlike the cool-season grasses (found in most lawns) which grow best in the spring and fall.

Native grasses will live a long time after establishment. However, like most long-lived plant species, they generally establish slowly. Therefore, it is very important to establish these grasses properly and to have patience when evaluating the results.

### ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible for this practice with the Conservation Reserve Program, the land must have a cropping history (4 out of 6 years from 1996-2001). Further, the site must be within 0.5 miles of a Lakeplain wet prairie as identified on the Pre-Settlement Vegetation Maps found in Section I of the Field Office Technical Guide, and the site must have hydric (wetland) soils.

### CRP POLICY

For General CRP, **at least 5 NATIVE grasses or sedges plus at least 10 NATIVE wildflowers** will be planted **plus the hydrology of the site must be restored**. An upland buffer at least 50 ft. wide, and up to 6 times the wetland acres must also be enrolled and planted to native grasses and wildflowers. Any other plantings are not eligible. **Only NATIVE grasses, sedges, and wildflowers may be planted for this practice** (see MI NRCS Biology Technical Note #13 for a list of native vs. non-native plants in Michigan).

NOTE: the hydrology of the site must be restored. The level of hydrology restoration allowed will be based on the best available evidence of what the original hydrology of the site was like prior to hydrology alteration. Neither Wetland Enhancements nor Wetland Creations are eligible under CRP CP25.

Lakeplain wet prairie plantings will be established according to the Restoration and Management of Rare and Declining Habitat (643) standard in the local Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG), and they must be planted within 12 months of contract approval to remain in compliance. If circumstances beyond the landowner's control prohibit the planting within the first 12 months, the local FSA County Committee may approve an extension to the next planting season.

### PLANTING

It is very important to plant native grasses (in the buffer and wetland) into a weed-free, firm seedbed. If the field is currently in cropland, weed control efforts should begin prior to planting. Use herbicide or tillage to eliminate competing vegetation. If necessary for erosion control, seed a temporary cover. Eliminate the

temporary vegetation at planting time with tillage or herbicides.

Broad-spectrum herbicides will provide good initial weed and sod control for fall and spring applications. Other herbicides labeled for warm season grass establishment may be used alone or mixed with broad-spectrum herbicides to provide residual weed control, which may result in faster establishment of the native grasses. Contact your local Michigan State University Extension Agent for specific herbicide recommendations. **Apply all herbicides according to the label.**

Plant during the period specified in the attached plan/design sheet. Apply lime and fertilizer according to needs determined by a soil test and MSU recommendations.

Use a specialized no-till drill that is able to handle native grass seeds (possibly available at some local Conservation District offices, DNR offices, Pheasants Forever chapters, etc). Plant the seeds **no deeper than** 1/8 inch.

If a native grass drill is not available, the seed may be broadcast or aerial seeded. In either case, the seedbed must be worked up and firmed with a cultipacker or similar equipment. A carrier such as potash may also be needed in order to spread the seed evenly. **After seeding, the site must be rolled or cultipacked to ensure proper seed to soil contact.** Plant the seeds **no deeper than** 1/8 inch.

Since warm-season grasses are slow starters, it is important to control unwanted vegetation, especially the first year after planting. Use mowing or herbicides as needed until a Final Status Review is issued to control unwanted vegetation. Mow when competing weeds are taller than the planted grasses and wildflowers, and at a height above the planted grasses and wildflowers. Some herbicides labeled for warm season grass establishment will provide residual weed control without damaging the planted grasses. For additional information on herbicide controls, see Conservation Management Sheet "Establishing Prairie Grass Buffer Strips" and contact your local Michigan State University Extension Agent for specific herbicide recommendations. **Always apply herbicides according to labeled directions.**

## RESTORATION OF HYDROLOGY

The hydrology of the site should be completed prior to establishing the vegetation in the buffer.

If surface or sub-surface drainage exists, these must be "plugged" according to the Wetland Restoration (657) standard in the FOTG. Digging, dredging, dug-outs, etc. that will create deep water are not authorized

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unless it is documented that the wetland was altered by grading, filling, etc. Wetland Enhancements and Wetland Creations are not authorized for CRP CP25.

## OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

Noxious weeds and other undesirable plants, insects, and pests shall be controlled, including such maintenance as necessary to avoid detrimental effects to the surrounding land.

After the Final Status Review, use mowing or burning to maintain the stand according to your CRP conservation plan. Maintenance activities are allowed only on a spot basis and only if necessary to maintain stand health, maintain stand diversity, or control pests that will damage the CRP cover or adjacent lands. Burning must be in accordance with a prescribed burn plan. See the Conservation Information Sheet "Prescribed Burning" for further information. Mow or burn only between Aug 1<sup>st</sup> and Aug 20<sup>th</sup>. If maintenance activities are needed at times other than these, the FSA County Committee **must** approve the maintenance activity **prior to** the activity occurring.

**Mowing for generic weed control or for cosmetic purposes is prohibited.**

## REQUIRED MANAGEMENT

All new CRP contracts must have mid-term contract management activities scheduled that are site specific and will ensure plant diversity, wildlife habitat, and protection of soil and water resources. Management activities that will ensure these benefits in lakeplain wet prairie plantings include prescribed burning (according to an approved burn plan), disking, interseeding of wildflowers, etc. All management activities must be performed according to NRCS Standards and Specifications as found in the FOTG, and CRP policy. See the attached design sheet for suggested management activities on your property.

## OTHER MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

For optimum wildlife habitat, plant a diversity of grasses and wildflowers. This mixture will provide winter and nesting cover, flowers for pollinating insects, as well as a good seed and insect source for food.

To facilitate future prescribed burning, consider establishing the perimeter of the field to a CP1 (Introduced Grasses and Legumes) mixture such as timothy, orchard grass, and clovers, CP12 (Food Plots) on non-erosive sites (cost-share is not authorized for food plots), or Native cool season grass.

## Rare and Declining Habitat (LAKEPLAIN WET PRAIRIE) DESIGN WORKSHEET CRP CP25

Landowner:

County:

Wetland Acres:

Farm:

Tract:

Field(s):

Buffer Acres:

Date:

Berm Acres:

### HYDROLOGY RESTORATION in Year:

**ORIGINAL HYDROLOGY &/or  
WETLAND FUNCTIONS AND VALUES  
WERE ALTERED BY:**

**AND WILL BE RESTORED BY:**  
(see the attached map and engineering design for details)

Subsurface Drain Tile

Plugging \_\_\_\_ Feet of Subsurface Drain Tile  
 And Installing a Berm to retain surface water

Surface Drains

Plugging \_\_\_\_ Feet of Surface Drains  
 And Installing a Berm to retain surface water

Grading / Leveling / Fill

Removing **Cubic Yards** of Fill

Traditional Agricultural Activities  
(Farmed Wetlands)

No Longer Farming  
 And Seeding the Area to Native Vegetation

Other:

Other:

### WETLAND & BERM SEEDING (PLS #/ACRE = PURE LIVE SEED POUNDS PER ACRE)

The wetland will be allowed to re-vegetate naturally

WETLAND SPECIES (see map for location)	RATE PLS#/ac	TOTAL = (RATE X Acres)	BERMS (if applicable) (see map for location)	RATE PLS#/ac	TOTAL = (RATE X Acres)
		0.0 Lb.			0.0 Lb.
		0.0 Lb.			0.0 Lb.
		0.0 Lb.			0.0 Lb.
		0.0 Lb.			0.0 Lb.
		0.0 Lb.			0.0 Lb.
<input type="checkbox"/> WETLAND Wildflowers:	1.0	0.0 Lb.			0.0 Lb.

Recommended WETLAND Wildflowers include: Cardinal Flower, Swamp Milkweed, Joe Pye Weed, Common Boneset, Sawtooth Sunflower, and other Native to Michigan.

### WETLAND BUFFERS SEEDING

BUFFER SPECIES	RATE	TOTAL needed = (RATE X Acres)
	PLS #/acre	0.0 PLS #
	PLS #/acre	0.0 PLS #
	PLS #/acre	0.0 PLS #
	PLS #/acre	0.0 PLS #
	PLS #/acre	0.0 PLS #
<b>BUFFER Wildflowers:</b>	1.0 PLS #/acre	0.0 PLS #

Recommended BUFFER Wildflowers include: Black-Eyed Susan, Coreopsis, Partridge Pea, Purple Coneflower, Compass Plant, and others Native to Michigan.

<b>BEFORE PLANTING in Year:</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Herbicide <sub>1</sub> (per label):	Dates =
<input type="checkbox"/> Herbicide <sub>2</sub> (per label):	Dates =
<input type="checkbox"/> Tillage:	Dates =
<input type="checkbox"/> Temporary Seeding:	
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Apply fertilizer and lime according to an approved soil test and MSU recommendations for “establishing native grasses”.</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Other:	
<b>PLANTING METHOD in Year:</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Planting Method:</b>	
Dates =	
(If unforeseen circumstances prohibit the planting of the grass by this date, please contact our office as soon as possible)	
<b>GRASS AND WILDFLOWER POST-PLANTING MAINTENANCE</b> for Pest Control	
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Mowing: <u>BEFORE</u> FINAL STATUS REVIEW = mow 12” high when the weeds are 12” taller than the planted grasses</b>	
<b><u>AFTER</u> FINAL STATUS REVIEW* = 12” MINIMUM Mowing Height*</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Herbicide* (per label):	<input type="checkbox"/> Prescribed Burning*: According to an approved plan
<input type="checkbox"/> Other:*	
<b>*NOTE: <u>after</u> the Final Status Review has been issued, <u>MOWING</u> will be conducted between August 1 &amp; 20, and weeds will be treated on a “spot” basis <u>only</u>, unless prior approval is granted by the County Committee.</b>	
<b>**NOTE: <u>after</u> the Final Status Review has been issued, other maintenance activities will be conducted between August 1 &amp; May 1, and weeds will be treated on a “spot” basis <u>only</u>, unless prior approval is granted by the County Committee.</b>	