WILDLIFE HABITAT (CORRIDORS)

Michigan CONSERVATION RESERVE PROGRAM

CRP – CP4B

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) October 2006

Photo courtesy of USDA NRCS

What is A WILDLIFE HABITAT (CORRIDORS) PLANTING?

A Wildlife Habitat (Corridors) planting is a combination of wildlife friendly grasses, wildflowers, legumes, shrubs, &/or trees that provide soil erosion protection as well as excellent habitat for a variety of wildlife, especially upland game birds and songbirds. These are linear plantings at least 66 feet wide.

Native grasses and wildflowers are encouraged, but non-native wildlife friendly grasses and legumes are also eligible. Some of the more common native grasses that grow well in Michigan include warm-season grasses such as Big Bluestem, Little Bluestem, Indian grass, and Switchgrass as well as native cool season grasses such as Canada Wild Rye and Virginia Wild Rye. Common wildflowers include Black-Eyed Susan, Purple Coneflower, Coreopsis, and others. Native shrubs include dogwoods, cranberry, etc. Eligible non-native grasses and legumes only include timothy, orchard grass, redtop, and red, ladino, or alsike clovers, and alfalfa.

Native grasses, shrubs, and trees 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 plants properly and to have patience when evaluating the results.

ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible for this practice with the General or Continuous Conservation Reserve Program, the land must have a cropping history (4 out of 6 years from 1996-2001). Further, for the Continuous Conservation Reserve Program, the land must be within 2000 feet of an approved public wellhead.

CRP POLICY

For General CRP, if 50 points were awarded for the National Ranking cover type factor, **at least 3 native grasses plus at least 2 NATIVE wildflowers plus 10% - 20% shrubs &/or trees** will be planted. If 40 points were awarded for the National Ranking cover type factor, **a combination of 2 native grasses + 1 NATIVE wildflower + 10% - 20% shrubs &/or trees, OR 3 non-native grasses + 1 legume + 10% - 20% shrubs &/or trees** will be planted. Any other plantings are not eligible. **Only NATIVE wildflowers, shrubs, & trees may be used for 50 point mixes** (see MI NRCS Biology Technical Note #13 for a list of native vs. non-native plants).

Grasses, wildflowers, & trees/shrubs will be established according to the Upland Wildlife Habitat Management (645) standard 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 grasses, trees & shrubs 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.

If the field is currently in sod, begin weed control efforts using broad-spectrum herbicides in the fall. Apply herbicides again after the spring green-up prior to planting (if possible, a prescribed burn prior to spring green up to remove the dead litter from the fall treatment will provide best results).

Herbicides labeled for warm season grass establishment may also 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 grasses and trees/shrubs according to the attached plan/design sheet, and apply lime and fertilizer according to needs determined by a soil test and MSU recommendations for the grasses.

Use a specialized no-till drill that is able to handle the 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 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.

For grasses, mow, burn, or apply herbicides as needed to control unwanted vegetation until a ***Final*** Status Review is issued. Mow when competing weeds are taller than the planted vegetation, and at a height above the planted vegetation. **Native grasses will not be mowed lower than 12", and non-native grasses lower than 4"- 6"** to ensure plant health.

For trees/shrubs, until a ***Final*** Status Review is issued, 9 ft^2 around each tree/shrub should remain weed-free to maximize tree growth. Fabric weed barriers are very effective at minimizing weed competition, but are not eligible for CRP cost-share. **Mowing is not allowed for weed control for trees/shrubs.**

For additional information on establishment and maintenance, see the following NRCS – Michigan Conservation Sheets (available at http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/efotg/ in Section IV): "Tree/ Shrub Planting for: Reforestation, Windbreaks, and Wildlife", "Weed Control for Tree and Shrub Establishment", "Establishing Cool Season Grasses and Legumes for Conservation Cover", "Establishing Prairie Grass Buffer Strips", "Prescribed Burning", &/or others.

For additional information on herbicide controls, contact your local MSU Extension Agent. **Always apply herbicides according to labeled directions.**

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

Undesirable plants, insects, and pests shall be controlled, including such maintenance as necessary to avoid detrimental effects to the surrounding land. Some of the most common pests that need controlled on CRP acreage include Autumn Olive, Multiflora Rose, Spotted Knapweed, Quackgrass, etc.

After the Final Status Review, maintain the planting 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. **MOWING** is only authorized between Aug 1st and Aug 20th to protect ground-nesting wildlife and to allow re-growth for winter cover. Other maintenance activities (herbicides, burning, etc.) are only allowed between August 1 – May 1 (i.e. - outside of the Primary Nesting and Brood-Rearing season). If maintenance activities are needed at times other than these, the FSA County Committee **must** approve the maintenance activity **prior to** the activity occurring.

For Trees/shrubs, replacement of dead trees/shrubs will occur to ensure at least 80% of the trees/shrubs are living. The landowner is responsible for replacement costs.

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

MID-CONTRACT 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 Wildlife Habitat (Corridors) plantings include prescribed burning (according to an approved burn plan), disking, interseeding of wildflowers or legumes, etc. All management activities must be performed according to NRCS Standards and Specifications as found in the FOTG, and CRP policy.

MANAGED GRAZING/HAYING

These plantings may be used for managed haying or grazing. These activities must be performed according to NRCS Standards and Specifications as found in the FOTG and CRP policy. The same acreage may not be hayed or grazed more than once every 3 years. Annual CRP rental payments will be reduced based on the value of the forage removed. All managed haying and grazing activities must be included in the conservation plan prior to harvesting the forage. See the attached information for specifics relating to Managed Grazing/Haying in CRP.

OTHER MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

For optimum wildlife habitat, plant a diversity of grasses, wildflowers, and trees/shrubs to provide winter and nesting cover, flowers for pollinating insects, and a good seed, berry, and insect source for food.

To facilitate future prescribed burning, consider establishing the perimeter of the field to an approved Cool-Season Grass and/or Legume, or Food Plots on non-erosive sites.

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WILDLIFE HABITAT (CORRIDORS) DESIGN WORKSHEET CRP CP4B

Landowner: **County:**

Farm Tract Field(s) **Grass Ac:** **Tree/Shrub Ac:** Date

RECOMMENDED SPECIES and SEEDING RATE (PLS #/ac = Pure Live Seed Pounds per Acre)

	50 PT. MIX	RATE PLS#/ac	TOTAL = (RATE X Acres)		40 PT. MIX	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.
	WILDFLOWERS		0.0	Lb.		WILDFLOWERS	0.0 Lb.
	TREES / SHRUBS		Total Number			TREES / SHRUBS	Total Number

NOTES:

Recommended Wildflowers include:

Recommended Trees/Shrubs include:

BEFORE PLANTING in Year:

☐ Herbicide$_1$ **(per label)**: Dates =

☐ Herbicide$_2$ **(per label)**: Dates =

☐ Tillage: Dates =

☐ Temporary Seeding:

☐ **Apply fertilizer and lime according to an approved soil test and MSU recommendations for "establishing native grasses".**

☐ Other:

PLANTING METHOD IN YEAR:

☐ **Tree/Shrub Planting Method:** **:**

☐ **Grass Planting Method:**

Dates =

(If unforeseen circumstances prohibit the planting of the grass by this date, please contact our office as soon as possible)

TREE / SHRUB POST-PLANTING MAINTENANCE for Pest Control

☐ **Maintain a 9 ft^2 weed & grass-free area around each tree/shrub for up to 3 years for optimal growth****

☐ Tree/Shrub Herbicide** **(per label)**: Dates** =

☐ Other:**

****NOTE: <u>after</u> the Final Status Review has been issued, other maintenance activities will be conducted between August 1 & May 1, and weeds will be treated on a "spot" basis <u>only</u>, unless prior approval is granted by the County Committee. – Mowing is not an approved method of weed control for tree/shrub plantings.**

GRASS AND WILDFLOWER POST-PLANTING MAINTENANCE for Pest Control

☐ **Mowing: BEFORE FINAL STATUS REVIEW = mow when the weeds are taller than the planted grasses (minimum mowing height = 12" for Native Grasses; 4" - 6" for Non-Native Grasses).**

AFTER FINAL STATUS REVIEW* = mow when the weeds are taller than the planted grasses (minimum mowing height = 12" for Native Grasses; 4" - 6" for Non-Native Grasses).

☐ Herbicide** **(per label)**:

☐ Prescribed Burning**: According to an approved plan

☐ Other:**

***NOTE: after the Final Status Review has been issued, MOWING will be conducted between August 1 & 20, and weeds will be treated on a "spot" basis only, unless prior approval is granted by the County Committee.**

****NOTE: after the Final Status Review has been issued, other maintenance activities will be conducted between August 1 & May 1, and weeds will be treated on a "spot" basis only, unless prior approval is granted by the County Committee.**

MID-CONTRACT MANAGEMENT for Plant Diversity, Wildlife Habitat, and Soil and Water Protection

STARTING IN YEAR:

☐ **Prescribed Burning:** According to an approved plan

☐ **Grass-Specific Herbicide** (per label): no more than 1/3 of the acreage in 1 year, and only once every 3 yrs; treated strips <= 100', untreated strips 2X treated strip width.

☐ **Strip Disking:** 2" – 4" deep (leave 30% residue); no more than 1/3 of the field in 1 year, and only once every 3 yrs; disked strips <= 100', undisked strips 2X disked strip width.

☐ **Wildflower Interseeding: at least ¼ lb/ac broadcast or drilled** following herbicide, prescribed burning, or strip disking.

☐ **Legume Interseeding: at least 3 lb/ac broadcast or drilled** following herbicide, prescribed burning, or strip disking.

LOCATION AND LAYOUT SKETCH & ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: