



CONTENTS

WILDLIFE HABITAT PROGRAMS—Pages 44-71.

Wildlife Habitat Programs..... 44.

WILD NEBRASKA 44-46.

Wildlife Habitat Improvement Practices..... 46-47.

Management Activities 47.

Disking 47-48.

Drain Closure 48-49.

Excavation 49.

Food and Cover Plot Establishment..... 49-50.

Grassland Haying and/or Shredding..... 50-51.

Grassland or Prairie Establishment 51-53.

Grazing Management for Grassland Wildlife..... 53-54.

Herbicide Treatment of Grasslands..... 55.

Irrigation Reuse Pit Closure (Only in Wetlands)..... 56.

Inter-seeding Established Grasslands with Legumes and Other Forbs..... 57.

Prescribed Burning 58.

Quick-cycle, Tail water Recovery System Installation..... 59.

Riparian Forest Buffers 60-61.

Stream Weir Installation 61.

Water Control Structure Installation 62.

Wetland Creation..... 62-63.

Wetland Silt and Fill Removal..... 63.

Wetland Vegetation Management 64.

Wildlife Shelter Belts..... 65-66.

Wildlife Shrub Planting 66-67.

Woody Vegetation Removal 68-69.

Additional Practice: Backyard Habitat Establishment..... 69.

CORNERS FOR WILDLIFE 70.

Cover Practice I—Grasses 70.

Cover Practice II—Trees or Shrubs added to Cover Practice I 71.



WILDLIFE HABITAT PROGRAMS

The District cooperates with the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission and Pheasants Forever on programs to create and enhance wildlife habitat. Federal agencies administer habitat development programs including the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) for wildlife habitat improvement and soil erosion control, the Wetland Reserve Program (WRP), Partners for Wildlife for wildlife habitat enhancement and the USDA-WHIP for habitat development. Contact the FSA for information about CRP, the NRCS for information about the WRP and USDA-WHIP and the US Fish and Wildlife Service for information about Partners for Wildlife.

State sponsored conservation programs include the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission's Private Lands Wetland Initiative for wetland development. This program requires the landowner to sign a contract of varying duration.

In addition to joint programs with Natural Resources Districts, Pheasants Forever or Ducks Unlimited programs provide incentives for creating habitat. Ken Feather, Forestry Department Manager for the Upper Big Blue NRD, can provide current information on these programs.

He can be reached by calling (402) 362-6601 or email: kfeather@upperbigblue.org

The NRD co-sponsors a wildlife habitat enhancement program with the NGPC. The program, WILD Nebraska, has consolidated several former NGPC programs including the Wildlife Habitat Improvement Program (WHIP), the Wetland Initiative Program (WIP), the Conservation Reserve Program-Management Access Program (CRP-MAP), the Seasonal Habitat Improvement Program (SHIP), the Cooperative Roadside Seeding Program (RSP), the Upland Habitat Initiative (UHI), the Wildlife Shelterbelt Program (WSP) and the Living Snow Fence Program.

WILD NEBRASKA

Because of declines in the wildlife populations in Nebraska, the Upper Big Blue NRD and the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission cooperate on a program, WILD Nebraska, to develop, manage and enhance wildlife habitat on private land through contracts with landowners. Cooperating landowners are offered financial assistance for establishing new wildlife habitat areas. The program is designed to give flexibility to interested landowners to implement land use practices that benefit wildlife, farmers, ranchers and the general public.

PROCEDURE

- 1). Contact the Upper Big Blue NRD office to apply. Applications are taken year-round.
- 2). The NRD and the Game and Parks Commission will make an on-site review to determine eligibility and to establish priorities.
- 3). Final approval will be made by the NRD board of directors.
- 4). An annual review will be made to insure compliance.
- 5). Annual payments will be made on the anniversary dates of acceptance into the program.



WILD NEBRASKA (Cont.)

ELIGIBILITY

WILD Nebraska is designed to create new wildlife habitat from crop ground or to improve existing wildlife habitat. Existing habitat lands will not be accepted into the program without improvement approved by the funding agencies. Allowing pedestrian public access, including access for hunting, is the option of the landowner on all acres funded through this program. If public access is allowed, a payment of \$3.00 per acre is made for each year of the contract.

Flexibility is a hallmark of this program. Landowners and agency staff have considerable leeway to develop a plan that meets the needs of all parties. Because of this, each contract will be created specifically for the individual site and goals.

PAYMENTS

A methodology to establish standardized costs has been adopted through WILD Nebraska using the USDA's published county average costs. These rates are familiar to landowners and are already managed to be current. Where county average costs are not available, WILD Nebraska will work with partners to develop reasonable rates. In cases where annual rental payments are used, the same problem of maintaining current rates exists. WILD Nebraska's solution is to use a percentage of the county average CRP rental rates. Total payments depend on the cost-share percentage and the annual maximum payment for each activity.

WILD Nebraska uses a payment system in which landowners receive financial incentives to help them "make a transition" from one level of economic land use to a different income base that provides greater wildlife benefits. Priorities are set on a statewide basis and include such things as habitat type, public access opportunities, project type (for example, row crop to high diversity grassland), contract length and regional resource needs.

In general, cost-share for management activities is designed to introduce a landowner to a specific wildlife habitat management technique and to encourage its use in the future. Therefore, reenrollment of sites for additional cost-share benefits for the same activity will generally not be allowed unless special circumstances exist. Examples include public access or rare or unique habitats.

Transition payments will be limited to a maximum of five years. Following that period, lands will continue to be eligible for development or management activity incentives, but would not be eligible to receive additional transition payments.

A payment of \$3.00/acre will be made for public access, including hunting, for each year of the contract.

The District has a minimum payment policy. In order to be cost-effective, the District will not issue a check for payment in an amount less than \$100.00. If the estimated cost on an application turns out to be higher than the actual amount and the actual amount to be paid is less than \$100.00, the application will be denied and no check will be issued. If an application results in a payment that would be less than \$100.00 consider adding more acres on the application to increase the payment amount.



Development

Development projects are eligible for reimbursement for materials and construction costs. Cooperators will be reimbursed, up to the specified limit, after submitting bills and invoices to the Upper Big Blue Natural Resources District.

Management

Management payments will be based on a prescribed management plan. This plan may be modified by mutual consent as conditions warrant. Payments, will be made to the cooperator after the prescribed management action has been completed. Payments will be based on actual costs that are adjusted to account for equipment needs and maintenance, labor and risk factors. If a management activity is not listed in the table, the payment will be established in the contract and mutually agreed to by the Upper Big Blue NRD, the NGPC and the cooperator. Cooperators will be reimbursed for the amount listed in the table if they do the management themselves, or if they pay someone else to do the management.

Transition

These are short-term payments designed to help the landowner transition to an alternate use of the land designed to be more wildlife friendly. These payments are needed when the alternative use of the land results in uncertainty and a loss of income generating potential, at least in the short-term. WILD Nebraska alone will not be able to compete economically with conventional agriculture. Therefore, payments will be targeted to obtain the greatest benefit for wildlife. When possible, payments will complement the existing land payment programs of our partners, especially the USDA. Transition payments will be based on a percentage of the county average land rental rates. Agreements will be either in the form of a contract or an easement. The decision on whether to use a contract or easement will be based on a number of factors including: cooperator preference, resource value, cost of the activity and length of the agreement.

WILD NEBRASKA WILDLIFE HABITAT IMPROVEMENT PRACTICES

Grazing Management

- Disking.
- Grassland haying and/or shredding.
- Grazing management for grassland wildlife.
- Herbicide treatment of grasslands.
- Inter-seeding established grasslands with legumes and other forbs.
- Prescribed burning.
- Wildlife shrub planting.
- Woody vegetation removal.
- Food and cover plot establishment.

Grassland Establishment Practices

- Grassland or prairie establishment.
- Wildlife shrub planting.
- Food and cover plot establishment.



WILD NEBRASKA

WILDLIFE HABITAT IMPROVEMENT PRACTICES (cont.)

Wetland Practices

- Disking.
- Drain closure.
- Grassland haying and/or shredding.
- Irrigation reuse pit closure (only in wetlands).
- Prescribed burning (approved by partnership).
- Quick-cycle tail water recovery system installation.
- Stream weir installation.
- Water control structure installation.
- Wetland silt and fill removal.
- Wetland vegetation management.
- Woody vegetation removal.
- Food and cover plot establishment.

Wetland Creation Practices

- Drain closure.
- Excavation.
- Stream weir installation.
- Water control structure installation.
- Wetland creation.
- Food and cover plot establishment.

Woodland Practice

- Riparian forest buffers.
- Wildlife shelterbelts.
- Wildlife shrub planting.
- Woody vegetation removal.
- Food and cover plot establishment.

WILD NEBRASKA MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

► Disking

Purposes:

- Increase plant diversity and productivity in existing grasslands and wetlands to fulfill life requirements of wildlife and set back plant succession.
- Site preparation for inter-seeding.

General Concept:

Disking can increase diversity by setting back plant succession and improving the structure of grassland and wetland plant communities. It will allow growth of important broadleaf “wildlife friendly” plants by reducing competition from plants with few wildlife benefits. Disking can be used to prepare sites for inter-seeding.

Continued on page 48. →



► Disking (cont.)

Examples:

- Disking existing low diversity grass stands (primarily CRP and other planted grasslands) incorporates dead plant material into the soil, promotes new tiller growth into bare areas, splits the crowns of bunch grasses to stimulate growth and reduces competition within sod bound grasses.
- Disking low diversity grass stands provides seed beds for legume or forb inter-seeding.

Cost-Share Rate:

Maximum Annual Payment: \$1,000/landowner/year, payment made upon project completion

Minimum Payment: \$100.

Management Payment: Up to 75% of county average cost, payment made upon project completion. Only one payment per site is allowed unless required in the agreement.

Public Access Payment: \$3/acre/year for duration of contract.

Minimum Size: 5 acres.

Contract Term: 5 years.

Requirements and Technical Specifications:

Must be part of an approved management plan. As a general rule, no disking should occur in grasslands between May 1st and August 15th to reduce impacts to wildlife production and improve desired plant growth. Typically, disking in grasslands should be shallow (2-3 inches) and only disturb approximately one-half of the soil surface. The intensity will vary according to wind and water related soil erosion potential and type of grassland. Tracts in heavy soils with invasive species (like smooth brome) will often require two or more diskings to be effective. A minimum of 10% of the grassland should be treated at one time with several treatments being rotated over subsequent years. Disking in wetland communities should be deep (6-10 inches) and accomplished during dry periods.

► Drain Closure

Purpose:

To restore hydrology to wetlands that have been fully or partially drained.

General Concept:

Many wetlands have been fully or partly drained by ditches, culverts, head-cutting gullies and tiling. Closure of these drains will result in an increase of wetland acres and also restore, or partially restore, the natural hydrology to the wetland. The water control activity will often be used in association with this activity.

The Seasonal Habitat Improvement Program (SHIP) of the Rainwater Basin Joint Venture is included as part of this activity. An existing cooperative agreement between the NGPC, USFWS and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation is in place to implement this activity in the Rainwater Basin. The main difference between SHIP and other drain closure projects is that SHIP closes the drainage only during the non-cropping season to provide water bird migration habitat.



► Drain Closure (cont.)

During the cropping season, the landowner is allowed to remove the water and crop the site. In some cases, this activity may be offered outside of the Rainwater Basin.

This activity works well when coupled with our partners' programs. An example is WRP and some CRP activities where those programs cover a portion of the landowner's restoration costs and this activity under WILD Nebraska could pay the remaining cost-share.

Cost-Share Rate:

Maximum Annual Payment: \$5,000/landowner/year, may exceed with administrative approval, payment made upon project completion.

Minimum Payment: \$100.

Public Access Payment: \$3/acre/year for duration of contract.

Contract Term: 10 or more years.

Requirements and Technical Specifications:

Commission approved seeding of construction areas will be used as prescribed to provide wildlife habitat and to prevent erosion.

► Excavation

Any excavation as part of the Wetland Creation Practice must be approved by cooperating agencies.

Cost-Share Rate:

Maximum Annual Payment: \$5,000/landowner/year, payment made upon project completion.

Minimum Payment: \$100.

Public Access Payment: \$3/acre/year for duration of contract.

Contract Term: 10 years.

► Food and Cover Plot Establishment

Purposes:

- To provide a readily available winter food source for wildlife.
- To provide a lure for wildlife that will attract them into high quality cover.
- To provide a relatively safe feeding environment for wildlife.
- To provide wildlife cover.



► Food and Cover Plot Establishment (cont.)

General Concept:

Food is a strong wildlife attractant and strategic placement of food plots can help to manage wildlife. However, the term “food plot” is not the best descriptor of this activity. The term “food and cover” plot better expresses the actual benefits provided. Although food is rarely a limiting factor for wildlife, it is much safer for wildlife to forage in a food and cover plot than searching for waste grain in a disked field. An important use of food and cover plots is the ability to attract resident wildlife species, such as pheasants, into areas with secure winter cover prior to winter. This complementary activity improves survival and tends to bring wildlife through winter in better physical condition.

Examples:

Establishment of a multi-species sorghum planting to provide food and cover for wintering pheasants.

Cost-Share Rate:

Maximum Annual Payment: Materials only.

Minimum Payment: \$100.

Public Access Payment: \$3/acre/year for duration of contract.

Minimum Size: 3-10 acres.

Contract Term: 1-2 years.

► Grassland Haying and/or Shredding

Purposes:

- Fulfill life requirements for grassland wildlife by enhancing vegetative structure and composition.
- Site preparation for inter-seeding additional forbs and grasses in existing grasslands.

General Concept:

Haying (removal of vegetative material) and shredding or mowing can be used on grasslands and wetlands to alter the composition of existing plant communities.

Altering the timing and extent of haying or shredding can protect ground nesting birds, encourage rare plant species and modify plant diversity, structure and residual cover.

Examples:

- Alteration of time and extent of haying on sites with known populations of plant species of concern (threatened and endangered species) may enhance survivability.
- Shredding undesirable vegetation may allow more effective herbicide treatment.
- Shredding may curtail encroachment of woody invaders in grassland situations.



► **Grassland Haying and/or Shredding (cont.)**

Cost-Share Rate:

Maximum Annual Payment: \$500/landowner/year, payment made upon project completion, CRP tracts not eligible.

Minimum Payment: \$100.

Management Payment: Up to 50% of county average cost if shredded or mowed according to an approved management plan (no harvest allowed), payment of \$10/acre if timing of haying operation substantially altered according to an approved management plan.

Public Access Payment: \$3/acre/year for duration of contract.

Minimum Size: 5 acres.

Contract Term: 5 years.

Requirements and Technical Specifications:

Must be part of an approved management plan. No more than 30% of grassland tract can be hayed annually except when used as a timing alteration specified in the approved management plan. This activity must occur between July 15 and April 1 to minimize impacts to ground nesting birds. Shredding on CRP is not eligible for payment.

► **Grassland or Prairie Establishment**

Purposes:

- Fulfill life requirements for grassland wildlife.
- Establish border plantings in ag systems.
- Restore native grassland communities to the greatest extent possible.

General Concept—Native plantings:

These are intended to restore native grassland communities and should include a diverse mixture of grasses, sedges and forb species. Seed mixtures for native grass and forb plantings should be representative of local native prairies. For example, tall grass prairie species should be planted in the tall grass prairie region of eastern Nebraska and mixed grass species should be planted in the mixed-grass prairie region of central and western Nebraska. Such seed mixtures will provide the best habitat for native wildlife species. Where available and practical, local ecotypes (varieties native to the local area) should be used in plantings.

Introduced or Native Grasses with Legumes:

Without nesting cover, other management practices for ground nesting bird species with high population turnovers are not very effective. Cool season grasses with a strong legume component, also known as Dense Nesting Cover (DNC), can be very important habitat for pheasants and other ground nesting birds. Combinations of various different types of herbaceous vegetation provide excellent diversity and structure and are used by many species of grassland wildlife throughout the year.



► Grassland or Prairie Establishment (cont.)

Legumes Only:

Legumes can provide excellent nesting cover and brood rearing cover for grassland birds, especially pheasants. Legumes are also excellent insect producers (protein source), which enhances brood survival.

All of the above are applicable in block plantings.

Introduced and native grasses with legumes and legume seedlings are applicable in strip-plantings such as field borders.

Examples:

- Prairie restoration projects.
- Conversion of cropland to grasslands.

Cost-Share Rate:

Maximum Annual Payment: \$2,500/landowner/year, payment made upon project completion.

Minimum Payment: \$100.

Development Payment: Up to \$80/acre for seed costs, \$15/acre for ground preparation and seedling.

Management Payment: Up to 100% of cost of selected herbicide costs if implemented according to an approved management plan, payment of \$10/acre for application if implemented according to an approved management plan, may be eligible for payment after fifth year of contract.

Transition Payment: Up to 80% of county average annual rental rate for up to 5 years, payments not applicable if grazing or haying implemented.

Public Access Payment: \$3/acre/year for duration of contract.

Minimum Size: 5 acres.

Contract Term: 5 years—introduced native grasses with legumes and legumes only,
10 years—native plantings

Requirements and Technical Specifications: Native Plantings

Restore native grassland communities to the greatest extent possible according to an approved plan. Enrollments of lands with high diversity plantings that are intended to restore or provide buffer for native prairies are the primary targets. A minimum guideline is to include five or more native grasses and two or more native forbs with the forb component to represent at least 30% of the seed mixture. Prairie restoration projects are to include eight or more native forbs. Where existing grass cover occurs (for example, smooth brome), seed bed preparation will require elimination of existing vegetation by disking, plowing or chemical treatment. In addition, cover-cropping and repeated tillage operations may be necessary to eliminate existing persistent vegetation. On crop fields, seed bed preparation may not be necessary and seeds may be planted directly into residue. Mowing, grazing, burning and/or other activities may be used to manage the grassland after establishment. If noxious weed control is needed, it must be accomplished by spot mechanical treatment or spot chemical spraying.



► **Grassland or Prairie Establishment (cont.)**

Introduced or native grasses with legumes:

The seed mixture must include two or more grasses and one or more legumes. Either introduced or native, warm or cool season grasses are acceptable. Smooth brome, reed canary grass, crested wheat grass, or Garrison creeping foxtail are not acceptable. Switchgrass cannot comprise more than 20% of the grass component. Seed mixture must include a minimum of 30% legumes. If plant materials are known to be invasive in the project area, alternate plant materials should be used.

Legumes Only:

The seed mixture may contain a single species of legume or combination of two or more species. If plant materials are known to be invasive in the project area, alternate plant materials should be used.

Grazing, haying and/or burning may be an applicable management activity after the first three years of the contract. If noxious weed control is needed, it must be accomplished by spot mechanical treatment or by spot chemical spraying.

Lands enrolled into this activity will be accepted on a case-by-case basis following an inspection and planting plan.

► **Grazing Management for Grassland Wildlife**

Purposes:

- Manage grassland and/or wetland ecosystems to fulfill life requirements for wildlife.
- Demonstrate quality grassland stewardship emphasizing mutual benefits to wildlife and livestock production.
- Enhance native grassland by increasing plant species composition and structure.

General Concept:

The objective of this activity is to create a more desirable landscape with a mosaic of grassland habitats. Planned grazing can be a viable management tool that can maintain productive grasslands and enhance habitat conditions for wildlife. Other associated plant community management activities, such as haying, prescribed burning and herbicide use, may be integral to a stewardship plan. Through partnerships in the planning process, ranchers and conservation agencies can reach consensus on a stewardship plan to adequately meet each of their objectives. Under a good stewardship plan, improvements in plant species composition and improved structure can be expected, resulting in improved wildlife habitat conditions. Long-term whole ranch planning is a preferred strategy for this activity because of greater benefits realized on a large scale, but smaller units may be considered under some circumstances. Cost-share is available for fencing and/or other selected activities.

Encroachment of native grassland by exotic invasive species such as smooth brome and Kentucky bluegrass can reduce habitat quality for grassland dependent wildlife.



► Grazing Management for Grassland Wildlife (cont.)

Reduction of these invasive exotics, resting overgrazed grasslands and other grassland management practices can fulfill necessary wildlife production and winter cover requirements. In the case of introduced grass and legume tracts, management strategies will encourage plant diversity with particular emphasis on increase or retention of legume component. Cost-share is available for fencing and other grassland management practices.

Examples:

- Cross fencing large pastures to improve grazing systems and provide rested pastures and residual cover for wildlife.
- Fencing out important wildlife features to better manage grazing on those sites.
- Replacing invasive species with native plant mixtures.
- Managing timing and intensity of grazing in introduced grass/legume situations to encourage a minimum of two grasses and 25% legume component.

Cost-Share Rate:

Maximum Annual Payment: \$2,500/landowner/year (some exceptions possible), payment made upon project completion.

Minimum Payment: \$100.

Development Payment: Based on county average cost for materials (fencing, water sources, etc.) depending on other available funding and wildlife habitat benefits received. Payment made upon project completion.

Management Payment: May be eligible for management payment for other grassland activities benefiting wildlife.

Public Access Payment: \$3/acre/year for duration of contract.

Minimum Size: 5 acres.

Contract Term: 10 years.

Requirements and Technical Specifications:

Develop a stewardship plan in cooperation with the landowner and other partners that will benefit wildlife and address shared objectives. The plan should include vegetative inventories, wildlife and livestock objectives, management strategies (for example, fencing, water needs), funding sources and development of a cooperative agreement. If noxious weed control is needed, the landowner must use mechanical means or spot applications of herbicides.



► Herbicide Treatment of Grasslands

Purposes:

- Minimize adverse effects of broad-scale herbicide treatments on sites with known state or federally listed threatened and endangered plant species.
- Retain or increase diversity of existing plant communities necessary to fulfill life requirements of wildlife.
- Site preparation for seeding or inter-seeding.

General Concept:

Use of herbicides can be a significant factor affecting plant diversity in plant communities. Nebraska statutes require control of listed noxious weeds. Herbicides can be the control activity of choice in many situations. Broad-scale applications of herbicides can result in almost complete loss of many forb species, including threatened and endangered species such as the western prairie fringed orchid. Careful applications of proper herbicides on plant communities can minimize adverse effects on non-target plants. Proper use of selected herbicides can be a valuable tool in controlling invasive plants and for setting back succession of existing undesirable vegetation.

Examples:

- Spot spraying with a narrow-range herbicide on leafy spurge in a wet meadow site with population of western prairie fringed orchids.
- Use of *Roundup*® on field of smooth brome to allow early successional plants to re-establish.

Cost-Share Rate:

Maximum Annual Payment: \$500/landowner/year, payment made upon project completion.

Minimum Payment: \$100.

Management Payment: Up to 100% of cost of selected herbicide costs if implemented according to an approved management plan, payment of \$10/acre for application if implemented according to an approved management plan.

Public Access Payment: \$3/acre/year for duration of contract.

Minimum Size: 5 acres.

Contract Term: 5 years.

Requirements and Technical Specifications:

Herbicide applications must be a part of an approved grassland management plan. This management plan must include specific name, rate, timing and method of chemical application, target species and affected important plant community and/or rare species. Blanket or whole field applications will not be acceptable unless part of a grassland renovation project.



► Irrigation Reuse Pit Closure (Only in Wetlands)

Purposes:

Improve hydrology within a wetland.

General Concept:

Irrigation reuse pits have two major negative impacts on wetlands. When located within the hydric soil footprint of a wetland, pits “concentrate” water and partially drain the surrounding wetland. This is especially damaging to small, temporary and seasonal wetlands. The wetland surrounding the pit dries much more frequently, disrupting the natural wet/dry cycle and allowing for the conversion of the wetland.

Irrigation reuse pit closure aids in the restoration of wetland hydrology. Should a cooperator determine that a pit is no longer necessary for farming activities, this activity can assist in filling the pit with soil back to original grade. An alternative would be the placement of a low-level earthen berm, with a control structure around the pit, to control water movement into it. The structure can be opened during irrigation season to capture tail-water, then closed the rest of the year to allow natural runoff to bypass the pit. Quick-cycle tail-water recovery systems and Seasonal Habitat Improvement Projects are activities that can often be paired with this.

Cost-Share Rate:

Maximum Annual Payment: \$5,000/landowner/year, may exceed with administrative approval, payment made upon project completion.

Minimum Payment: \$100.

Public Access Payment: \$3/acre/year for duration of contract.

Contract Term: 10 or more years.

Requirements and Technical Specifications:

Excavations to obtain fill for the pit will need to be designed so they do not puncture the clay seal of the wetland. Seeding of the construction area will usually not be necessary. However, if necessary, a NGPC approved seeding will be used to provide wildlife habitat and to prevent erosion.



► Inter-seeding Established Grasslands with Legumes and Other Forbs

Purposes:

- Fulfill life requirements for upland game and other grassland wildlife.
- Enhance native grasslands by increasing plant species composition and diversity.

General Concept:

Existing grasslands in many instances may be dominated by a single species or only a few species of grass with relatively few forbs. Such areas do not provide the habitat requirements necessary to sustain many wildlife populations. Forbs support an additional array of insect species and provide a forage and seed source for wildlife. Forbs (including legumes) and other grasses can be introduced into grassland by various methods. Only native species should be inter-seeded into native prairies. Alfalfa and sweet clover are the most commonly used legumes and can be used statewide on non-native grasslands.

Methods of seeding forbs and grasses include: (1) light disking, drilling or broadcasting and harrowing; (2) drilling directly into sparse grass stands; or (3) drilling into recently burned or chemically treated tracts. Broadcasting followed by short-term, high intensity grazing may also be acceptable. Methods are site specific and will vary according to location, soils and type of existing grass stands.

Examples:

- Inter-seed introduced, cool season grass or switch grass stands with alfalfa, sweet clover and/or red clover.
- Inter-seed native grass stands with native forbs.

Cost-Share Rate:

Maximum Annual Payment: \$2,500/landowner/year (some exceptions possible), payment made upon project completion.

Minimum Payment: \$100.

Development Payment: Up to 100% of seed costs and up to 100-percent of county average costs for site preparation - maximum of \$10/acre.

Public Access Payment: \$3/acre/year for duration of contract.

Minimum Size: 5 acres.

Contract Term: 5 years.

Requirements and Technical Specifications:

A site development plan must be prepared for each project. In most instances, mechanical disturbance or chemical applications must occur prior to seeding. In smooth brome stands, a minimum of 90% reduction in grass cover is required prior to inter-seeding. Seed mixtures to be inter-seeded into nonnative grasslands must include at least two or more legumes consisting of alfalfa, red clover, sweet clover and/or hairy vetch. Alfalfa should be a dryland, rhizomatous variety and sweet clover should be used in conjunction with a perennial legume. Red clover may be used in the eastern half of the state and in wetter sites. Hairy vetch is suitable in sandy soils. A minimum of two pounds of introduced legumes, in any combination, should be seeded per acre. Native, unbroken grasslands must be inter-seeded **only** with native forbs or grasses. Inter-seeded legumes or native forbs must comprise a minimum of 30% of full seeding rate. CRP-MAP tracts are **not** eligible for payment under this activity.



► Prescribed Burning

Purposes:

- Improve plant composition and structure of existing plant communities to fulfill life requirements of wildlife.
- Control of woody plant invaders.
- Site preparation for inter-seeding.

General Concept:

Fire has played an integral part in the development and maintenance of grasslands and other plant communities in the Great Plains. Through technical assistance, landowners can be provided the necessary information to conduct safe and effective burns and will be better informed of the benefits of prescribed burning.

Many private landowners lack the necessary equipment and information to conduct prescribed burns. WILD Nebraska may provide cooperators with drip torches and other tools on loan at no cost along with necessary information to conduct safe and effective burns.

Examples:

- Spring or fall burning to control or suppress cool season grasses in native grasslands and facilitate release of warm season grasses and forbs.
- Burning to prepare site for inter-seeding grasses and forbs into existing grasslands.
- Burning, in conjunction with hydrologic manipulation, to suppress undesirable vegetation in wetland ecosystems.
- Burning to retard encroachment of woody plants into grasslands, wetlands and savannas and remove litter accumulation and undesired invasive species in forest understory.

Cost-Share Rate:

Maximum Annual Payment: \$1,000/landowner/year, payment made upon project completion.

Minimum Payment: \$100.

Management Payment: burns of 5-20 acres - up to \$100.
burns of 21 to 80 acres - \$250.
burns of 81-160 acres - \$500.
burns of 161-320 acres - \$750.
burns over 321 acres - \$1,000.

[Payment will be made upon project completion. Only one payment per site is allowed unless required in the agreement.]

Transition Payment: may be eligible for a payment if grazing deferment is necessary to provide adequate fuel load.

Public Access Payment: \$3/acre/year for duration of contract.

Minimum Size: 5 acres, no limit for equipment loan or technical assistance.

Contract Term: 5 years, site eligible for payments normally only once in a five-year contract.

Requirements and Technical Specifications:

A management plan detailing prescribed burns must be prepared by a resource professional for each site.



► Quick-Cycle, Tail-water Recovery System Installation

Purpose:

To the fullest extent possible, restore and/or maintain the natural hydrology of wetlands by encouraging the use of quick-cycle, tail-water recovery systems.

General Concept:

In Nebraska's Rainwater Basin and elsewhere, pits have been dug in and near wetlands to make these areas more suitable for cropping. Because most pits capture water during the entire year, the natural hydrology of the wetland is usually interrupted. By providing financial incentives to install quick-cycle, tail-water recovery systems, cooperators may be able to fill existing pits.

The quick-cycle works like a sump pump. Excess water from irrigation is directed into a small earthen pit or tank. A pump, switched on by a float returns the excess water to the irrigation system resulting in increased efficiency. In the absence of a larger volume pit, runoff from precipitation reaches the wetland at a higher rate. Quick-cycle systems can also benefit wetlands by directing irrigation tail-water away from a wetland to facilitate natural draw-down processes. Pit closure or pit filling or some other type of hydrologic modification must accompany this activity.

Examples:

Several quick-cycle pumps have been installed in the Rainwater Basin. In each case either an existing pit was filled or a new pit was not constructed resulting insignificant benefits to the wetland resource.

Cost-Share Rate:

Maximum Annual Payment: \$5,000/landowner/year, may exceed with administrative approval, payment made upon project completion.

Minimum Payment: \$100.

Development Payment: Up to 50% of the cost of supplies and materials, may exceed with administrative approval, payment made upon project completion.

Public Access Payment: \$3/acre/year for duration of contract.

Contract Term: 10 or more years.

Requirements and Technical Specifications:

System should be designed to capture irrigation tail-water and allow most precipitation runoff to enter the wetland. Cost of return lines is not eligible.



► Riparian Forest Buffers

Purpose:

To restore or establish native woody species including trees, shrubs, vines, etc., along seasonal and permanent drainages to enhance wildlife habitat diversity within the landscape.

General Concept:

This activity will be combined exclusively with USDA programs, primarily continuous CRP, or possibly the Nebraska Department of Agriculture/Natural Resources Districts' Nebraska **Buffer Strip Program**—(see pages 25-27 of the **Land Treatment Chapter**)—which includes riparian forest buffer restoration and establishment. The intent of this activity is to encourage cooperators to increase the width of enrolled buffers and to select native woody species that provide the greatest benefit to wildlife.

A mixture of short- and long-lived tree and shrub species that produce mast or browse is preferred. The potential to restore or establish riparian forest buffers exists along many drainages across Nebraska, especially in the eastern and southern parts of the state. Riparian areas serve as key wildlife habitats in the life requisites of a majority of wildlife species found in Nebraska. These wooded corridors, though often narrow, are vitally important for nesting, loafing and escape cover and also provide a variety of foods for wildlife. In many cases, these woodlands may have been removed intentionally to expand cropland areas or have been degraded due to overgrazing, flooding, erosion, etc.

Opportunities may exist to promote riparian forest buffers and riparian filter strips within priority watersheds in Nebraska. A partnership between NGPC and Pheasants Forever, called the Nebraska Buffers Partnership, has been formed to facilitate identification and enrollment of lands into the continuous sign up of the Conservation Reserve Program. This process uses one-on-one contacts with landowners and provides landowners with enrollment assistance.

Cost-Share Rate:

Maximum Annual Payment: \$2,500/landowner/year.

Minimum Payment: \$100.

Development Payment: Up to 100% of the cost of materials and installation, payment made upon completion of project. Cost-share will be provided at a rate not to exceed 25% of the county average costs (or actual costs if less) for all components eligible for cost-share under the Riparian Forest Buffer practice of the continuous provision of the CRP offered by USDA. For sites that do not qualify for CRP, such as “three-dot drains”, but do not qualify for the Nebraska Buffer Strip Program, cost-share may be provided at a rate of up to 75% of the county average costs (or actual cost if less).

Seedling planting site preparation: Up to 100% of county average cost or actual costs, if less.

Weed control: No cost-share on mechanical weed control (shredding) between rows except the removal of competitive grass cover may be cost-shared on a case by case basis.

Weed barrier fabric and installation: 50% of county average cost (or actual, if less).

Replants: 100% of seedling cost only if survival is less than 75%, provided twice during first five years, cooperator installs seedlings.

Transition Payment: Only for conversion from cropland to riparian buffer, will not apply to sites enrolled in CRP or other programs providing an annual land use payment.



► Riparian Forest Buffers (cont.)

Public Access Payment: \$3/acre/year for duration of contract.

Minimum Size: 1-5 acres.

Contract Term: 10-15 years concurrent with USDA contract and as specified in the cooperative agreement.

Requirements and Technical Specifications:

To qualify for cost-share, the buffer must be a minimum of 66-feet wide. Composition of the species planted can include no more than 10% conifers (for example, red cedar) and no less than 30% native shrubs.

► Stream Weir Installation

Purposes:

To stop or reverse streambed degradation that negatively impacts wetlands.

General Concept:

Many streambeds in Nebraska have become severely degraded. Degradation occurs when a stream cuts at an unnaturally accelerated rate, forming an incised channel with steep banks. A highly degraded stream affects wetlands by isolating them from over bank flood flows, by potentially lowering ground water levels across the floodplain and by allowing the development of erosive gullies that drain adjacent wetlands. Stopping degradation ensures that the wetlands on the floodplain will not become further isolated from ground water or over-bank water sources. Reversing degradation helps to restore wetlands by reconnecting them with ground water and over bank water sources. This activity will often be paired with the **Drain Closure—(see pages 48-49 of this chapter)**—activity where floodplain head cuts (erosive gullies draining wetlands) are plugged.

Cost-Share Rate:

Maximum Annual Payment: \$5,000/landowner/year, may exceed with administrative approval, payment made upon project completion.

Minimum Payment: \$100.

Development Payment: Up to 50% of the cost of supplies and materials, may exceed with administrative approval, payment made upon project completion.

Public Access Payment: \$3/acre/year for duration of contract.

Contract Term: 20 or more years.

Requirements and Technical Specifications:

Approval of final plans by a registered professional engineer is needed for these projects.

Natural Heritage Program and Fisheries Division staff at the NGPC will review these projects to ensure that the movement of aquatic life is not impaired.



► Water Control Structure Installation

Purpose:

- To facilitate wetland restoration.
- To maintain the productivity of the wetland by effectively managing water levels.

General Concept:

Wetland plant and animal communities are well adapted to the wet and dry cycles that wetlands undergo. However, the hydrology of many wetlands has been altered to the point that the natural wet and dry cycles no longer occur. When this is the case, it is often necessary to provide for water control to restore the wetland or to maintain the productivity of the wetland. This activity will usually be paired with the **Drain Closure**—(see pages 48-49 of this chapter)—activity.

Cost-Share Rate:

Maximum Annual Payment: \$5,000/landowner/year, may exceed with administrative approval, payment made upon project completion.

Minimum Payment: \$100.

Development Payment: Up to 50% of the cost of supplies and materials, may exceed with administrative approval, payment made upon project completion.

Public Access Payment: \$3/acre/year for duration of contract.

Contract Term: 10 or more years.

Requirements and Technical Specifications:

This activity is only applicable for development of shallow water wetlands (average depth of less than 2.5 feet). This activity will not be used to cost-share on deep-water projects (for example, lakes and fishponds).

► Wetland Creation

Purpose:

To create wetlands for the benefit of wildlife.

General Concept:

Although wetland creation is not a priority of this program, there are instances in which creations can replace wetlands that have been drained or to complement the functions of existing wetlands. Creation, most often, is accomplished through excavation or by construction of a dam. This activity will generally be paired with one of the other wetland activities.

Cost-Share Rate:

Maximum Annual Payment: \$5,000/landowner/year, may exceed with administrative approval, payment made upon project completion.

Minimum Payment: \$100.

Development Payment: Up to 50% of the cost of supplies and materials, may exceed with administrative approval, payment made upon project completion.

Public Access Payment: \$3/acre/year for duration of contract.

Contract Term: 10 or more years.



► Wetland Creation (cont.)

Requirements and Technical Specifications:

A wetland will not be created in an area where it will degrade existing wetlands or other unique natural communities. This activity is intended to emphasize shallow water habitat for wildlife. It is not intended for development of fisheries habitats. Creation of fish ponds will not be allowed under this activity.

► Wetland Silt and Fill Removal

Purposes:

- To restore wetlands in areas that were filled and leveled.
- To remove silt and sediment washed into wetlands in order to restore original basin profile, depths and hydrology.
- To remove invasive plant species and expose native plant seed banks.
- To create varying water depths within the wetland and provide habitat diversity.

General Concept:

Many wetlands throughout the state have been filled (with soil, etc.) and leveled. Other wetlands have been severely impacted by removal of perennial vegetation from the watershed leading to the deposition of silt into the wetland. The highly accelerated rate of silt deposition leads to an alteration of wetland hydrology and can result in the establishment of invasive plants such as hybrid cattail, reed canary grass and river bulrush, all of which out compete more desirable plants. Also, silt buries the seed bank of desirable plant species preventing germination. It also acts as a sponge, absorbing water and making it unavailable to wildlife, and has a leveling effect, creating a wetland with a nearly flat bottom that eliminates the micro topography that provides habitat diversity. This activity must be accompanied by a prescribed vegetative buffer and/or silt trap.

Cost-Share Rate:

Maximum Annual Payment: \$5,000/landowner/year, may exceed with administrative approval, payment made upon project completion.

Minimum Payment: \$100.

Development Payment: Up to 50% of the cost of supplies and materials, may exceed with administrative approval, payment made upon project completion.

Public Access Payment: \$3/acre/year for duration of contract.

Contract Term: 10 or more years.

Requirements and Technical Specifications:

Wetlands that have been filled and leveled, as well as wetlands from which silt is to be removed, will need to have a depth of fill/silt and a topographic survey conducted to determine how much material should be excavated. Care must be taken when excavating in “perched” wetlands (such as Rainwater Basins and other playa wetlands) so that the clay seal underlying the area is not breached, allowing water to seep away. A vegetated buffer and/or silt trap will almost always accompany this activity.



► Wetland Vegetation Management

Purpose:

To manage, enhance and restore native wetland plant communities to benefit wildlife.

General Concept:

Because wetlands occupy a continuum between wet and dry conditions, they undergo a variety of unique changes both seasonally and from year-to-year. Wetlands under natural conditions go dry and then flood, are burned by prairie fires and are subjected to other disturbances such as grazing. These are natural processes that do not harm the wetland. In fact, it is the interaction of all of these dynamic processes that make wetlands so productive. If some of these processes are altered, for example, by maintaining a constant water level or the exclusion of a vegetative disturbance, such as fire, the wetland habitat will actually begin to deteriorate.

Many wetlands have been impacted, either due to the removal of natural disturbances or because proper management has not been prescribed. Examples of prescribed management techniques that may be applied under this activity include burning, grazing, haying, disking, shredding, spraying, water level changes, seeding and tree removal. Specific examples are not provided because each wetland and situation is unique. Management will be prescribed based upon site conditions and biological justification. These activities apply to the wetland only, however, they may be paired with other grassland or woodland management activities as appropriate.

Cost-Share Rate:

Maximum Annual Payment: \$5,000/landowner/year, may exceed with administrative approval, payment made upon project completion.

Minimum Payment: \$100.

Development Payment: Up to 50% of the cost of supplies and materials, may exceed with administrative approval, payment made upon project completion.

Public Access Payment: \$3/acre/year for duration of contract.

Contract Term: 5 or more years.

Requirements and Technical Specifications:

The cooperator will follow a NGPC approved management plan for the term of the contract.



► Wildlife Shelterbelts

General Concept:

Wildlife shelterbelts provide a multitude of benefits for many game and non-game species of wildlife. Shelterbelts primarily provide winter and escape cover, but also provide nesting cover, brood rearing cover, food and loafing sites.

Over the past several decades, shelterbelt numbers have been on a steady decline due largely to agricultural development. This activity is designed to replace some of that loss. The activity will develop new shelterbelts and restore existing ones. This activity will not be used to establish farmstead or feedlot windbreaks. Other programs exist that provide cooperators adequate financial assistance for their establishment.

Various combinations of red cedar, rocky mountain juniper and a variety of locally adapted native shrubs will be used. The use of exotic species is prohibited. Shrub species that provide winter and escape cover as well as food will be emphasized. The planting of red cedar in central and eastern parts of the state should be scrutinized due to the potential for “pioneering” into areas where they are not wanted.

Cost-Share Rate:

Maximum Annual Payment: \$2,500/landowner/year.

Minimum Payment: \$100.

Development Payment: Up to 100% of the cost of materials and installation, payment made upon project completion.

Seedling planting site preparation: Up to 80% of county average cost or actual costs, if less.

Weed control: No cost-share on mechanical weed control (shredding) between rows except the removal of competitive grass cover may be cost-shared on a case by case basis.

Weed barrier fabric and installation: 50% of county average cost (or actual, if less).

Replants: 100% of seedling cost, provided twice during first five years, cooperator installs seedlings.

Transition Payment: Only for conversion from cropland to wildlife habitat, will not apply to sites enrolled in CRP or other programs providing an annual land use payment.

Public Access Payment: \$3/acre/year for duration of contract.

Minimum Size: 2 acres (includes belt plus herbaceous and shrub cover).

Contract Term: 10 or more years.

Requirements and Technical Specifications:

The site must contain an area of herbaceous cover (undisturbed, quality nesting-loafing-roosting-cover) equal in size to the wildlife shelterbelt planting and not less than 66-feet wide located on the leeward side of the shelterbelt. This cover maybe hayed (or shredded) after July 15th up to twice every five years to maintain habitat quality.

The site must also contain two shrub thickets a minimum of 100-feet long and 20-feet wide per two acre “plot” (belt plus herbaceous cover) located on the leeward side of the shelterbelt.



► **Wildlife Shelterbelts (cont.)**

The wildlife shelterbelt must contain a minimum of three rows (recommended 20-foot spacing between rows) using any combination of red cedar, rocky mountain juniper and native shrub species.

The site must be protected from livestock and tillage encroachment. Fencing will be required for sites exposed to livestock. A single shrub row will be used to delineate herbaceous cover boundary on sites located adjacent to tilled cropland.

All vegetation between the rows will remain undisturbed (except to control noxious weeds). The planting of food/cover plot seed between the rows will be encouraged during the first five years following wildlife shelterbelt establishment on sites converted from cropland.

Sites with obvious noxious weed problems will not be enrolled. Should noxious weeds become a problem, the producer will be responsible for their control. Weed control will be limited to spot treatment by mechanical or chemical means.

► **Wildlife Shrub Planting**

Purpose:

To establish woody cover where needed to supply food and cover for game and non-game species of wildlife.

General Concept:

Shrubs are important habitat components for many wildlife species. These plants provide food and cover during the entire year. Some wildlife are dependent on woody plants for a considerable portion of their daily diet. Others depend on woody plants for cover from avian predation, shelter during winter storms, loafing and brood rearing.

This activity is intended to establish plantings that will be varied in size and location. They may be on pivot corners, bordering irregularly shaped fields, within grassy draws, or along riparian areas that lack essential woody cover. These are not intended to be shelterbelt plantings. Each proposed site will be evaluated for its potential to provide good, woody cover where it is lacking.

The “thicket” concept will be encouraged but design flexibility will allow for customizing the site.



► Wildlife Shrub Planting (cont.)

Cost-Share Rate:

Maximum Annual Payment: \$2,500/landowner/year.

Minimum Payment: \$100.

Development Payment: Up to 100% of the cost of materials and installation

Seedling planting site preparation: Up to 100% of county average cost or actual costs, if less.

Weed control: No cost-share on mechanical weed control (shredding) between rows except the removal of competitive grass cover may be cost-shared on a case by case basis.

Weed barrier fabric and installation: 50% of county average cost (or actual, if less).

Replants: 100% of seedling cost only if survival is less than 75%, provided twice during first five years, cooperator installs seedlings.

Transition Payment: Only for conversion from cropland to wildlife habitat, will not apply to sites enrolled in CRP or other programs providing an annual land use payment.

Public Access Payment: \$3/acre/year for duration of contract.

Minimum Size: 100 seedlings.

Contract Term: 10 or more years (includes shrubs and associated herbaceous cover).

Requirements and Technical Specifications:

The site must contain an area of herbaceous cover (undisturbed, quality nesting-loafing-roosting cover) equal in size to the wildlife shrub planting and not less than 20 feet wide. This cover may be hayed (or shredded) after July 15th up to twice every five years to maintain habitat quality.

A minimum of three native shrub species that are locally adapted must be used within any wildlife shrub planting.

The site (shrubs plus herbaceous cover) must be protected from livestock and tillage encroachment. Fencing will be required for sites exposed to livestock. Exceptions can be made for sporadic plantings into existing grasslands; however, livestock use must not directly reduce shrub survival.

Sites with obvious noxious weed problems will not be enrolled. Should noxious weeds become a problem, the producer will be responsible for their control. Weed control will be limited to spot treatment by mechanical or chemical means.

The wildlife shrub planting should be designed as a dense thicket when possible to maximize wildlife benefits and the long-term survival of the planting. The row spacing should be four to six feet and between row spacing should be five to eight feet. The minimum width of the thicket should be no less than 20 to 25 feet. If planting into existing grass, killing (tillage or herbicide) the grass stand within the entire thicket area is recommended prior to planting in order to reduce competition and promote suckering of the shrubs.



► **Woody Vegetation Removal**

Purpose:

Remove all invasive trees, shrubs and other woody vegetation from grasslands and prairie wetlands that are negatively impacted by their presence.

General Concept:

In the absence of natural or artificial disturbances such as fire, grazing, or haying, undesirable woody plants often invade grasslands and prairie wetlands. This transition to woodland habitat often contributes to the decline of important grassland and prairie wetland habitats and their associated wildlife species. In addition, woody plant invasion can result in a loss of ecosystem function through secondary affects, such as stream channel degradation in braided channel riparian systems and wetland water loss on clay lined playa wetlands. Removing woody vegetation and incorporating management activities to reduce the threat of re-invasion can restore valuable wildlife habitat at a specific seral stage while maintaining ecosystem function.

This activity is intended to enhance wildlife habitat for target species. It is not intended to specifically enhance livestock grazing, although it may occur as an associated benefit.

Examples:

- Tree removal on and along the central Platte River has restored important roosting and feeding habitat for waterfowl, Sandhill Cranes, shorebirds and the endangered Whooping Crane. By removing woody vegetation, sandbars and islands can be destabilized allowing stream flows to naturally scour vegetation.
- Tree removal from Rainwater Basin wetlands can reclaim these wetlands for water birds and will restore the hydrologic balance by reducing losses through evapo-transpiration and root channel drainage.
- Removal of red cedar, Siberian elm and other woody species from existing tall and mixed grass prairie can assist in maintaining the integrity of these habitats.

Cost-Share Rate:

Maximum Annual Payment: \$2,500/landowner/year.

Minimum Payment: \$100.

Development Payment: Up to 100% of the cost of materials and installation, payment made upon completion of project. The cost of tree removal can vary widely due to amount of woody vegetation present and other conditions such as soil type, slope, etc. Sites will be evaluated in accordance with cost estimates to determine an acceptable cost-benefit ratio.

The actual dollar per acre amount paid is site specific and will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

Management Payment: Made upon completion of project or can be made in portions based on progress of the project.

Transition Payment: Only if approved by NGPC.

Public Access Payment: \$3/acre/year for duration of contract.

Minimum Size: 1 acre (wetlands), 5 acres grassland.

Contract Term: 10 years.



► Woody Vegetation Removal (cont.)

Requirements and Technical Specifications:

On sites such as the central Platte River and most Rainwater Basin wetlands, removal via heavy equipment is the most efficient method. Shallow-rooted trees can be pushed over, piled up and burned. The US Army Corps of Engineers should be contacted prior to beginning project.

On grassland sites, trees such as red cedar, can be cleared using a custom tree sheers. Harvested trees can be piled up and burned or placed in brush piles along an established edge. Stumps of trees that have the potential to re-sprout, such as Siberian Elm, should be treated with herbicide to prevent re-sprouting.

Must be used in conjunction with a management activity to control future encroachment by woody species.

► Additional Practice: Backyard Habitat Establishment

Purposes:

- To provide information to assist in the establishment of backyard wildlife habitat.
- To facilitate and enhance the experience of enjoying wildlife.

General Concept:

This practice is currently supported through technical assistance only. There are many resources available to assist homeowners and hobby farmers in developing habitats that attract and benefit various wildlife. In time, this practice may include some development and management funds.

Examples:

Identification of aesthetically pleasing, native plants to be used as wildlife attractants—for home viewing.

Cost-Share Rate:

Maximum Annual Payment: No payment.

Requirements and Technical Specifications:

Technical assistance only.



CORNERS FOR WILDLIFE

Nebraska's Natural Resources Districts and Pheasants Forever cooperate on a cost-share program to develop center pivot corners from cropland to wildlife habitat. The goal of the program is to establish permanent wildlife habitat in an area that was not previously habitat. Corners planted with at least 400 trees & shrubs have greatest priority.

Landowners are responsible for planting trees and shrubs when fewer than 400 trees & shrubs are planted. If 400 or more trees & shrubs are planted, the NRD will plant the trees & shrubs at no cost to the landowner.

A no-till seed drill may be rented from the local Pheasants Forever chapter for \$8.00/acre for Pheasant Forever members or \$20.00/acre for non-members—with a \$30 dollar minimum. A \$100 deposit is required but will be released if the drill is returned in the same condition as when received.

Contracts funded by grants from The Nebraska Environmental Trust Fund run for five years.

PROCEDURE

- 1). Contact the district to determine eligibility and develop a plan.
- 2). File the application with the NRD. The District's board of directors and Pheasants Forever will accept or deny the application. Applications are accepted on a first come, first served basis.

ELIGIBILITY

- 1). Pivot corners on a four-way road intersection are not eligible.
- 2). The pivot corner must currently be cropped. Corners already covered in warm-grass and/or trees are not eligible.
- 3). For pivot corners planted with trees or shrubs, mechanical or chemical weed removal is required three times each year for the life of the contract.
- 4). This District will not process a payment of less than \$100. Applicants must include enough acreage to insure that the minimum payment will be at least \$100.
- 5). Two project signs must be posted on each project.

FUNDS AVAILABLE TO COOPERATORS

Cover Practice I - Grasses

Annual Rate: \$40 per acre.

Minimum Size: 2.5 acres.

Contract Term: 5 years.

Last date for planting: May 15 (1st year of the contract).

Cover: Eleven grass seed mixtures, contact the NRD for more information.

Cost-Share Rate: 75%.



FUNDS AVAILABLE TO COOPERATORS (cont.)

Cover Practice II- Trees or Shrubs Added to Cover Practice I

Annual Rate: \$75 per acre, total.

Minimum Size: 1.5 acres.

Contract Term: 5 years.

Last date for planting: May 15 (1st year of the contract).

Cover: 400 or more trees or shrubs.

Cost-Share Rate: 75% on grass and trees; 100% on planting trees; 50% on fabric weed barrier.

SOURCES OF FUNDS for Cover Practices I & II:

Funding comes from grants obtained by Pheasants Forever from The Nebraska Environmental Trust Fund and the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission's "Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program". In addition, services are provided by the NRD and Pheasants Forever. The lease should state if any non-public uses (for example, grazing or farming) will occur within the limits of the lease. NRD approval of the application is not contingent upon state or federal financial assistance. However, the applicant is encouraged to make use of state and/or federal funds whenever possible.

First Adopted: [July 1, 1979](#)

Revisions Adopted: [April 2003](#)
[April 2006](#)



CONTENTS

CONSERVATION PLANTINGS / PARKS & RECREATION AREAS—Pages 72-77.

Conservation Plantings 72.
Seedling Sales and Planting 72.
Seedlings Planted by the District..... 72-73.
Seedlings Planted by Purchasers or District 73.
Community Tree Resources Program 74.
Community Tree Resources Program—CTR-I..... 74.
Community Tree Resources Program—CTR-II 75.
Community Native Grass Resources Program 75.
Parks & Recreation Areas 76.
Parks Program 76-77.
Living Memorial Tree Planting at District Recreation Areas 77.



CONSERVATION PLANTINGS

SEEDLING SALES AND PLANTING

Under the District's seedling sales program, stock is provided to District patrons at the lowest possible cost. In order to assure quality stock, the seedlings are kept in a refrigerated state prior to delivery to the customer. To increase the survival rate, customers are instructed to prepare the site before planting. Following the planting, sufficient watering and proper weed control is imperative.

SEEDLINGS PLANTED BY THE DISTRICT

- 1). The NRD will provide a complete tree planting service. This includes all necessary equipment, materials and labor.
- 2). All trees and shrubs planted by the NRD will be ordered by the NRD. The sites are to be designed and planned by the NRCS or NRD, assisted by the customer, and submitted to the NRD.
- 3). The order form to be used is the NRCS NB-Wood-1. Tree and shrub seedlings must be ordered in multiples of 25.
- 4). Orders will be accepted between November 1 and April 1.
- 5). Survival of the seedlings is not guaranteed.
- 6). The customer will be charged for planting all trees ordered. Payment must be made by the time of planting.
- 7). If 1000 seedlings or more are ordered, 10% down will be required at the time of order. The balance must be paid before planting.

UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES WILL ANY PLANTING BE DONE UNTIL THE SEEDLINGS HAVE BEEN PAID FOR IN FULL.

- 8). If the NRD is to do the planting, a minimum of 150 trees or shrubs must be ordered.
- 9). The NRD will make a maximum of 120 plantings or plant 35,000 seedlings per season, whichever figure is reached first. The trees will do best if the ground is plowed or deep chiseled. If the ground is in sod form, plow or chisel in the fall and disc again in the spring. All customers will be notified prior to planting. If the plots are found unprepared to plant, the seedlings will be left with the customer. Any farmstead within the Upper Big Blue NRD boundaries is eligible.



SEEDLINGS PLANTED BY THE DISTRICT (cont.)

Replacement Policy:

Before replacement will be considered, the following criteria must be met by the customer:

- 1). Proper ground preparation - plowed, chiseled and disked.
- 2). Seedlings watered during hot periods.
- 3). Weed control.

NOTE: The District will replace seedlings if the stock is found to be in poor condition prior to planting. Planting errors will also be a consideration.

Replacement will **not** be made under the following conditions:

- 1). Seedlings damaged by floods or hail.
- 2). Seedlings damaged by mowing or destroyed by farm equipment.
- 3). Seedlings planted in sod.
- 4). Poor ground preparation.
- 5). Lack of care following planting.

Funds Available to Customers:

NRD Cost-Share: Landowners may be eligible for assistance under the District's **Land Treatment Program (see the Land Treatment Chapter pages 8-28).**

State Cost-Share: Landowners may be eligible for assistance under the District's **Land Treatment Program (see the Land Treatment Chapter pages 8-28).**

Federal Cost-Share: Contact the local NRCS office for information.

Sources of Funds:

Program costs are paid for by tree and planting sales as well as local tax revenue collected by the NRD.

SEEDLINGS PLANTED BY PURCHASERS OR DISTRICT

- 1). Seedlings must be ordered in multiple of 25.
- 2). Orders will be accepted from November 1 to April 1.
- 3). Survival of the seedlings is not guaranteed. The District will only replace seedlings if they are found to have been in poor condition prior to delivery to the customer.
- 4). Payment must accompany the order.
- 5). If 1000 seedlings or more are ordered, 10% down will be required at the time of order. The balance must be paid before receipt of the seedlings, or planting of the seedlings by the District.

***UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES WILL ANY PLANTING BE DONE UNTIL THE
SEEDLINGS HAVE BEEN PAID FOR IN FULL.***



COMMUNITY TREE RESOURCES PROGRAM

This program offers financial assistance to communities for the development or improvement of city or village tree resources. Two levels of participation are offered. The first level (**CTR-I**) encourages cities and villages to develop a new tree improvement program which qualifies them for the Tree City USA designation. A higher level of District assistance is available to communities which make such a commitment.

A second level of assistance (**CTR-II**) is available to cities, villages and other public entities which have developed a specific plan for tree replacement or new plantings. A five-year plan and an annual budget for tree resources improvement are required.

Because this program is designed to encourage plantings which provide public benefits, funding will be approved for planting on public lands. Nursery stock recommended for use may be balled, burlapped, or potted. Bare root stock may be used if it is at least six feet tall. Permanent plantings are required. Seedlings for nursery plantings are available for purchase through the District's seedling sales program.

Applications for either level of assistance must include a copy of the community's tree plan and a cover letter stating the amount and purpose of the financial assistance requested. In addition, a commitment is required that the applicant will maintain all plantings funded by the District for a minimum of five years.

COMMUNITY TREE RESOURCES PROGRAM—CTR-I

This program is designed to encourage planned, long-term plantings where trees and shrubs are not presently growing.

Eligibility:

- 1). The city or village must establish a legally constituted tree board that has the responsibility of public tree resource management.
- 2). The city or village must have a current tree ordinance.
- 3). The city or village must develop a community tree plan that includes:
 - a). A current inventory and assessment of publicly owned trees.
 - b). A summary of accomplishments of the last five years and detailing of goals of the current tree plan.
 - c). A five-year master plan and a one-year detailed plan for tree planting, removal and maintenance, including pruning.
 - d). A proposed annual budget of estimated costs and detailed description of how the community plans to meet the commitments of the tree plan.
- 4). The city or village must have the community tree plan approved by the University of Nebraska District Extension Forester.
- 5). Eligible plantings of trees and shrubs include plantings:
 - a). Along city streets and right-of-ways.
 - b). On city-owned property.
 - c). In new or expanded city parks or other publicly-owned areas.

Funds Available:

The District will provide a 50% matching grant on a per capita basis. The maximum assistance will be \$1.00 per capita up to \$5,000 with a minimum assistance of \$200. Funding is based on the type and quality of the project and the number of times that the community has received CTR funds. The amount of District funds available is dependent on the annual budget.



COMMUNITY TREE RESOURCES PROGRAM (cont.)

COMMUNITY TREE RESOURCES PROGRAM—CTR-II

This program is designed to encourage replacement plantings of trees and shrubs.

Eligibility:

- 1). The city, village or public entity must submit a work plan for tree planting. Guidance from the University of Nebraska District Extension Forester is recommended. The plan must include:
 - a). A list of the trees and shrubs and number to be planted.
 - b). A map showing where trees will be placed.
 - c). A timetable for completion of the project.
 - d). An estimate of the total project cost.
- 2). The city, village or public entity must sign an agreement stating that it will maintain the plantings for a minimum of five years.
- 3). The city, village or public entity must agree to match funds provided by the District.

Funds Available:

The District will provide a 50% matching grant with a maximum of \$1,000 and a minimum of \$200. Funding is based on the type and quality of the project. The amount of District funding available is dependent on the annual budget.

COMMUNITY NATIVE GRASS RESOURCES PROGRAM

This program offers financial assistance to communities to develop or improve city or village properties where the establishment of native grass would be beneficial. Such areas may include, but are not limited to, lands surrounding wastewater treatment lagoons, lands within a Wellhead Protection Area and areas suitable for wildlife habitat improvement.

Eligibility:

- 1). The city, village or public entity must submit a work plan for native grass planting. Guidance from District staff is recommended. The plan must include:
 - a). The number of acres to be planted.
 - b). The native grass seeding mixture to be used.
 - c). A map showing where planting is to be located.
 - d). A timetable for completion of the project.
 - e). An estimate of the total project cost.
- 2). The city, village or public entity must sign an agreement stating that it will maintain the planting for a minimum of five years.
- 3). The city, village or public entity must agree to match funds provided by the District.

Funds Available:

The District will matching 50% of the local share of the project cost with a maximum of \$1,000 and a minimum of \$200. Funding is based on the type and quality of the project. The amount of district funding available is dependent on the annual budget.



PARKS & RECREATION AREAS

PARKS PROGRAM

The parks program offers financial assistance to communities for the development or improvement of natural resources in nature areas, campgrounds and park facilities. This program is available for any city, town, county or school located in the District. The District is not considered the lead agency in park development, but will assist in the funding.

The District will consider—on a case by case basis—providing cities and villages with planning and financial assistance for multiuse parks and recreation improvement/development that encourages tree planting, creation of wildlife habitat, open spaces and other enhancements of natural resources.

Public use areas that conserve soil and water are to have priority. Sports facilities are to be planned and funded by others.

To help reduce damages from flooding, the District promotes publicly-owned linear parks, greenbelts and other open spaces by offering planning and financial assistance to counties, cities and villages. It is District policy to cooperate with county, state and federal agencies in developing public use areas where such activities are consistent with District priorities and goals.

Procedure:

Applications are available at the NRD. Return completed applications to the District for consideration. Include sufficient detail in the application to adequately explain the plans and to justify the expenditure of funds.

Terms:

- 1). The applicant must be a village, town, city, county or school located within the District. Volunteer groups, service clubs, etc. are not eligible to receive NRD park funds, although their efforts are to be encouraged. Their participation should be coordinated through the local unit of government making the application.
- 2). The applicant is to sign an agreement with the District which includes the following conditions:
 - a). The applicant will administer the project.
 - b). The applicant will handle contracts and vendors as necessary.
 - c). The project will be designed and built to meet appropriate park, safety and building code requirements for public facilities.
 - d). The applicant has or will acquire title to or long-term lease or easement for the property on which the facility is or will be located.
 - e). The applicant will operate and maintain the facility. NRD funds are not available for operation or maintenance.
 - f). The facility will be for the use and enjoyment of the general public.
 - g). The NRD funds will be paid to the applicant upon completion of each approved phase of the project and upon satisfactory final inspection and acceptance by the NRD of each phase.
 - h). The applicant is to proceed in a timely fashion with the project and will submit claims for payment for work completed by July 1 of the current fiscal year. Failure to do so may result in nonpayment.



UPPER BIG BLUE NATURAL RESOURCES DISTRICT PROGRAMS

Terms (cont.):

- i). The applicant will complete the project within five years of the date that the application is approved by the NRD. Failure to do so may result in nonpayment and cancellation of the NRD's participation.
- 3). The following minimum points must be incorporated in the lease or easement:
 - a). The time period remaining on the lease must be at least equal to the life of the facility. An option for renewal would be desirable.
 - b). The lease cannot be revoked at will by the lessor.
 - c). There must be a provision in the lease for continued operation and maintenance responsibilities by the sponsor.
 - d). A legal description and map of the area to be leased must be provided.
 - e). Both parties to the lease should agree that the land being leased must be retained and used for public outdoor recreation for the duration of the lease or the life of the facility.
 - f). The lease should state if any non-public uses (for example, grazing or farming) will occur within the limits of the lease.
- 4). NRD approval of the application is not contingent upon state or federal financial assistance. However, the applicant is encouraged to make use of state and/or federal funds whenever possible.

Funds Available to Communities:

NRD Cost-Share: The District will fund up to 25% of the local share, of the estimated or the actual costs, whichever is less. A maximum limit of \$10,000 in NRD funds can be approved per applicant per year. The amount of District funds available is dependent upon the annual budget.

State Cost-Share: Funds may be available. Check with the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission.

Federal Cost-Share: 50% grants may be available. Apply through the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission.

Sources of Funds:

The District's funds are from local NRD tax revenues. Other funds come to the park sponsor direct from the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission or the U.S. Department of the Interior.

LIVING MEMORIAL TREE PLANTING AT DISTRICT RECREATION AREAS

Families or friends may provide a living memorial by purchasing a special tree to be planted at a District operated recreation facility. The tree is planted and cared for by the NRD and a small sign is erected—with the name of the person memorialized or honored—identifying the kind of tree. The trees are part of a planting plan developed by the District for each recreation area. The NRD is responsible for the tree during its normal life span. Species availability varies depending on the progress of the planting plans and previous purchases. Contact the NRD for more information at (402) 362-6601.

First Adopted: [July 1, 1979](#)
Revisions Adopted: [November 2002](#)
[April 2006](#)