



CONSERVATION ENHANCEMENT ACTIVITY E391C (with Montana Supplement)

CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

Increase riparian forest buffer width to enhance wildlife habitat

Conservation Practice 391: Riparian Forest Buffer

APPLICABLE LAND USE: Crop (Annual & Mixed); Crop (Perennial); Pasture; Range; Associated Ag Land; Farmstead

RESOURCE CONCERN: Animals

ENHANCEMENT LIFE SPAN: 15 Years

Enhancement Description

Criteria

- Existing buffer width shall be at least 35 feet or (if applicable) the minimum State buffer- width requirement, whichever is greater. Buffer width shall be increased to 60 feet and may be extended up to 180 feet or the State-allowed maximum width.
- The management plan shall consider habitat and wildlife objectives such as habitat diversity, habitat linkages, daily and seasonal habitat ranges, limiting factors, and native plant communities.
- Establish plant communities that address aquatic, terrestrial wildlife and pollinator needs and have multiple values such as habitat enhancement and nutrient uptake.
- Dominant vegetation will consist of existing, naturally regenerated, or seeded/planted trees and shrubs suited to the soil and hydrology of the site.
- Use tree and shrub species that are native and non-invasive. Substitution with improved and locally accepted cultivars or purpose-specific species is allowed. For plantings and seeding, only viable, high-quality, and adapted plant materials will be used.
- Favor tree and shrub species that have multiple values such as those suited for timber, nuts, fruit, florals, browse, nesting, and aesthetics.

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- Periodic removal of some forest products such as high value trees, medicinal herbs, nuts, and fruits is permitted provided the buffer area is not compromised by the loss of vegetation or harvesting disturbance.
- Necessary site preparation and planting shall be done at a time and manner to insure survival and growth of selected species.
- Harmful plant and animal pests present on the site will be controlled or eliminated as necessary to achieve and maintain the intended purpose. Pest management will be conducted in a manner that mitigates impacts to pollinators.
- Protect riparian vegetation until the desired plant community is well established.
- Livestock shall be controlled or excluded as necessary to achieve the buffer’s water quality improvement purpose. If livestock is present, follow a Prescribed Grazing Plan (CPS 528) and defer grazing for a minimum of two years.
- Design the expanded buffer enhancement for an expected life of at least 15 years.
- The enhancement will comply with all applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations, and with States’ Forestry Best Management Practices for Water Quality.
 - **MT: For additional guidance refer to NRCS Conservation Practice Standards Upland Wildlife Habitat Management (Code 645), Biology Tech Note MT-20 Creating and Enhancing Habitat for Pollinator Insects and Plant Materials Tech Note MT- 46 Seeding Rates and Recommended Cultivars for wildlife friendly grasses, forbs, shrubs, and trees.**



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Documentation and Implementation Requirements

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Participant Will:

- Prior to implementation, prepare the planned buffer area according to the planting plan NRCS has developed with you. Refer to NRCS Conservation Practice Standard Riparian Forest Buffer (Code 391). (NRCS will provide technical assistance.)
□ Prior to implementation, select planting dates, methods, and density/spacing appropriate for the site and soil conditions. (NRCS will provide technical assistance.)

Table with 2 columns: Field Name, Field Value. Rows: Planting Date, Planting Method, Density and spacing.

- Prior to implementation, work closely with NRCS to select diverse native and naturally regenerated or seeded/planted trees and shrubs that are adapted to your specific site and meet the wildlife habitat objectives of this enhancement.

Table with 4 columns: Species, Vegetative or Rootstock, Size, Protection (tubes, mats, nets). Multiple empty rows for data entry.

- During implementation, conduct planting of selected species according to dates, methods, spacing and other requirements listed in the planting plan.
□ During implementation, install and maintain erosion control measures as needed, such as, silt fencing and mulching.
□ During implementation, notify NRCS of any planned changes to allow NRCS to verify that the changes meet NRCS enhancement criteria.
□ After Implementation, control harmful pests and vegetation to reduce competition for water, nutrients, and space and in a manner that limits effects to pollinators. Inspect and maintain tubes and protection measures regularly.
□ After implementation, livestock and wildlife may need be controlled or excluded to achieve the buffer's habitat enhancement purpose. If livestock are present, follow a Prescribed Grazing Plan (Code 528) and defer grazing for a minimum of two years. Wildlife may need to be controlled during establishment of vegetative treatments. Temporary and local population control methods should be used with caution and within state and local regulations.



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NRCS will:

- Prior to implementation, provide and explain NRCS Conservation Practice Standard Riparian Forest Buffer (Code 391) to show how it relates to this enhancement.
- Prior to implementation, verify no plants on the Federal weeds list are included in the planting list.
- Prior to implementation, NRCS will provide technical assistance on:
 - Site preparation and planting plan that meets NRCS Conservation Practice Standard Riparian Forest Buffer (Code 391) and lists the species, vegetation type, density, protection measures, and planting dates.
 - Selecting planting techniques and timing appropriate for the site and soil conditions.
 - Having the participant consider planting a more diverse number of species that help establish plant communities to address targeted aquatic and terrestrial wildlife and pollinator needs.
 - Preparing specifications for applying this enhancement for each site using approved state implementation requirements, national technical notes, appropriate state technical notes, and narrative statements in the conservation plan, or other acceptable documentation.
- Prior to implementation, complete the State approved NRCS Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Guide (WHEG) as completed and certified by an NRCS or partner wildlife biologist when applicable. Specific pollinator species targeted will be notated on the WHEG, and total score after implementation will equal 0.50 or greater. WHEG score after implementation = _____.
- **MT: Use Biology Tech Note MT-19 Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Guides for Species of Concern.**
- After implementation, livestock and wildlife may need be controlled or excluded to achieve the buffer’s habitat enhancement purpose. If livestock are present, follow a Prescribed Grazing Plan (Code 528) and defer grazing for a minimum of two years. Wildlife may need to be controlled during establishment of vegetative treatments. Temporary and local population control methods should be used with caution and within state and local regulations.
- During implementation, review any planned changes to ensure they meet the enhancement criteria.
- During implementation, verify all erosion control needed for the site is functioning and is maintained to specifications provided to the participant.
- After implementation, verify the vegetation was established, and any protections required are being maintained according to specifications provided to the participant.
- After implementation verify livestock are controlled or excluded as necessary to achieve the buffer’s water quality improvement purpose. If livestock are present, verify a Prescribed Grazing Plan (Code 528) is being followed and grazing is being deferred for a minimum of two years.



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NRCS Documentation Review:

I have reviewed all required participant documentation and have determined the participant has implemented the enhancement and met all criteria and requirements.

Participant Name _____ Contract Number _____

Total Amount Applied _____ Fiscal Year Completed _____

NRCS Technical Adequacy Signature

Date

