



# MARGINAL PASTURELAND WILDLIFE HABITAT BUFFER Michigan CONSERVATION RESERVE PROGRAM CRP – CP29

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

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Photo courtesy of USDA NRCS

## WHAT IS A MARGINAL PASTURELAND WILDLIFE HABITAT BUFFER?

A Marginal Pastureland Wildlife Habitat Buffer is a band of **Native** grasses, wildflowers, and/or shrubs used to limit sediment, nutrients, pesticides, and other contaminants from entering water bodies. In addition, Marginal Pastureland Wildlife Habitat Buffers can provide valuable winter cover, nest sites, nectar and pollen for pollinating insects, and food for wildlife.

Marginal Pastureland Wildlife Habitat Buffers are located on native grasslands immediately adjacent and parallel to streams, lakes, ponds, ditches, &/or sinkholes.

## ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible for this practice for the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), the land must be considered Marginal Pastureland. Plus, the site must be a native prairie or savanna/barren (as indicated on the Pre-Settlement Vegetation Maps found in Section II of the local Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG) and will be managed for or planted to native grasses. Further, there must be an existing resource concern present that can be addressed with a Marginal Pastureland Wildlife Habitat Buffer, including wildlife habitat concerns.

## CRP POLICY

CRP Marginal Pastureland Wildlife Habitat Buffers will be installed according to the Riparian Herbaceous Buffer Standard (390) in the local Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG).

CRP Marginal Pastureland Wildlife Habitat Buffers are only eligible on **Marginal Pastureland** that is adjacent and parallel to streams, sinkholes and karst areas, and permanent bodies of water such as lakes/ponds.

The minimum width of the Marginal Pastureland Wildlife Habitat Buffer depends upon the slope of the field, the soil type, and the pollutants contained in the runoff. **For the Conservation Reserve Program, Marginal Pastureland Wildlife Habitat Buffers will be a minimum of 20 feet from the edge of the eligible body of water, and a maximum of 120 feet from the edge of the eligible water body.** If the site already contains existing vegetation that is not eligible for CP29, these acres will be included in the calculation of maximum width and included in the CRP Plan, but will not be eligible for payments.

Vegetation for Marginal Pastureland Wildlife Habitat Buffers will be **Native Grasses & Wildflowers** (Big Bluestem, Little Bluestem, Indiangrass, Switchgrass, Canada Wild Rye, etc.) **&/or shrubs**, and will be adapted to the site conditions and meet the standards in the local FOTG. Only viable, high quality seed will be used.

All seeding and construction must be completed within 12 months of contract effective date of CRP-1 to remain in compliance. If circumstances beyond the landowner's control prohibit completion within the first 12 months, the local FSA County Committee may approve an extension to the next construction and planting season.

## PLANTING

If the site is currently grazed, and existing vegetation will sufficiently address the resource concern once the cattle are excluded, no planting will be required.

It is very important to plant the vegetation into a weed-free, firm seedbed. Weed control efforts should begin prior to planting. Use herbicides 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.

Contact your local Michigan State University (MSU) Extension Agent for specific herbicides to use. **Apply all herbicides according to the label.**

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

Use a drill designed for the seed to be planted, or the seed may be broadcast or aerial seeded. For aerial or broadcast seeding, the seedbed must be worked up and firmed with a cultipacker or similar equipment. A carrier such as potash may also be needed to spread the seed evenly. **After seeding, the site must be rolled or cultipacked to ensure proper seed to soil contact.** Regardless of the method, plant the seeds **no deeper than** 1/8 – 1/4 inch.

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”.**

For additional information on establishment and maintenance of grasses, see the following NRCS – Michigan Conservation Sheets (available at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/efotg/> in Section IV): “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

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

**After** the Final Status Review, 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 1<sup>st</sup> and Aug 20<sup>th</sup> to protect ground-nesting wildlife and to allow re-growth for winter cover. Other maintenance activities or Mid-Contract Management will only be allowed outside the designated dates to protect ground-nesting wildlife. Designated dates are from May 1<sup>st</sup> to August 1<sup>st</sup>. If management or maintenance activities are needed within these dates, the FSA County Committee **must** approve the management activity **prior to** the activity occurring.

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

Do not use Marginal Pastureland Wildlife Habitat Buffers as a travel way, cropland headland or a lane for livestock or farm equipment.

## Livestock must be excluded from the Marginal Pastureland Wildlife Habitat Buffer.

## REQUIRED MANAGEMENT

All new CRP contracts must have mid-term contract management activities scheduled that are site specific and will ensure plant diversity, wildlife habitat, and protection of soil and water resources. Management activities that will ensure these benefits in Marginal Pastureland Wildlife Habitat Buffers include prescribed burning (according to an approved burn plan), disking, grass-specific herbicide applications, and interseeding of wildflowers. All management activities must be performed according to NRCS Standards and Specifications as found in the FOTG, and CRP policy. Mid-Contract Management options will be selected by the participant.

## OTHER MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

For optimum wildlife habitat, plant a diversity of grasses, legumes, wildflowers, and shrubs. These mixtures will provide winter and nesting cover and food for a variety of wildlife.

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**\*\*NOTE: after the Final Status Review has been issued, other maintenance activities will be conducted outside the primary nesting season (May 1<sup>st</sup> – August 1<sup>st</sup>), and weeds will be treated on a “spot” basis only, unless prior approval is granted by the County Committee.**

**LOCATION AND LAYOUT SKETCH & ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:**

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