

**For:** State and County Offices

**Practice CP33, Habitat Buffers for Upland Birds**

**Approved by:** Acting Deputy Administrator, Farm Programs



**1 Overview**

**A Background**

In many parts of the nation, certain species of wildlife have suffered a significant reduction in population due primarily to the loss of habitat. The population of Northern Bobwhite has dropped from an estimated 59 million birds in 1980 to 20 million birds by 1999. Other grassland dependent bird species have suffered significant population declines and the population trend continues to decline. Further, some grassland dependent bird species are being considered for inclusion on the endangered species list. In addition, populations of many aquatic (e.g., fish and mollusk), amphibian, and reptile species have been impacted because of habitat loss.

**B Purpose**

This notice provides policy for continuous signup practice CP33, Habitat Buffers for Upland Birds, to:

- provide food and cover for quail, upland birds, and other species
- limit total acres enrolled to 250,000 acres
- provide a State allocation of acres (See Exhibit 1)

**Note:** This policy is effective beginning October 1, 2004.

<b>Disposal Date</b>	<b>Distribution</b>
August 1, 2006	State Offices; State Offices relay to County Offices

## 2 Program Policy

### A Overview

This practice is offered as a CRP continuous signup practice. Eligible cropland may be offered and automatically approved as practice CP33, Habitat Buffers for Upland Birds, on a continuous basis provided the practice is otherwise suited to the site and sufficient acres have been allocated.

The primary purpose of this practice is to provide food and cover for quail and upland birds in cropland areas. Secondary benefits may include reducing soil erosion from wind and water, increasing soil and water quality, protecting and enhancing the on-farm ecosystem.

Apply this practice around the field edges of eligible cropland that is suitably located and adaptable to the establishment of wildlife habitat for primarily quail and upland bird species. Upland habitat buffers will be allowed to re-vegetate by natural herbaceous succession, and/or will be established to adapted species of native, warm-season grass, legumes, wildflowers, forbs, and limited shrub and tree plantings, as specified according to an approved conservation plan. The conservation plan must be designed according to the NRCS FOTG.

### B Total Acres Enrolled

Total acres enrolled shall not exceed 250,000 acres:

- nationwide
- for the practice.

**Note:** Exhibit 1 provides allocations of acreage by State which shall **not** be exceeded. A monitoring and evaluation plan must be developed in consultation with the State Technical Committee, including the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service, State Fish and Game agencies, and other interested quail parties. The plan must provide the ability to establish baseline data on quail populations and estimate increased quail population and impact on other populations as a result of practice CP33, Practice Buffers for Upland Birds, including the following:

- verification that suitable Northern Bobwhite quail cover is established
- verification that appropriate cover management practices are implemented on a timely basis
- States must control acreage within their allocation
- implementing a Statewide sampling process that will provide reliable estimates of the number of quail per acre (or some other appropriate measure):
  - before practice CP33, Habitat Buffers for Upland Birds, is implemented (baseline)
  - resulting from the established CRP cover.

Monitoring and evaluation plans must be in place before October 1, 2004. If plans are not in place before October 1, 2004, signup for this practice may not begin.

**2 Program Policy (Continued)**

**C Eligible Land**

CP33, Habitat Buffers for Upland Birds, is limited to the following:

- cropland otherwise eligible according to 2-CRP, paragraph 97
- cropland around field edges suitable for quail and upland birds.

**D Size Requirements**

The minimum average width of a quail and upland bird habitat buffer is 30 feet, with a maximum average width of 120 feet. Buffers will be established to the extent needed to support the targeted species, general resource needs, and participant objectives, but generally should be located around the entire perimeter of the field, or at a minimum, in areas where runoff enters or leaves the field. Within the minimum and maximum widths above, quail and upland bird habitat buffer widths should be designed to conform to minimum field application setback width for manure or chemicals established by State or local regulations.

**E Eligibility**

To be eligible for cost share (C/S), this practice shall:

- primarily improve, enhance, or create quail and upland bird habitat to an acceptable level
- prevent degradation of quail and upland bird habitat from recurring after establishment
- be maintained for the CRP-1 period
- be included in the approved conservation plan
- prevent degradation of environmental benefits from recurring after establishment.

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3 Habitat Buffers for Upland Birds

A C/S Policy

This table contains C/S policies for Practice 33, Habitat Buffers for Upland Birds.

<b>If the component is...</b>	<b>AND the justification is...</b>	<b>THEN C/S is...</b>	
temporary cover	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• that a soil condition will not allow establishing a natural successional cover within 1 growing season</li> <li>• needed until selected seed or plant stock is available</li> <li>• needed because normal planting period for the species has passed</li> </ul>	authorized.	
grading, leveling, and filling	to control concentrated flow and site preparation  <b>Important:</b> Grading, leveling, and filling does <b>not</b> include shaping or manipulation of a stream bank.		
site preparation	specified in the approved conservation plan		
eligible seed or plant stock, including shrubs/trees. C/S for shrubs/trees up to 10 percent of the approved practice.  <b>Important:</b> Native species are encouraged.	specified in the approved conservation plan, best suited for the targeted species		
buffer boundary marker	specified in the approved conservation plan		
grading, leveling, and filling	to control concentrated flow		
clean tilling	specified in the approved conservation		
herbicide	to maintain vegetative cover		not authorized.
insecticide			
clearing rocks or other obstructions from the area to be seeded			
stream bank stabilization	to enhance production		
mineral or nutrient			

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### 4 Practice Incentives

#### A Practice Incentives for SIP

Participants that enroll practice CP33 may receive a CRP-SIP according to 2-CRP, subparagraph 125 A.

#### B Practice Incentives for PIP

Participants that enroll practice CP33 may receive a CRP-PIP according to 2-CRP, subparagraph 125 B.

### 5 Practice Standards

#### A Practice Requirements

In addition to the practice standards in NRCS FOTG, the following requirements apply.

- The seeded area shall not be harvested or grazed by domestic livestock for the life of CRP-1, including managed haying and grazing, unless grazing is incidental to the normal gleaning of the crop residue in the field according to 2-CRP, subparagraph 267 D.
- Limit C/S to the minimum minerals and seed necessary to establish an adequate cover to improve wildlife habitat and environmental benefits.
- Trees and shrubs shall not exceed 10 percent coverage of the buffers. Shrubs and trees selected must provide optimal quail habitat and/or emergency benefits. Shrubs planted for wildlife berries/fruit and trees planted for wildlife fruit/nuts are acceptable if suited to the site.
- Chemicals used in performing the practice must be:
  - Federally, State, and locally registered
  - applied strictly according to authorized registered uses, directions on the label, and other Federal or State policies and requirements.
- Noxious weeds and other undesirable plants, insects, and pests shall be controlled, including such maintenance as necessary to avoid an adverse impact on surrounding land.
- The habitat buffer must be established and maintained according to the practice standards in NRCS FOTG.
- Buffers shall not be used as turn rows, roads, or for storage of crops or equipment.

## **6 Program Requirements**

### **A Planting Timespan**

Planting or sowing of the approved cover shall be completed within 12 months of the effective date of CRP-1. See 2-CRP, paragraph 237 for exceptions.

### **B Environmental Concerns**

Consideration of wildlife habitat, water quality and quantity, and other environmental concerns are to be evaluated in the planning and establishment of the upland habitat practice.

### **C Practice Maintenance**

This practice shall be maintained without additional C/S for the life of CRP-1 according to the practice standards in NRCS FOTG.

C/S shall be refunded if either of the following applies:

- the producer destroys the practice during the contract period
- the cover fails to provide adequate upland quail and upland bird habitat and environmental benefits during the practice lifespan, unless the failure is caused by circumstances beyond the producer's control.

### **D Management Activity**

This practice shall have periodic management activities performed, according to the conservation plan, during the life of CRP-1, as determined by COC. For quail and upland bird buffers, the buffers shall be disturbed on a rotational basis by light disking, prescribed burning, selective herbicide application, or other prescribed methods as approved to set back vegetative succession and woody encroachment, and to expose food seeds. Mowing is an inadequate means of disturbance for quail habitat, except as need to facilitate prescribed burning or light disking. See 2-CRP, paragraph 239.

C/S is authorized for management activities.

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### 6 Program Requirements (Continued)

#### E Technical Responsibility

NRCS or TSP shall have technical responsibility for this practice.

### 7 Action

#### A State Office Action

State Offices shall:

- provide a copy of this notice to County Offices
- provide a copy of this notice to the NRCS State Office
- monitor acres and not allow enrollments to exceed the State's allocation.

#### B County Office Action

County Offices shall:

- provide a copy of this notice to the district NRCS Office
- ensure policy of this notice and 2-CRP are followed.

**State Allocation**

The following table provides State allocations.

<b>State</b>	<b>Acres</b>
Alabama	6,100
Arkansas	12,000
Colorado	600
Connecticut	500
Delaware	900
Florida	2,800
Georgia	8,600
Illinois	20,000
Indiana	20,000
Iowa	20,000
Kansas	20,000
Kentucky	9,000
Louisiana	8,900
Maryland	2,100
Maine	500
Michigan	2,400
Minnesota	500
Mississippi	9,400

<b>State</b>	<b>Acres</b>
Missouri	20,000
Nebraska	6,000
New Jersey	600
New Mexico	500
New York	500
North Carolina	11,300
Ohio	14,200
Oklahoma	9,500
Pennsylvania	2,200
Rhode Island	500
South Carolina	5,000
South Dakota	500
Tennessee	9,300
Texas	20,000
Virginia	3,600
West Virginia	500
Wisconsin	1,500
<b>Total</b>	<b>250,000</b>