

**REGION 3 NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE SYSTEM  
POLLINATOR GUIDANCE  
FOR GRASSLAND MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES**

The following Region 3 guidance has been developed to assure that pollinator conservation is considered while planning and conducting habitat management operations.

In addition to the identified Regional guidelines, there are Best Management Practices (BMPs) described in publications such as *Pollinator Friendly BMPs for Federal Lands* and *Minnesota DNR Pollinator BMPs and Habitat Restoration Guidelines* that may be reviewed and implemented as practical for each grassland management activity.

Whenever feasible, field stations should determine which pollinators are using the project area or similar habitats. Considering the specific needs of at-risk pollinators at a site will help determine the most appropriate management techniques to be implemented to accomplish goals.

The listed guidelines for haying and grazing must be included as stipulations in all new/ updated haying and grazing compatibility determinations (CD). Project Leaders must also provide language within the appropriate sections of new/updated haying and grazing CDs demonstrating that conservation measures and potential effects on pollinators have been considered. A signed statement by the project leader (at the end of this document) along with this copy of the guidance document must accompany existing grazing and haying CDs indicating the identified stipulations in this guidance will be followed when administering those CDs. This process will negate the need to revise current CDs.

In an effort to provide consistency with Farm Service Agency (FSA) programs throughout the Region, the August 1 haying initiation date was adopted from reviewing that agency's primary bird nesting season dates. In all states except Missouri and Ohio, August 1 was the end of the primary nesting season range.

### **Haying Guidelines/CD Stipulations**

- Haying must meet specific habitat and related wildlife objectives and contribute to the purposes of the Refuge or WMD.
- Haying will typically be initiated after August 1 to minimize disturbance to nesting birds, unless an earlier initiation date is documented by a specific management objective in a station plan or a written justification by the project leader is attached to the current CD. Haying should be delayed as late as possible to minimize negative effects to wildlife.
- A goal of 30-50% of similar habitat type in the management unit or adjacent areas should be left unhayed when feasible to serve as refugia for pollinators and other wildlife. Refugia locations should be planned taking foraging flight ranges of pollinators into consideration.
- No single area should be hayed more than once per year to allow time and space for pollinator populations to recover unless there's a specific management objective identified in a station plan or a written justification by the project leader is attached to the current CD.

### **Grazing Guidelines/CD Stipulations**

- Grazing must meet specific habitat and related wildlife objectives and contribute to the purposes of the Refuge or WMD.
- Grazing will not occur more frequently than three out of every five years on any individual tract unless there is a specific management objective identified in a station plan or a written justification by the project leader is attached to the current CD.
- A goal of 30-50% of similar habitat type in the management unit or adjacent areas should be left ungrazed when feasible to serve as refugia for pollinators and other wildlife.
- Any use of cattle insecticides must adhere to current Region 3 Pesticide Use Guidance.
- Consider the needs of pollinators and other wildlife when placing range improvements on the landscapes, such as salt/mineral blocks, watering tanks, and holding corals.

### **Mowing Guidelines**

- Routine roadside mowing of refuge roads, tour routes, etc. should be completed only to the level of providing public/staff safety during the primary vegetation growing/flowering season. Any expanded roadside mowing for maintenance purposes should be completed as late in the year as feasible.
- When mowing to control invasive species or encroachment of woody species, focus on patches of invasive or woody species, leaving the rest of the habitat intact.
- Vegetation will be cut as high as possible to accommodate pollinator and wildlife conservation, unless shorter cuttings are required to meet a specific management/maintenance objective.
- Mowing of newly established restoration projects may be conducted as needed throughout the year.

### **Prescribed Fire Guidelines**

- A goal of 30-50% of similar habitat type in the management unit or adjacent areas will be left unburned to serve as refugia for pollinators and other wildlife, unless that is not possible due to a specific management objective or safety concern.
- Timing of prescribed burns should be based on management objectives. Variation of the timing of prescribed burns is recommended (i.e. spring, summer, fall, winter), however, managers

should consider appropriate pollinator conservation measures when conducting burns during the primary growing/flowering seasons.

- Allow unburned patches (“skips”) to remain after a prescribed burn unless there is a specific management objective for a complete burn of the site.

### **Pesticide Use For Invasives Guidelines**

- Assure all staff associated with invasive control can properly identify the targeted invasive species.
- Provide educational opportunities for the public and staff on integrated pest management techniques to control invasive species.
- Encourage mechanical treatment for invasive control instead of chemical treatment where feasible.
- Prioritize control areas and keep pollinator conservation in mind as control methods are assessed.
- Review utility ROW easement documents to ascertain the level of control the refuge manager has concerning chemical use and method of weed control used by the easement holders on the ROW.

### **Farming Guidelines**

- Adhere to the Region 3 Farming Program Guidelines, including the prohibited use of neonicotinoid treated crop seeds.

**A copy of this guidance will be attached to existing/current haying and grazing CDs at this station and the identified grazing and haying stipulations in this guidance will be followed when administering those CDs.**

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**Project Leader**

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**Date**