

Continuous CRP Sign-up Fact Sheet

March 2023

CP33 Habitat Buffers for Upland Birds

The dramatic population decline of northern bobwhite quail over the last few decades is cause for concern among wildlife conservationists and hunters. This concern has led to new research, multi-state partnerships, and on-the-ground conservation initiatives in attempts to reverse the decline of this iconic game bird.

While solutions remain elusive, localized efforts to restore quality quail habitat have had promising results. Unlike many other upland game birds, quail have small home ranges and can be managed for even in small areas present on almost every farm in their range.

Quail coveys require a variety of habitat types in close proximity to one another. Grasslands for nesting cover, bare ground and annual plants for foraging broods, and brushy-woody areas for escape cover and thermal cover are all needed. Close proximity of these habitats is especially beneficial in spring and early summer when quail chicks are less than two weeks old and very susceptible to predation and hypothermia.

Habitat Buffers for Upland Birds establishes diverse, low density grass/forb seedings along agricultural fields. These plantings provide edge habitat quail thrive on. Field buffers naturally place all the habitat components quail require close together without sacrificing large areas of crop production.

Edges of agricultural fields often suffer yield loss from shading, wind stress, soil compaction or wildlife depredation. Buffers allow landowners to eliminate their lowest producing acres and straighten out edges to farm the field more efficiently, while receiving predictable annual payments.



Example of a habitat buffer for upland birds.



A diversity of grasses, wildflowers, and shrubs will provide winter and nesting cover, and blooming plants for great brood-rearing habitat.

INTERESTING FACT

Crop yields can be 40-60% lower next to woodlots and hedgerows.

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The wider the buffer, the more benefits for soil, water, and wildlife enhancement a landowner can expect.



Crops often suffer from yield loss along field edges. Providing critical quail habitat can require little sacrifice on crop production.

What does a CP33 contract look like?

- Establish nesting cover, brood-rearing cover, winter cover and escape cover around the edges of crop fields.
- Shrub plantings may be required if appropriate woody cover does not currently exist.
- Acres must be cropland or considered planted to an agricultural commodity during four of six crop years. Years are determined by the current Farm Bill.
- Eligible acres may be signed up on a continuous basis and are not subject to competitive ranking nationwide.
- Minimum enrollment of five acres.
- Field borders must be a minimum average width of 30 feet with a maximum average of width of 120 feet.
- Whole pivot corners are eligible.
- Create strips of vegetation around the edges of crop fields designed to benefit bobwhite quail and other grassland species.
- Annual payment is based on the county soil rental rate established for the three predominant soils.
- 10 year contract length.
- Standard 50% cost-share on establishment practices.
- Sign-up Incentive Payment (SIP) and/or practice incentive payments (PIP) may be available.
- No cost share for management is available, but is still required once in the lifetime of the contract.



Field borders place all the critical habitat components (nesting cover, bare ground, and escape/thermal cover) immediately next to each other.

FOR MORE INFORMATION



Through a partnership with Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever, Nebraska Game & Parks Commission and the Natural Resources Conservation Service, wildlife biologists are available to help provide wildlife habitat guidance, technical assistance on the available conservation programs and design seeding mixtures.

For further information visit NebraskaPF.com

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