



Acadiana Resource Conservation
& Development Council, Inc.

Grassland Restoration

Grasslands are among the most imperiled systems in Louisiana. Conversion of grasslands to cropland, introduction of non-native pasture grasses, and widespread use of non-selective herbicides has caused serious damage to this important system. Native pastures, uncultivated areas, field borders, fence rows, and ditch banks were among the areas that provided grassland habitat in the agricultural landscape. However, like the prairie grasslands, grassland in the agricultural landscape has largely disappeared. Introduced grasses such as bermudagrass and bahiagrass form a dense sod and thus limit the growth of other grasses and forbs. The result is a dense, low-growing monoculture that offers little diversity and very limited habitat for wildlife.

Population trends of birds that inhabit grassland habitat reflect the declining habitat base. For example, Northern Bobwhites, Dickcissels, Loggerhead Shrikes, Grasshopper Sparrows, Henslow's Sparrows, and Le Conte's Sparrows are identified as Species of Conservation Concern in the LA Wildlife Action Plan and occupy both coastal prairie grasslands and agriculture associated grasslands.

AGRI

The Acadiana RC&D Council and Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries propose a 2-phased approach to address the challenges of establishing Native Grass Systems (NGS) and native forbs in Louisiana.

Phase I – Education, Outreach and Technology Transfer to Natural Resource

Professionals Two (2) Operational Farm Demonstration Areas (OFDA) will be established. Each OFDA will encompass a 2,500 acre landscape in which wildlife habitat creation and suitable management practices can be demonstrated. Acadiana RC&D council will host three workshops across southwest/ south central targeting professionals.

Phase II – Land Owner Assistance Program Acadiana RC&D will offer assistance to landowners desiring to establish NGS. The following services will be offered:

1. custom conservation plan;
2. seedbed preparation;
3. seed stock procurement and custom seed mixes;
4. planting of seed (using a no-till NGS drill);
5. follow up inspection (of planting and customized management recommendations).



Project Benefits

Native warm season grasses (NWSG), forbs, legumes, and associated plants can be re-established and used in native prairie restoration, riparian buffers, filter strips, grassed waterways, field borders, and mixed grass pastures. In addition to providing habitat for grassland birds, establishment of diverse grasslands will reduce erosion, sedimentation, and nutrient runoff into surface waters.

Project Partners

Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries
Quail Forever
USDA – NRCS
National Wetland Research Center

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