

For: State and County Offices

**Practice CP42, Pollinator Habitat**

Approved by: Deputy Administrator, Farm Programs



**1 Overview**

**A Background**

The Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 encouraged the USDA to develop habitat for pollinators and to use conservation practices to benefit pollinators. More than 30 percent of our food crops depend on insect pollination. However, native pollinators and managed colonies of European honey bees have experienced widespread declines.

FSA collaborated with pollinator experts and other conservation partners to develop a new practice, CP42, Pollinator Habitat, to help enhance and restore habitat for ecologically and economically important pollinator species. CP42 will be available beginning with General Signup 41. Offers will be accepted under general signup criteria **only**.

**B Purpose**

This notice provides:

- general information about CP42
- Exhibit 1, practice writeup for CP42.

**C Objectives**

The objective of CP42 is to establish habitat to support a diversity of pollinator species.

**D Practice CP42 Eligible Land Policy**

CP42 is limited to cropland otherwise eligible according to 2-CRP, paragraph 151.

Disposal Date	Distribution
July 1, 2011	State Offices; State Offices relay to County Offices

## 2 Policy for Practice CP42, Pollinator Habitat, State Standards

### A Seed Mixes

STC's, in consultation with the State Technical Committee, shall establish seed mixes for CP42.

CP42 has the following requirements:

- seeding mixes shall contain a minimum of 9 species of pollinator-friendly flowering plants, including wildflowers, legumes, and/or shrubs

**Note:** More than 9 species are encouraged. Trees are **not** an eligible component of CP42 seed mixes.

**Exception:** States with arid areas may submit alternative standards (subparagraph B).

- at least 3 species shall have their primary onset of blooming during each period of April-June 15, June 15-July, and August-October

**Note:** The 3 species need not be in bloom for the entirety of a bloom period

**Exception:** States with arid areas may submit alternative standards (subparagraph B).

- seeding mixes shall include no more than 25 percent grasses based on pure live seeds per square foot

**Note:** Grass is **not** required in CP42.

- where allowed by the NRCS Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG), total seed mixes, including grass seeds, must be 15-30 pure live seeds per square foot

**Note:** Seeding rates may be higher where required by NRCS FOTG.

- if including grass in the seeding mix, nonsod-forming bunch grasses are preferred over sod-forming grasses to provide quality nesting habitat for native bees
- grasses seeded in CP42 **must** be native.

**Note:** Though wildflower, legume, and/or shrub species planted are encouraged to be native, beneficial introduced flowering plants (for example, alfalfa and clover) may be part of the seeding mix. Each introduced species is encouraged to make up no more than 10 percent of the pure live seed mixture with a total of introduced flowering plants encouraged to not exceed 20 percent of the pure live seed mixture.

2 Policy for Practice CP42, Pollinator Habitat, State Standards (Continued)

**B Policy for Review of Alternative Standard Proposals**

In some cases, arid areas may be unable to establish CP42, fulfilling the 9 flowering species requirement and/or the 3 species in 3 bloom periods requirement. STC's may propose alternative standards for arid areas, defined as acreage located west of the 100th meridian that receives less than 25 inches of annual precipitation, where species number and/or bloom period standards are infeasible because of local ecological conditions.

STC's may propose alternative standards for either the number of flowering plant species required or the number of species required to bloom in each period, or both. No other Pollinator Habitat requirements are eligible for alternative standards. STC's are encouraged to consult with the State Technical Committee, pollinator experts, and/or other conservation partners to develop alternative standards.

STC's **must** submit a proposal outlining the following:

- how many flowering plant species shall be included in their arid area mixes
- how many shall bloom in each period of April-June 15, June 15-July, and August-October
- a brief justification explaining why the 9 flowering species requirement and/or the 3 species in 3 bloom periods requirement is infeasible.

States that received Pollinator Habitat waivers during general signup 39 **must** resubmit a proposal. Actual seed mix lists are **not** required. Proposals **must** be submitted to DAFP through CEPD by March 4, 2011. Submissions **must** be sent to Beverly Preston by e-mail to [beverly.preston@wdc.usda.gov](mailto:beverly.preston@wdc.usda.gov). DAFP will evaluate each request on a case-by-case basis.

States that do **not** include arid areas are **not** eligible to propose alternative CP42 standards. Ineligible States or arid States choosing to retain the 9 flowering species and 3 species in 3 bloom periods requirements are **not** required to submit anything to DAFP.

**C Establishment**

To address concerns about weed competition for establishing Pollinator Habitat, participants may use cover crops, herbicides, and other means, as outlined in the approved conservation plan and according to 2-CRP, paragraph 426, before planting. Where weed competition is a concern, a full season of site preparation (for example, 2 or 3 applications of broad spectrum herbicide) before fall planting is recommended.

2 Policy for Practice CP42, Pollinator Habitat, State Standards (Continued)

**D Mid-Contract Management**

STC's, in consultation with the State Technical Committee, must establish management practices according to 2-CRP, paragraph 428, for CP42. Management activities may be authorized during the blooming periods, but outside the primary nesting season, if the management activity promotes plant diversity and enhances pollinator habitat.

**E Managed Harvesting and Routine Grazing**

The seeded area of CP42 shall not be harvested or grazed by domestic livestock for the life of CRP-1. Managed harvesting and routine grazing on CP42 requires additional NEPA analysis to evaluate implications of harvesting and grazing on CP42.

In Signup 39, Pollinator Habitat was established in association with practices CP1, CP2, CP3A, and CP10, meeting NEPA obligations for harvesting and grazing. STC's, in consultation with the State Technical Committee, must determine if managed harvesting (haying) and/or routine grazing is eligible to be conducted on acreage devoted to Signup 39 Pollinator Habitat. If determined to be eligible, STC's, in consultation with the State Technical Committee, must develop haying and grazing standards appropriate to the Signup 39 Pollinator Habitat.

**F New C/S Components**

Habitat boundary markers around CP42 are an optional component eligible for C/S where specified in the approved conservation plan. Markers should be simple structures, such as fiberglass posts or metal posts (like "T" or "U" posts). Markers may be useful to delineate CP42, where CP42 is planted in strips or in combination with other practices that may be eligible for managed harvesting or routine grazing. However, markers are **not** required in these scenarios. STC's may set limits, such as maximum number of posts per contract or perimeter distance.

Woody habitat creation for pollinator nesting habitat is an optional component eligible for C/S as specified in the approved conservation plan, where allowed by NRCS FOTG. Some pollinators use deadwood to nest in or to escape extreme weather. Many States have standards under "645", "Upland Wildlife Habitat" or "647", "Early Successional Habitat Development" that create woody habitat for other wildlife that can be used or modified to support pollinators. Those practices include brush piles (creating a loose mound of branches on CP42), edge feathering (cutting limbs or trees on a tree line or woodland edge so that woody material falls on CP42), and downed tree structures (cutting, and then dragging a tree onto CP42). Woody habitat created on CP42 shall **not** exceed 1,500 square feet for every 1 acre of CP42, up to 1 acre in total woody habitat. C/S shall compensate for labor and/or equipment used to create woody habitat on CP42, using on-site woody resources only. C/S shall not compensate for purchase or transport of woody material onto the farm or tree removal. STCs may establish additional limits.

## Notice CRP-687

### **3 Action**

#### **A State Office Action**

State Offices shall:

- provide a copy of this notice to the NRCS State Office
- ensure that County Offices follow the provisions of this notice.

#### **B County Office Action**

County Offices shall:

- provide a copy of this notice to NRCS
- ensure that policy in this notice is followed.

**CP42, Pollinator Habitat**

**A Purpose**

The purpose of CP42 is to establish habitat to support a diversity of pollinator species.

**B Program Policy**

Apply CP42 to eligible cropland where pollinator habitat can be established and maintained, as determined by NRCS technical specifications, in a cost-effective manner through enrollment in CRP.

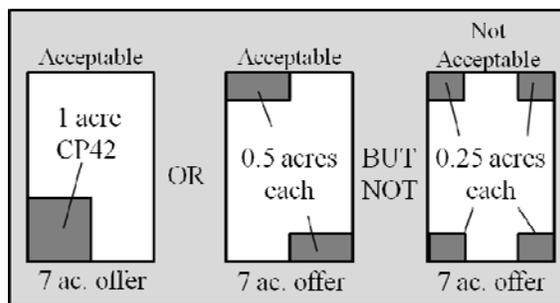
The conservation plan developed for acreage under CRP-1 devoted to CP42 **must** address pollinator habitat needs.

**C Size Requirements**

- Producers may use CP42 on all offered acreage.
- If not planted in whole fields, block plantings of CP42 are preferred over strips. If planted in strips, each strip **must** be a minimum of 20 feet wide.
- Habitat areas of CP42 must be at least 0.5 acres each.

**Example 1:** Participant A offers 40 acres, with all acreage in CP42. This offer is eligible.

**Example 2:** Participant B offers 7 acres, including 1 acre of CP42. Individual habitat areas of CP42 must be no smaller than 0.5 acres.



**D Eligibility**

To be eligible for C/S, CP42 shall:

- create pollinator habitat to an acceptable level
- prevent degradation of pollinator 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
- improve environmental benefits to less than the soil loss tolerance.

CP42, Pollinator Habitat (Continued)

E C/S Policy

The following contains C/S policies for CP42.

If the component is...	AND the justification is...	THEN C/S is...
seedbed preparation minerals	substantiated as needed by COC	authorized using technical practice codes 327, 338, 340, 342, 386, 390, 394, 550, 595, 643, 645, and 647.
eligible seed or plant stock, including shrubs. <b>Important:</b> Native flowering species are encouraged.	substantiated as needed by COC, and specified in the approved conservation plan to benefit targeted pollinator species	
habitat boundary marker	specified in the approved conservation plan	
seeding, including approved shrubs	substantiated as needed by COC and listed as approved species in the practice specifications	
herbicides insecticides	specified as necessary in the approved conservation plan	
brush piles, edge feathering or similar methods. <b>Important:</b> Limited to woody materials on CP42 acres only.	specified as necessary in the approved conservation plan to provide nesting habitat for pollinators and other environmental benefits	
temporary cover	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• required in the practice specifications needed until required seeds or plant stock is available</li> <li>• needed because normal planting period for the species has passed</li> <li>• that a soil condition, such as chemical residue, will not allow establishment of cover immediately</li> </ul>	
seeding firebreaks, fuelbreaks, or firelanes	to establish and maintain the cover according to State requirements	

**CP42, Pollinator Habitat (Continued)**

**E C/S Policy (Continued)**

<b>If the component is...</b>	<b>AND the justification is...</b>	<b>THEN C/S is...</b>
herbicides	to maintain vegetative cover	not authorized.
insecticides		
clearing rocks or other obstructions from the area to be seeded		
clean tilling of firebreaks, fuelbreaks, or firelanes		
fencing or roads		
minerals	to enhance production	

**F Practice Requirements**

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

- CP42 may be used with other conservation practices.
- Seeding mixes shall contain a minimum of 9 species of pollinator-friendly wildflowers, legumes, and/or shrubs. More than 9 species are encouraged. Trees are **not** an eligible component of CP42 seed mixes.

**Exception:** States with arid areas may submit alternative standards.

- At least 3 species shall have their primary onset of blooming during each period of April-June 15, June 15-July, and August-October. The 3 species need **not** be in bloom for the entirety of a bloom period.

**Exception:** States with arid areas may submit alternative standards.

- STC's may propose alternatives to species diversity and bloom period standard for arid areas **only**. Alternative standards **must** receive DAFP approval.
- Seeding mixes shall include no more than 25 percent grasses based on pure live seeds per square foot. Grass is **not** required in CP42.
- Where allowed by NRCS FOTG, total seed mixes, including grass seeds, **must** be 15-30 pure live seeds per square foot. Seeding rates may be higher where required by NRCS FOTG.
- Grasses seeded in CP42 **must** be native. Though wildflower, legume, and/or shrub species planted are encouraged to be native, beneficial introduced flowering plants (for example, alfalfa and clover) may be part of the seeding mix. Each introduced species is encouraged to make up no more than 10 percent of the pure live seed mixture with a total of introduced flowering plants encouraged to not exceed 20 percent of the pure live seed mixture.



## CP42, Pollinator Habitat (Continued)

### F Practice Requirements (Continued)

- To provide quality nesting habitat for native bees, non-sod forming bunch grasses are preferred over sod-forming grasses, if including grass in the seeding mix.
- 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.
- CP42 **must** be established and maintained according to the practice standards in NRCS FOTG.
- If included in the approved conservation plan and where allowed by NRCS FOTG, brush piles, downed tree structures, edge feathering, or similar methods may be used to create dead woody material for pollinator nesting habitat. **No** trees may be enrolled in CP42. Edge feathering may be included in a conservation plan where a forested edge or tree line owned by the participant abuts CP42 and edge feathering material can be dropped onto CP42. Woody habitat created on CP42 shall **not** exceed 1,500 square feet for every 1 acre of CP42, up to 1 acre in total woody habitat.
- 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.
- Spot application of herbicide may be needed to control undesirable plants.
- The seeded area shall **not** be harvested or grazed by domestic livestock for the life of CRP-1.
- Where practicable, as determined by NRCS or Technical Service Provider (TSP), State-certified seed shall be used for CP42.
- CP42 shall have periodic management activities performed, according to the conservation plan, during the life of CRP-1, as determined by COC.

### G Practice Length

The length for CP42 is 10 years.

### H 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 426 for exceptions.

**CP42, Pollinator Habitat (Continued)****I Environmental Concerns**

Consider preserving and improving pollinator and wildlife habitat, and other environmental concerns, when making determinations about types of plantings, spacing, and other practice specifications.

**J Practice Maintenance**

CP42 shall be maintained without additional C/S for the CRP-1 period. C/S shall be refunded if:

- producer destroys the cover during the CRP-1 period.
- cover fails to provide adequate pollinator habitat and environmental benefits during the practice lifespan, unless caused by circumstances beyond the producer's control.

**K Management Activity**

CP42 shall have periodic management activities performed, according to the conservation plan, during the life of CRP-1, as determined by COC. CP42 shall be disturbed on a rotational basis by light disking, prescribed burning, selective herbicide application, or other prescribed methods, as approved by STC. Management methods shall enhance or maintain flowering plant diversity, setback vegetative succession and woody encroachment, and expose soil for pollinator nesting sites. Mowing is generally an inadequate means of disturbance for pollinator habitat, **except** as needed to remove annual weeds during establishment, or to facilitate prescribed burning or light disking. See 2-CRP, paragraph 428.

C/S is authorized for management activities.

**L Technical Responsibility**

Technical responsibility for CP42 shall be assigned to NRCS or TSP.