



2009 Corners For Wildlife



Program Guidelines

1. NRD Allotment of Funds:

At this time (March 2008), Pheasants Forever has funding available from the Nebraska Environmental Trust for both the 2008 (\$200,000) and 2009 (\$200,000) program years. That being the case, we encourage your NRD to move forward with landowner enrollments.

Funding for the program will be available on a first-come, first-served basis. This is done to speed up the enrollment process. This means that materials are also ordered and delivered to landowners in a timelier manner.

2. Landowner Rental Payments:

Based on the informational letter included with this packet, we are now able to offer landowners an increased rental rate beginning with the 2008 program year. Landowners can receive up to \$100 per acre depending on the cover practice established.

Available rental rates:

- a) Planting a selected nesting cover mixture without trees and shrubs = up to \$60 per acre.
- b) Planting a selected nesting cover mixture with at least 400 shrubs and trees in a traditional row planting = up to \$75 per acre.
- c) Planting a selected nesting cover mixture with 2 shrub plantings that are each 1,500 ft² in size (a total of 534 shrubs) = up to \$100 per acre.

Similar to the program in the past, rental payment rates will be determined by each NRD participating in the program. In other words, if you feel that interest would be just as high at a lower rental rate, then please lower the rate. From a Pheasants Forever standpoint, the more corners enrolled, the better!

If you wish to lower rental rates from the contract enclosed in this packet, please contact Mary at 308-428-3062 or mkorth@pheasantsforever.org as soon as possible so a new contract can be generated for your use in signing up landowners. Updated contracts and other forms will be also be available for you to access on our website at: www.NebraskaPF.com.

3. Sign-up Dates:

There will be no official sign-up date for the program. Since funds are allocated on a first-come, first-served basis, those NRD's that encourage landowner enrollment early will likely enroll the most projects. Remember to contact the Pheasants Forever State Office at 308-428-3062 if you have questions on the availability of funds as signups progress through the spring.

4. Contract Approval:

As you receive landowner interest in Corners For Wildlife enrollment, please sign up landowners using the contract and plan developed for your NRD. Contract, plan and aerial photograph for each project should then be submitted to Pheasants Forever for consideration, entering into the program and contract finalization. Once a contract is finalized and approved, a fully executed copy of the contract will be returned to your NRD.

When funding for the year is exhausted, we will be happy to continue accepting contracts and hold them for the next year's program enrollment. In that case, those contracts will be the first ones accepted for the new program year. Interested landowners may also be able to plant their nesting cover mixture in the fall before their contracts starts. In many cases, landowners are interested in planting grasses at this time of the year to help establishment and fitting the field work into a time with greater flexibility.

5. Enrollment Reporting:

In order to ensure that planting materials are distributed in a timely manner, we are asking that all proposed contracts and plans be submitted to the Pheasants Forever State Office as soon as possible. Please make sure the following information is included with each contract:

- Landowner name and address.
- Name and address to ship the grass seed to (no P.O. Boxes please).
- What grass mixture is selected.
- Number of acres of seed needed.
- How many feet of fabric weed barrier will be needed (If applicable).

That information will allow us to place orders with grass seed vendors and have the seed delivered as quickly as possible. The seed vendor will ship the grass seed mixture directly to the landowner. If a landowner wishes to receive their seed in any special combination for planting, please let me know before the seed order is placed. Unless otherwise specified, all seed orders will be delivered with the fluffy seed separated from the small, slick seeds. This seed mixing combination is designed for projects that will be planted using a no-till grass drill.

6. NRD Participation:

NRD participation in Corners For Wildlife has not changed over the years. As a full partner in the program, NRD's agree to:

- Promote the Corners For Wildlife program and enroll landowners.
- Plant the trees and shrubs free of charge to the landowner when 400 or more shrubs and trees are included in the plan.
- Invoice Pheasants Forever for 100% of the cost of shrubs, trees and fabric weed barrier. The landowners should not receive any bill for materials from the NRD for these projects.
- Place 2 project signs on every corner enrolled in the program.
- Complete a project evaluation form for projects when they are visited periodically throughout the year.
- Administer landowner rental payments.
- In addition, some NRD's are applying feed weed barrier at cost in the program.

7. Grass Mixtures:

Landowners will now have a smaller, more wildlife-friendly list of available mixtures to select from when designing their project. An attempt was made to provide mixtures that will work throughout the state in a variety of soil types and climates. If you don't feel an adequate mixture is offered for a particular soil type or climate, contact Pheasants Forever and we will work with you to develop an appropriate mixture for your situation.

Available grass mixtures:

Contact PF for grass mixture approval

8. Materials and Planting Costs:

Landowners are able to receive cost-share assistance on project materials. Eligible items include:

- Grass seed = 75% cost share
- Trees = 75% cost share
- Wildlife shrubs = 75% cost share
- Project signs = 100% cost share
- Fabric weed barrier = 50% cost share
- Tree planting (when planting 400 or more shrubs or trees) = 100% cost share

Expenses that are not eligible for cost share are: drill rental, site preparation and planting costs, fencing, and weed control.

Some of these expenses may be cost-shared through a local Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever chapter, contact the PF State Office for assistance.

9. Landowner Cost Share:

Landowners entering the program will receive a 75% cost-share assistance for materials from Pheasants Forever and are responsible for 25% of the grass, shrub and tree costs. In addition, a 50% cost-share is offered on fabric weed barrier on tree or wildlife shrub plantings.

In most NRD's, the fabric weed barrier is being laid on Corners For Wildlife projects at NRD cost (no labor charges, just fabric charges). In those cases, there is no limit to the fabric weed barrier available for landowners on projects. In NRD's applying fabric weed barrier at full cost, a "budget" will need to be developed. In that case, fabric weed barrier will be applied on a first come, first served basis until available funds are exhausted. This is due to the potentially high costs associated with fabric weed barrier.

To keep things simple for the NRD's ***Pheasants Forever should be invoiced for 100% of the trees, wildlife shrubs, grass seed and fabric weed barrier costs.*** Pheasants Forever will then invoice the landowner directly for their 25% or 50% cost share. This is in an attempt to keep the administrative time and effort down for the NRD and NRCS offices.

10. Tree and Wildlife Shrub Plantings:

In order to comply with the wishes of the Nebraska Environmental Trust board and provide greater wildlife benefits for native wildlife like bobwhite quail and grassland songbirds, an increased emphasis is now being placed on the establishment of wildlife shrub thickets. A shrub thicket is a planting that is a minimum of 1,500 ft² in size and contains wildlife shrubs that tend to sucker. Examples of preferred wildlife shrubs includes: American Plum, Common Chokecherry, Sand Cherry, Skunkbush Sumac and Silver Buffaloberry.

A shrub thicket planting plan is included with your NRD's contract that demonstrates how two thickets can be machine planted on each project that are 30' x 50' in size and plant 267 shrubs at a 2.5' x 2.5' spacing. Spacing shrub plantings at this density is required to ensure the thicket is able to out-compete cool-season grasses in the future and provide maximum wildlife benefits.

In order to help ensure quality wildlife shrub and tree plantings, landowners are required to make an investment in the future management of the planting. Landowners have the option of either applying a fabric weed barrier on row plantings of wildlife shrubs and trees (at a 50% cost-share), or they are responsible for mechanical or chemical maintenance for the life of the contract.

When planting a shrub thicket, the application of fabric weed barrier is no longer practical. In order to properly establish thickets, a non-selective herbicide should be applied before the nesting cover planting if weeds or grass (especially non-natives such as smooth brome) are present. The planting sites should be prepared according to NRD instructions.

Continued control of grass competition in shrub thickets can be accomplished with the use of a grass selective herbicide during the first 2 years. In situations where smooth brome or bluegrass is present, this is vitally important to the proper establishment and growth of shrub thickets.

Since the tree and wildlife shrub plantings are one of the most important aspects related to the permanency of the project, it is important to ensure the greatest survival and growth rate of tree and shrub plantings as possible.

11. No-till Seed Drills:

For landowners that are having difficulty in locating a no-till seed drill, their local Pheasants Forever or Quail Forever chapter may have one available. There are now 58 no-till drills available through local chapters around the state. The location of these drills and information about using them can be obtained through our website at: www.NebraskaPF.com or by contacting the PF State Office.

11. General Program Requirements:

- The project must be located on or adjacent to a center pivot irrigation field. We have lots of flexibility with this partnership, but according to the terms of the grant, the project will need to be associated in some way with a center pivot irrigation system.
- The goal of the program is to establish new wildlife habitat in an area that did not have wildlife habitat. Corners that are in existing grass cover can qualify if the current cover will be completely removed through chemical application (fall and spring spraying of a non-selective herbicide) and re-established to an available habitat mixture.
- If trees are being considered in the project, Red Cedar/Juniper are no longer options available in the program. If the landowner still desires to plant trees, Pheasants Forever will need to approve the tree planting plan prior to enrollment of the project. The main emphasis of the program is now to encourage the establishment of shrub thickets on the projects.
- Maintenance of tree and wildlife shrub plantings is required each year for the life of the contract, or the use of fabric weed barrier.
- ***Project signs (2) are required on each project. These signs will be supplied to the NRD and are to be placed at shrub and tree planting time.*** NRD logo's can be added to the signs, contact the PF State Office for more details.
- We are most interested in those corners that are being enrolled with two shrub thickets greater than 1,500 ft² on each corner.
- Violation of the contract can result in forfeiture of funds (cost-share and rental payments).

12. Landowner Rental Payments:

Landowners will receive their annual rental payments following the schedule listed on their contract. NRD's receive a check from Pheasants Forever in late May or early June to cover the landowner rental payments for their District. NRD's will administer the rental payments to landowners from that point. The first landowner rental payments will be issued the following spring, on the anniversary date of the establishment of the project.

13. Materials needed with each Project form the NRD:

To administer the program and complete Environmental Trust Fund progress reports, Pheasants Forever will need certain information regarding each project in the program after sign-ups are completed.

- Fully signed contract by all 3 parties (Landowner, NRD and Pheasants Forever).
- Fully completed project plan.
- Photocopy of aerial photograph with project location highlighted.
- A summary of all projects in the NRD listing landowner name, address, phone number, grass seed mixture selected and the number of acres seeded to grass.
- Comments or suggestions for improving the program in the future.

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