

# UGBEP Pilot Projects Review for Council Final Approval

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Helena, MT March 12, 2024



# Background

- At September 2018 UGBEP Advisory Council meeting, specialists presented concepts for new habitat project types
- Major impetus was the decline of CRP in Montana, once the mainstay of UGBEP enrollments (through nesting cover & Open Fields)
- Council approved 5 practices as Pilot project types
- Requested that FWP implement these and report back before final approval for inclusion as permanent UGBEP practices



# Pilot Practices

- Grain Stubble Management
- Cover Crops
- Wildlife Friendly Haying
- Light Disking
- Interseeding



# Grain Stubble Management

- \$8/acre for stubble >15”
- Maximum of 320 cropland acres per payment year
- Habitat site must be ‘idled’ until the following spring (i.e. no grazing).
- Cropland must be adjacent to nesting cover (as defined for HMLs) at least 20% of the size of the taller stubble; or winter cover at least 2% the size of the taller stubble under contract; or an existing habitat project site.
- Verification taken before Sept. 1 or after harvest
- Best achieved by use of stripper headers
  - Becoming a part of typical No-till movement due to soil health benefits
- Research in Kansas on 9x increase greater pheasant abundance in tall stubble vs short (i.e. greater preference)
- Provides great hunting opportunity compared with shorter stubble



# Grain Stubble Management



# Cover Crops

- \$30/acre per year
  - Maximum of 320 cover crop acres per payment year
  - Three cover crop species are required, of which, no more than one can be a brassica unless > 3 species are used. (Landowner pays for seed).
  - Burning, disking or harvesting is not allowed.
  - Grazing is restricted until January 1st.
  - Cover crops must be adjacent to other UGB habitat (nesting or winter cover)
- Another practice originating from soil health movement
- Many wildlife benefits
  - Brood cover
  - Winter food & cover
  - Pollinator habitats



# Cover Crops



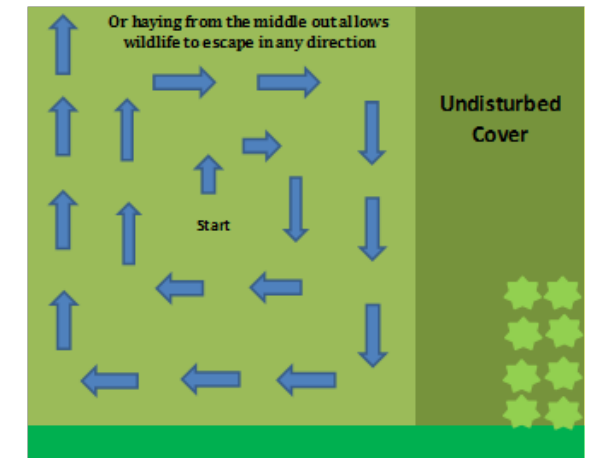
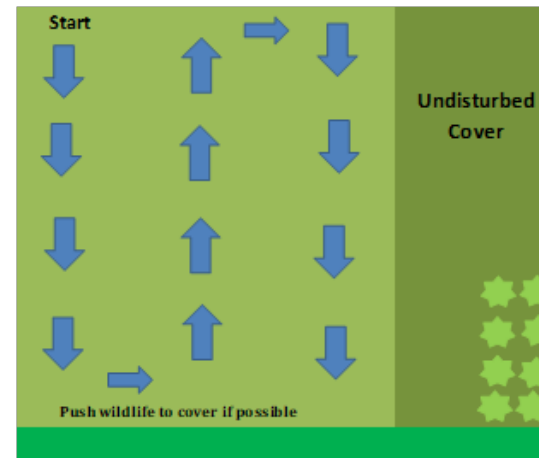
# Wildlife Friendly Haying

- \$35/acre for rested hay ground

- Half of the designated hay field is rested each year of the contract.
- All rested acres must be in single block: Minimum 30 acres, maximum 160 acres.
- Haying on the other half of the acres must be delayed until July 1st.
- All haying that does occur must be done according to the schedule and patterns outlined in the contract.

- Wildlife-Friendly Haying Pattern

- Hay back and forth across field, OR from the inside out.
- Haying pattern should push wildlife towards the idled portion of the hay field or other adjacent cover





# Improved Grass Management- Light Disking

- \$30/acre for disking
  - Practice is for grass stands that have been established for at least four years.
  - For active CRP – Disking must follow Farm Service Agency (FSA) maintenance schedules and practice must be approved in CRP contract.
  - For all other grass stands, no more than 1/3rd of the field may be disked annually.
  - Minimum disturbance is at least two passes of light disking 2-4” in depth.
  - Maximum of 320 treated acres per landowner, per year
  - Practice must be performed between August 1st and December 1st.
- Based on research in Nebraska
  - Higher selection by hens for nesting
- Tested in MT on PF Coffee Creek with good success (ref. Sept 2016 Council Meeting Tour)



# Improved Grass Management- Interseeding

- \$40/acre for interseeding forbs & legumes into established grass
  - Performed in addition to light disking\*
  - Seed mix must be designed or approved by FWP.
  - For active CRP – Disking must coincide with Farm Service Agency (FSA) maintenance schedules. At least 4 years must remain on the contract.
  - For all other grass stands, interseeding may not occur more than once in a 10-year period.
  - Maximum of 320 treated acres per landowner, per year
  - Practice performed between Aug 1- Dec 1.
- Related practice to light disking, cannot happen alone
- Greatly increases the benefits of disking alone
  - Early brood survival about 2x better in disked & interseeded CRP
  - Model landscape could produce 2.9 times more chicks with CRP treated with both practices



# Improved Grass Management- Interseeding



# Conclusion

- Council questions or input?
- If in support, requesting approval from Council to add all 5 of the presented practices as permanent for the program

