

Nature Saskatchewan Habitat Enhancement Details

Nature Saskatchewan offers a habitat enhancement program to improve habitat for Burrowing Owls, Piping Plovers, Sprague's Pipits, and Ferruginous Hawks. Habitat enhancement can take place through native seeding, wildlife-friendly fencing, alternative water development, and/or protective fencing around existing Ferruginous Hawk nesting platforms/trees. *Ideal* sites are areas adjacent to or near by an existing pasture (tame or native).

For native seeding, wildlife-friendly fencing, and alternative water development projects, **the landowner provides 50% of the project cost and Nature Saskatchewan provides 50% of the project costs.**

For Ferruginous Hawk protective fencing around existing nesting platforms/trees, **Nature Saskatchewan provides 100% of the project costs.**

Burrowing Owl Projects:

Preferably areas adjacent to existing pasture within 3-5 km of Burrowing Owl nests active in the past 5 years, confirmed by Nature Saskatchewan staff, a Conservation Officer/agency, or a research biologist.

Piping Plover Projects:

Preferably areas adjacent to pasture, or designated as critical habitat, or with nesting plovers nearby in the current year or recent past, confirmed by Nature Saskatchewan staff, a Conservation Officer/agency, or a research biologist.

Sprague's Pipit Projects:

Preferably areas adjacent to pasture with nesting pipits nearby in the current year or recent past, confirmed by Nature Saskatchewan staff, a Conservation Officer/agency, or a research biologist.

Ferruginous Hawk Projects:

Preferably nesting trees or platforms located in pastures with nesting hawks in the current year or recent past, confirmed by Nature Saskatchewan staff, a Conservation Officer/agency, or a research biologist.

Note: Burrowing Owl, Piping Plover, and Sprague's Pipit projects are a 12 year agreement between Nature Saskatchewan and the landowner. Qualifying quarter sections will also be enrolled into the appropriate stewardship program through which the landowner will report the presence of the species through an annual census card mailed out by Nature Saskatchewan, if applicable.

Seed lots must provide appropriate seed testing certificates which have to be sent to Nature Saskatchewan (and the Professional Agrologist assigned to the project) in addition to the receipts for reimbursement, and must not contain any problematic weed species listed in the *Noxious Weed Act*, for example, downy brome, Japanese brome, hairy chess, cheat grass, leafy spurge, and rattail fescue or other invasive species such as crested wheatgrass or smooth brome. If

seeding of these species were to occur the recipient may be required to repay, or redirect to other stewardship activities, the full amount of the funds advanced for planting.

Recipient cannot receive funds if the land was broken from native prairie within the past three years. The same funding repayment or redirection requirement outlined above would apply to this situation. Assistance is subject to available funds and landowner participation/contribution. Projects are considered a 50-50 cost share between the recipient and Nature Saskatchewan where payment is calculated based on 50% of the total receipts.

Payment breakdown

Native Seeding Projects:

- For seed, the maximum level of assistance is **half of \$100/acre** for seeding a **100% native grass mixture of at least 2 species**. If the cost of the seed blend is below the maximum, only 50% of the actual seed cost will be paid. Seeding needs to be done within 18 months of seed purchase, if mix is not sown within 18 months, the landowner must let us know why.
- For seeding, the maximum level of assistance is **half of \$35/acre** which can include renting proper seeding equipment for native blends and the work involved. If the cost of seeding is below the maximum, only 50% of the actual labour and equipment cost will be paid.
- For glyphosate-based herbicide applications, the maximum level of assistance is **half of \$22/acre** which includes the cost of herbicide and application. If the cost of herbicide and application is below the maximum, only 50% of the actual cost will be paid.

Native Grass Seed Examples (there are more options available):

Slender Wheat Grass	Awned Wheat Grass
Northern Wheat Grass	Little Bluestem
Western Wheat Grass	Big Bluestem
Green Needle Grass	Purple Prairie Clover
Needle & Thread Grass	Blue Gramma

Note: Recipient must speak to a trained agrologist (provided by Nature Saskatchewan), specialized in native species to know which native seed blend is best suited for their area.

Wildlife-Friendly Fencing Projects:

- A 50% cost share whereby Nature Saskatchewan provides the landowner with funding up to a maximum of **half of \$4,500** for the total cost of one mile of 2 strand high tensile **electric fencing**, on 4-5" posts spaced a maximum of 100' intervals with braces at corners and every ¼ mile for the purpose of exclusion and cross fencing. The top strand must be **40-42" or less** from the ground, the bottom strand must be at **least 18"** from the ground, and there must be at **least 12"** between the two strands. Fencing needs to be on a quarter section that is native or perennial cover (except for Piping Plover projects). **The invoice should include custom fencing costs at a maximum of \$4,500 per mile.** If the cost of the fence is below the maximum, only 50% of the actual cost will be paid.

- A 50% cost share whereby Nature Saskatchewan provides the landowner with funding up to a maximum of **half of \$6,000** for the construction of 1 mile of 4 wire, (12 ½ gauge double strand barb) **bottom and top wire smooth**, with the highest wire **40 inches** or less off the ground, the lowest wire **18 inches** or more off the ground, the top 2 wires no less than **12 inches** apart. Fencing needs to be on a quarter section that is native or perennial cover (except for Plovers on Shore projects). **The invoice should include custom fencing costs at a maximum of \$6,000 per mile.** If the cost of the fence is below the maximum, only 50% of the actual cost will be paid.

Water Development Projects:

- A 50% cost share whereby, Nature Saskatchewan provides the landowner with funding up to a maximum of **half of \$3,500** for the development of a livestock watering site upon submission of original receipts totaling at least \$3,500. If the cost of the watering site is below the maximum, only 50% of the actual cost will be paid. Watering sites need to enhance an area that is native or perennial and/or protect riparian areas.

Ferruginous Hawk Nest Platform/Tree Fencing Projects:

- Nature Saskatchewan provides the landowner with 100% funding up to a maximum of **\$500** for the total cost of construction of fencing around Ferruginous Hawk nesting tree(s) and/or platform(s). The fence must have either **barbless top wire** (i.e. smooth, single or double-strand) or else have **permanent high-visibility-fence-wire markers** (may be provided by Nature Saskatchewan, if available) attached along the top two strands of barbed wire, spaced horizontally by no more than 1.5 meters (5 feet). Fencing should not occur around an active hawk nest between March 15 and July 15. If the cost of the fence is below the maximum, only what the project cost will be paid.

Restrictions and suggestions:

- Broadcast seeding is not allowed as it does not offer the depth and space precision important for native species establishment. Seeding depth has to be between ¼ and ¾ inch deep but is dependent on the type of soil. Seeding with an air drill is recommended for depth precision. A press drill provides the best depth and space precision results.
- Recipient must be the registered landowner or must have the registered landowner's permission to do this project and both parties will have to sign the contract
- Herbicides must be glyphosate-based. The residues of some other herbicides may prevent establishment of certain native species.

Nature Saskatchewan's Habitat Enhancement Program General Process for Seeding Projects

Year 1

- Applies to NS for funding; provides objectives, history (herbicide and crop), and soil type (soil test for pH, salinity, nutrient level).
- Meets with a Professional Agrologist assigned to this project by Nature Saskatchewan (on-site) and a Nature Saskatchewan staff member (when possible) to initiate project planning.
- If necessary, begins weed control using a glyphosate-based herbicide approved by the Professional Agrologist to achieve a weed-free seedbed.
- With assistance from the Professional Agrologist, determines appropriate seed mixes, and orders and pays for seed; seed certificate must be submitted to NS (or the Professional Agrologist assigned to this project).

Year 2

- Rents appropriate seeding equipment (broadcast seeding is not allowed); provides proof to NS that appropriate seeding methods have been used (e.g., with photos or confirmation by the Professional Agrologist).
- If necessary, applies pre-seed herbicide; must be a glyphosate-based herbicide approved by the Professional Agrologist.
- Seeds project area.
- Provides post-seeding weed control, primarily through mowing; this needs to be done before the weeds flower.
- If necessary, spot sprays and mows for additional weed control.
- Submits receipts for seed, labour, and equipment costs to Nature Saskatchewan.

Year 3

- Spot reseeds, if needed.
- Provides weed control through mowing (as in Year 2).

Nature Saskatchewan staff will do site visits to seeding projects at various stages to discuss the project with the landowner. Once seeding has been completed, receipts have been received by Nature Saskatchewan, and Nature Saskatchewan staff have confirmed the completion of seeding with a site check, reimbursements will be paid. Rangeland health assessments (using the Native Grassland and Forest workbook) prior to fence construction, and in year 2 or 3 after seeding/fencing, will be specified in HE agreements.