NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD

HERBACEOUS WEED CONTROL

(Ac.)

CODE 315

DEFINITION

The removal or control of herbaceous weeds including invasive, noxious and prohibited plants.

PURPOSE

- Enhance accessibility, quantity, and quality of forage and/or browse.
- Restore or release native or create desired plant communities and wildlife habitats consistent with the ecological site.
- Protect soils and control erosion
- Reduce fine-fuels fire hazard and improve air quality

CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES

On all lands except active cropland where removal reduction, or manipulation of herbaceous vegetation is desired.

This practice does not apply to removal of herbaceous vegetation by prescribed fire (use Prescribed Burning - 338) or removal of herbaceous vegetation to facilitate a land use change (use Land Clearing - 460).

CRITERIA

General Criteria Applicable to All Purposes

Herbaceous weed control will be applied in a manner to achieve the desired control of the target species and protection of desired species. This will be accomplished by mechanical, chemical, burning or biological methods either alone or in combination. When burning is used as a method, the Prescribed Burning standard (338) will also be applied.

NRCS will not develop biological or chemical treatment recommendations except for biological control utilizing grazing animals. Prescribed Grazing (528) is used to ensure desired results are achieved and maintained.

NRCS may provide clients with acceptable biological and/or chemical control references.

NRCS may provide clients with current acceptable references to achieve desired management objectives.

When herbicides are used, environmental hazards and site-specific application criteria listed on pesticide labels and contained in extension service and other approved pest management references must be followed.

Herbaceous weed control will include post treatment measures as needed to achieve resource management objectives.

Livestock and people access will be controlled based on management methods applied and restrictions as listed on the chemical labels.

Manage and/or dispose of treated weed species in a manner that will prevent the spread of herbaceous weeds to new sites.

Additional Criteria to Enhance Accessibility, Quantity, and Quality of Forage and/or Browse

Herbaceous weed control will be applied in a manner to minimize negative impact to forage and/or other non targeted plants. Timing and sequence of control shall be planned in coordination with specifications developed for Prescribed Grazing (528) or Forage Harvest Management (512).

Conservation practice standards are reviewed periodically, and updated if needed. To obtain the current version of this standard, contact the Natural Resources Conservation Service State Office or visit the electronic Field Office Technical Guide.

Additional Criteria to Restore or Release Native or Create Desired Plant Communities and Wildlife Habitats Consistent with the Ecological Site

Apply herbaceous weed control in a manner to protect the health and vigor of native or desired plant species.

Use applicable Ecological Site Description (ESD) State and Transition models, to develop specifications that are ecologically sound and defensible. Treatments must be congruent with dynamics of the ecological site(s) and keyed to states and plant community phases that have the potential and capability to support the desired plant community. If an ESD is not available, base specifications on the best approximation of the desired plant community composition, structure, and function.

Treatments will be conducted during periods of the year when weed species are most vulnerable and will promote restoration of the native or desired plant communities.

Apply herbaceous weed control in a manner that maintain or enhance important wildlife habitat requirements.

Treatments will be conducted during periods of the year that accommodate reproduction and other life-cycle requirements of target wildlife and pollinator species.

Apply treatments that maintain or enhance plant community composition and structure to meet the requirements of target wildlife species.

Additional Criteria to Protect Soils and Control Erosion

Apply herbaceous weed control to minimize soil disturbance and soil erosion.

Additional treatment will be applied to protect soils and prevent erosion.

Additional Criteria to Reduce Fine-Fuels Fire Hazard and Improve Air Quality

Treat weed species in a manner that creates a native or desired plant community which reduces the potential for accumulating excessive fuel loads and increased wildfire hazards.

Apply treatment methods in a manner that minimize the potential for unintended impacts to air resources, e.g., smoke, chemical drift etc.

Additional Criteria for Controlling Invasive Plants

Control of invasive plants may include eradicating, reducing, or managing invasive species populations and preventing their spread. Control also includes restoration of native species and habitats to reduce the effects of invasive species and to prevent further invasions.

Preventing the initial establishment of invasive plants should be a major component of any Invasive Plant Species Control Plan. Early detection and control is a more efficient and effective strategy than waiting until an area is infested.

Control of noxious or invasive plants may be accomplished by mechanical, chemical, biological, prescribed burning, or a combination of all of these methods.

The control method(s) used will be designed to protect the soil from erosion and to avoid the degradation of soil quality.

Control methods will be designed to protect and encourage the growth of desirable native plant species.

When using chemical control, spot treatment methods will be used whenever feasible.

If using biological controls, release of the control agent will be in compliance with taxa-specific release standards only after securing any required Federal, State or local permits.

Areas where control measures have been used may require active re-vegetation methods to reestablish desirable plant species. Vegetative plantings and site preparation will follow the Conservation Practice Standards and vegetative establishment in the NRCS Field Office Technical Guide for applicable planting standards such as: Pasture and Hay Planting (512), Tree/Shrub Planting (612), Riparian Forest Buffer (391), Conservation Cover (327), Restoration and Management of Declining Habitats (643), Critical Area Planting (342).

Use vegetation adapted to the site conditions that will accomplish the desired purpose. Federal or state listed noxious or invasive plant species shall not be planted.

Disposal of noxious or invasive plant species from the site treated will be by appropriate

methods (e.g., burned, hung off ground, placed on tarps, bagged, etc.) to lessen the potential for the plants to repopulate the site or spread to new areas.

CONSIDERATIONS

Consider using Integrated Pest Management (595) in support of herbaceous weed control. Consider soil erosion potential and difficulty of vegetation establishment when choosing a method of control that causes soil disturbance.

Consider the appropriate time period for treatment. Some herbaceous weed control activities can be effective when applied within a single year; others may require multiple years of treatment(s) to achieve desired objectives.

Consider impacts to wildlife species, in general, treatments that create a mosaic pattern may be the most desirable.

Consider impacts to wildlife food supplies, space, and cover availability when planning the method and amount of herbaceous weed control.

State issued licenses may be required when using chemical pesticide treatments.

For air quality purposes, consider using chemical methods of herbaceous weed control that minimize chemical drift and excessive chemical usage and consider mechanical methods of herbaceous weed control that minimize the entrainment of particulate matter.

Adjacent land uses must be considered before chemicals are used.

Additional Considerations for Invasive Plants

Consider choosing methods of control that cause no or limited soil disturbance. Disturbed soil may lead to increased germination of invasive plant seeds.

Plant material native to the State or local area should be used whenever possible.

Consider and minimize the impacts of control methods on native and/or desirable vegetation.

Consider the initial cause and timing of the invasive plant occurrence and future condition. Possible site degradation over time (low pH, disturbance, poor management, lack of native seed source/bank or invasive plant seed source/bank in vicinity) may have contributed to the initial occurrence of the invasive species and may contribute to re-population.

PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

Prepare plans and specifications for each field or treatment unit according to the criteria included in this standard.

Prepare plans and specifications that conform to all applicable federal, state, and local laws. For invasive plant control, use the **Wildlife Habitat Plan Template – Invasive Plants Tab**. Other formats are acceptable but they must contain the same required fields and information as the template. At a minimum, a herbaceous weed control practice plan shall include:

1. Goals and objectives statement.
2. Site Description
3. Pre-treatment cover or density of the target plant(s), listing of target plants, control strategies and method (e.g. chemical) for the site, and the planned post-treatment cover or density and desired efficacy. Re-vegetation methods will be included if applicable.
4. Maps, drawings, and/or narratives detailing or identifying areas to be treated, pattern of treatment (if applicable), and areas that will not be disturbed.
5. A monitoring plan that identifies what shall be measured (including timing and frequency) and the changes in the plant community (compare with objectives) that will be achieved.

For Mechanical Treatment Methods. Plans and specifications will include items 1 through 5 above, plus the following:

- Type of equipment to use for management
- Dates of treatment for effective management.
- Operating instructions (if applicable)
- Techniques and procedures to be followed.

For Chemical Treatment Methods. Plans and specifications will include items 1 through 5, above, plus the following:

- Acceptable chemical treatment references for containment and management of target species
- Document techniques to be used, planned dates and rates of application
- Evaluation and interpretation of herbicide risks associated with the selected treatment(s) using WIN-PST or other approved tools.
- Any special mitigation, timing considerations or other factors (such as soil texture and organic matter content) that must be considered to ensure the safest, most effective application of the herbicide
- Reference to product label instructions

For Biological Treatment Methods. Plans and specifications will include items 1 through 5, above, plus the following:

- Acceptable biological treatment references for the selected biological agent used to contain and manage the target species
- Document release date, kind, and number of agents
- Timing, frequency, duration and intensity of grazing or browsing
- Desired degree of grazing or browsing use for effective management of target species
- Maximum allowable degree of use on desirable non-target species
- Special mitigation, precautions, or requirements associated with the selected treatment(s)

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

Operation. Herbaceous weed control practices shall be applied using approved materials and procedures. Operations will comply with all local, state, and federal laws and ordinances.

Success of the practice shall be determined by evaluating regrowth or reoccurrence of target species after sufficient time has passed to monitor the situation and gather reliable data. Length of evaluation periods will depend on the herbaceous weeds species being monitored, proximity of propagules (seeds, plant materials and roots) to the site, transport mode of seeds (wind or animals) and methods and materials used.

Areas where invasive plant control measures have been taken will be monitored at least annually for the purpose of detecting re-growth of controlled species or the introduction and establishment of new noxious or invasive species while the site is in recovery. Any re-growth of the controlled invasive plant species in the treated area(s) will be controlled with follow-up treatment(s).

The operator will develop a safety plan for individuals exposed to chemicals, including telephone numbers and addresses of emergency treatment centers and the telephone number for the nearest poison control center. The National Pesticide Information Center (NPIC) telephone number in Corvallis, Oregon, may also be given for non-emergency information: **1-800-858-7384**

Monday to Friday

6:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Pacific Time

The national Chemical Transportation Emergency Center (CHEMTRAC) telephone number is: 1-800-424-9300

- Follow label requirements for mixing/loading setbacks from wells, intermittent streams and rivers, natural or impounded ponds and lakes, and reservoirs.
- Post signs, according to label directions and/or federal, state, tribal, and local laws, around fields that have been treated. Follow restricted entry intervals.
- Dispose of herbicide and herbicide containers in accordance with label directions and adhere to federal, state, tribal, and local regulations.
- Read and follow label directions and maintain appropriate Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS). MSDS and herbicide labels may be accessed on the Internet at: http://www.greenbook.net/
- Calibrate application equipment according to recommendations before each seasonal use and with each major chemical and site change.
- Replace worn nozzle tips, cracked hoses, and faulty gauges on spray equipment.

- Maintain records of plant management for at least two years. herbicide application records shall be in accordance with USDA Agricultural Marketing Service's Pesticide Recordkeeping Program and state-specific requirements.

Maintenance. Following initial application, some regrowth, resprouting, or reoccurrence of herbaceous weeds may be expected. Spot treatment of individual plants or areas needing re-treatment should be completed as needed when weed vegetation is most vulnerable to desired treatment procedures.

Review and update the plan periodically in order to incorporate new IPM technology; response to grazing management and complex weed population changes; and avoid the development of weed resistance to herbicide chemicals.

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