USDA United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

340 – Cover Crop Implementation Requirements (Single Species)

Producer:		**Project or Contract:**	
Location:		**County:**	
Farm Name:		**Tract Number:**	

Practice Lifespan – 1 year



Practice Purpose(s): (check all that apply)

- ☐ Reduce erosion from wind and water.
- ☐ Maintain or increase soil health and organic matter content.
- ☐ Reduce water quality degradation by utilizing excessive soil nutrients.
- ☐ Suppress excessive weed pressures and break pest cycles.
- ☐ Improve soil moisture use efficiency.
- ☐ Minimize soil compaction.
- ☐ Other: (Specify)

Description of work:

NRCS Review Only

Designed By:		**Date**	
Checked By:		**Date**	
Approved By:		**Date**	

GENERAL CRITERIA:

Plant species, seedbed preparation, seeding rates, seeding dates, seeding depths, fertility requirements, and planting methods will be consistent with applicable local criteria and soil/site conditions.

Cover crops shall be selected and planted as described in VT eFOTG, Section IV, VT Cover Crop Planting Specification Guide/Tables.

Select species that are compatible with other components of the cropping system.

Ensure herbicides used with crops are compatible with cover crop selections and purpose(s).

Cover crops may be established between successive production crops, or companion-planted or relay-planted into production crops. Select species and planting dates that will not compete with the production crop yield or harvest.

Do not burn cover crop residue. Do not plow cover crop under in the fall.

Determine the method and timing of termination to meet the grower's objective and the current NRCS Cover Crop Termination Guidelines.

When a cover crop will be grazed or hayed ensure that crop selection(s) comply with pesticide label rotational crop restrictions and that the planned management will not compromise the selected conservation purpose(s).

Do not harvest cover crops for seed.

If the specific rhizobium bacteria for the selected legume are not present in the soil, treat the seed with the appropriate inoculum at the time of planting.

Additional Criteria to Reduce Erosion from Wind and Water

☐ (check if applicable)

Time the cover crop establishment in conjunction with other practices to adequately protect the soil during the critical erosion period(s).

Select cover crops that will have the physical characteristics necessary to provide adequate erosion protection.

Use the current erosion prediction technology to determine the amount of surface and/or canopy cover needed from the cover crop to achieve the erosion objective.

Additional Criteria to Maintain or Increase Soil Health and Organic Matter Content

Cover crop species will be selected on the basis of producing higher volumes of organic material and root mass to maintain or increase soil organic matter.

The planned crop rotation including the cover crop and associated management activities will score a Soil Conditioning Index (SCI) value > 0, as determined using the current approved NRCS Soil Conditioning Index (SCI) procedure, with appropriate adjustments for additions to and or subtractions from plant biomass.

The cover crop shall be planted as early as possible and be terminated as late as practical for the producer’s cropping system to maximize plant biomass production, considering crop insurance criteria, the time needed to prepare the field for planting the next crop, and soil moisture depletion.

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Additional Criteria Reduce Water Quality Degradation by Utilizing Excessive Soil Nutrients

☐ (check if applicable)

Establish cover crops as soon as practical prior to or after harvest of the production crop. (i.e. before or after harvest)

Select cover crop species for their ability to effectively utilize nutrients.

Terminate the cover crop as late as practical to maximize plant biomass production and nutrient uptake. Practical considerations for termination date may include crop insurance criteria, the amount of time needed to prepare the field for planting the next crop, weather conditions, and cover crop effects on soil moisture and nutrient availability to the following crop.

If the cover crop will be harvested for feed (hay/balage/etc.), choose species that are suitable for the planned livestock, and capable of removing the excess nutrients present.

Additional Criteria to Suppress Excessive Weed Pressures and Break Pest Cycles

☐ (check if applicable)

Select cover crop species for their life cycles, growth habits, and other biological, chemical and or physical characteristics to provide one or more of the following:

- To suppress weeds, or compete with weeds.
- Break pest life cycles or suppress of plant pests or pathogens.
- Provide food or habitat for natural enemies of pests.
- Release compounds such as glucosinolates that suppress soil borne pathogens or pests.

Select cover crop species that do not harbor pests or diseases of subsequent crops in the rotation.

Additional Criteria to Improve Soil Moisture Use Efficiency

☐ (check if applicable)

In areas of limited soil moisture, terminate growth of the cover crop sufficiently early to conserve soil moisture for the subsequent crop. Cover crops established for moisture conservation shall be left on the soil surface.

In areas of potential excess soil moisture, allow the cover crop to grow as long as possible to maximize soil moisture removal.

Additional Criteria to Minimize Soil Compaction

☐ (check if applicable)

Select cover crop species that have the ability to root deeply and the capacity to penetrate or prevent compacted layers.

Fertilization:

Cover crops usually follow fertilized crops and often require no additional fertilization.
Applied fertilizers, when used, will be applied according to a current soil test and/or approved nutrient management plan, or organic farm operation plan. If needed, apply soil amendments prior to seedbed preparation or before seeding if a no-till drill is used.

Time and Manner of Incorporation of Cover Crop:

Cover crops shall be left on the surface over winter. They are generally worked into the soil the following year or killed and left on the surface to provide protective residue. Green manure crops generally will be incorporated into the soil in the spring following seeding, usually when top growth reaches 8 to 18 inches in height.

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SPECIFICATIONS:

Tract/Field #	Acres	Cover Crop Species	Seeding Rate (lbs/ac) PLS*	Planned Seeding Date	Seeding Method
T-328 Flds: 4,6,7,8,14,17	83	Winter Cereal Rye	75	Sept. 25	Drilled

* Pure Live Seed To Calculate PLS, multiply percent purity by the percent germination. Divide the seeding rate by the percent PLS to find the bulk seed needed per acre.

Tract/Field #	Termination Date or Stage	Termination Method	Other Information Pertinent to Establishing and Managing the Cover Crop (e.g., if haying or grazing is planned, specify the planned management for haying or grazing)
T-328 Flds: 4,6,7,8,14,17	April 20	Till	N/A

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE:

- Evaluate the cover crop to determine if the cover crop is meeting the planned purpose(s). If the cover crop is not meeting the purpose(s) adjust the management, change the species of cover crop, or choose a different technology.

Specific Additional Operation and Maintenance Requirements For Your Practice:

☐ A map(s) showing all fields planned for cover crop is attached.

☐ Cover Crop Specifications are attached.

If you have questions about this planned **Cover Crop** practice contact:

Name:		Tel:		Email:	

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