NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE
CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD

PRESCRIBED GRAZING

(Acre)
Code 528

DEFINITION

Managing the harvest of vegetation with grazing and/or browsing animals.

PURPOSE

- Improve or maintain desired species composition and vigor of plant communities.
- Improve or maintain quantity and quality of forage for grazing and browsing animal's health and productivity.
- Improve or maintain surface and/or subsurface water quality and quantity.
- Reduce accelerated soil erosion, and maintain or improve soil condition.
- Promote economic stability through sustainable forage use.
- Improve and maintain riparian and watershed function.

CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES

This practice applies to all lands where grazing and/or browsing animals are managed.

CRITERIA

General Criteria Applicable to All Purposes

Removal of plant material will be in accordance with site production limitations, rate of plant growth and the physiological needs of forage plants and the nutritional needs of the animals.

Adjust intensity, frequency, timing and duration of grazing to meet the desire objectives for the plants communities and the associated resources, including the grazing and/or browsing animals.

Manage kind of animal, animal number, grazing distribution, length of grazing and/or browsing periods and timing of use to provide grazed plants sufficient recovery time to meet planned objectives. The recovery period of non-grazing can be provided for the entire year or during the growing period of key plants.

Deferment (non-grazing period less than one year) and rest (non-grazing period equal or greater than one year) will be planned for critical periods of plant needs.

Protect soil, water, air, plant and animal resources when locating livestock feeding, supplementing, handling and watering facilities.

Manage grazing and/or browsing animals to maintain adequate vegetative cover on sensitive areas (i.e. riparian, wetland, habitats of concern, karst areas).

Schedule livestock movements based on rate of plant growth, available forage and allowable utilization target.

Defer or rest areas from grazing or browsing for a period of time to ensure the success of brush control, seeding or other conservation practices that causes stress or damage to key plants.

Develop contingency plans to deal with expected periodic weather, fire and/or insect concerns.

Additional Criteria to Improve or Maintain the Health and Vigor of Plant Communities.

Duration and intensity of grazing and/or browsing will be based on desired plant health and expected productivity of key forage species to meet management objectives.

Adjust intensity, frequency and timing of grazing and/or browsing to meet the desired objectives for the plant communities and the associated resources, including the grazing and/or browsing animal.

Schedule livestock movements based on rate of plant growth, available forage and utilization.

Plan periodic deferment from grazing and/or browsing to maintain or restore the desired plant community following episodic events, such as wildfire or severe drought.

Where appropriate, periodic soil testing for nutrient status and soil reaction and application of fertilizer and/or soil amendments according to soil test recommendations to enhance plant vigor.

Additional Criteria to Improve or Maintain Quantity and Quality of Forage for Livestock Health and Productivity

Plan grazing and/or browsing to match forage quantity and quality goals of the producer and within the capability of the resource to respond to management.

Use the nutritional capability of pasture plants to optimize delivery of nutrients to the animals.

Reduce animal stress and mortality from toxic and poisonous plants.

Livestock feeding, handling, and watering facilities should be designed and installed in a manner to improve and/or maintain animal distribution. These facilities should also be designed and installed to minimize stress, the spread of disease, parasites, contact with harmful organisms and toxic plants.

Supplemental feed and/or mineral requirements should be balanced with the forage consumption to meet the desired nutritional level for the kind and class of grazing and/or browsing livestock.

Additional Criteria to Improve or Maintain Surface and/or Subsurface Water Quality and Quantity.

Plan intensity, frequency and timing of grazing/browsing to:

- Maintain adequate ground cover and plant density to maintain or improve infiltration capacity and reduce runoff.
- Maintain adequate ground cover and plant density to maintain or improve filtering capacity of the vegetation

Minimize concentrated livestock areas to enhance nutrient distribution and improve or maintain ground cover.

Additional Criteria to Improve or Maintain Riparian and Watershed Function.

Minimize concentrated livestock areas to enhance nutrient distribution and improve or maintain ground cover.

Plan intensity, frequency and timing of grazing/browsing to:

- Provide adequate ground cover and plant density to maintain or improve infiltration capacity and reduce runoff.
- Provide adequate ground cover and plant density to maintain or improve filtering capacity of the vegetation.
- Avoid undesirable shifts in plant community composition, structure and function that could imperil watershed function.

Additional Criteria to Reduce Soil Erosion and Maintain Soil Condition

Plan intensity, frequency and timing of grazing/browsing to:

- Maintain adequate ground cover, litter and canopy to maintain or improve infiltration and soil condition.

Minimize concentrated livestock areas, trailing, and trampling to reduce soil compaction, excess runoff and erosion.

Additional Criteria to Improve or Maintain Food and/or Cover for Wildlife Species of Concern

Manage plant height, structure, density and diversity for desired wildlife habitat.

The prescribed grazing plan will maintain adequate cover, provide for necessary deferment time and duration and livestock density to ensure nesting and brood rearing success.

Additional Criteria for Management of Fine Fuel Load

Plan intensity, frequency, and timing of grazing/browsing to reduce hazardous fuel loads.

Additional Criteria to Promote Economic Stability through Grazing Land Sustainability.

Evaluate the economics of the forage system and associated infrastructure.

Develop a prescribed grazing plan that provides forage for as much of the year as possible to minimize supplemental feed cost.

Develop a contingency plan to ensure resource management and economic feasibility without resource degradation.

Use the nutritional capability of pasture plants to optimize delivery of nutrients to the animals in order to maintain high reproductive performance that promotes economic sustainability.

CONSIDERATIONS

Utilization or stubble height target levels are tools that can be used in conjunction with monitoring to help ensure that resource conservation and producer objectives are met.

Where practical and beneficial, start the grazing sequence in a different management unit.

When weeds are a significant problem prescribed grazing and/or browsing should be implemented in conjunction with other pest management practices to promote plant community resistance to invasive species and protect desired plant communities.

Consider improving carbon sequestration in biomass and soils through management of grazing and/or browsing to produce the desired results.

PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

The prescribed grazing plan shall conform to all applicable federal, state and local laws. Seek measures to avoid adverse affects to endangered, threatened, and candidate species and their habitats.

Prepare a prescribed grazing plan for all management units where grazing and/or browsing will occur according to state standards and specifications.

Prescribed Grazing Plan will include:

- Goals and Objectives clearly stated.
- Resource Inventory that identifies existing resource conditions, concerns and ecological site or forage suitability group potentials. Identify opportunities to enhance resource conditions. Location and condition of structural improvements such as fences, water developments, etc.
- Forage Inventory of the expected forage quality, quantity and species of forage in each management unit(s) during the grazing period. (Utilize Forage Inventory Tool).
- Forage-Animal Balance developed as a sustainable grazing plan for the management unit(s), which ensures forage produced or available meets forage demand of livestock.
- Grazing Plan developed for livestock that identifies periods of grazing and/or browsing, deferment, rest, and other treatment activities for each management unit.
- Contingency plan developed that details potential problems (i.e., severe drought, flooding, insects) and serves as a guide for adjusting the grazing prescription to ensure resource management and economic feasibility without resource degradation.
- Monitoring plan developed with appropriate records to assess whether the

grazing strategy resulted in a positive or upward trend and is meeting objectives. Identify the key areas and key plants that the manager should evaluate in making grazing management decisions. (Utilize the Pastures Condition Scoresheet – Standard for Tropical Grass/Legume Mixed Pastures Tool).

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

Operation. Prescribed Grazing will be applied on a continuing basis throughout the occupation period of all grazing units.

Adjustments will be made as needed to ensure that the goals and objectives of the prescribed grazing strategy are met.

Maintenance. Monitoring data will be used on a regular basis within the prescribed grazing plan to insure that objectives are being met, or to make necessary changes in the prescribed grazing plan to meet objectives.

All facilitating and accelerating practices (e.g. Fence (382), Pest Management (595), Brush Management (314), Pasture Planting (512) (etc.) that are needed to effect adequate grazing and/or browsing distribution as planned by this practice standard will be maintained in good working order and are being operated as intended.

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