

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE
CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD

RESIDUE MANAGEMENT, SEASONAL

(Acre)
Code 344

DEFINITION

Managing the amount, orientation, and distribution of crop and other plant residues on the soil surface during a specified period of the year, while planting annual crops on a clean-tilled seedbed, or when growing biennial or perennial seed crops.

PURPOSES

- Reduce sheet and rill erosion.
- Provide food and cover for wildlife.
- Reduce off-site transport of sediment, nutrients or pesticides.

CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES

This practice applies to all cropland and other land where crops are grown and adequate plan residues are produced.

Seasonal residue management includes managing residues of annual crops from harvest until the residue is:

- Buried by tillage for seedbed preparation
- Removed by grazing, or
- Mechanically removed

It also includes the management of residues from biennial or perennial seed crops from the time of seed harvest until regrowth begins the next season.

CRITERIA

General Criteria Applicable to All Purposes Named Above:

Residue shall be uniformly distributed over the entire field.

Combines or similar harvesting machines shall be equipped with spreaders capable of redistributing residues over at least 80 percent of the working width of the header.

Residues shall not be burned unless burning is an accepted practice in an integrated pest management (IPM) program developed and recommended by the State Land Grant University.

Additional Criteria to Reduce Sheet and Rill Erosion

The amount of residue needed to reduce erosion within the soil loss tolerance (T) or any other planned soil loss objective. The Revised Universal Soil Loss Equation shall be used to determine soil loss erosion rate.

Partial removal of residue by means such as baling or grazing shall be limited to retain the amount needed to meet the erosion reduction objective. The remaining residue shall be maintained on the surface through periods when sheet and rill erosion has the potential to occur, or until planting, whichever occurs first. Erosion prediction estimates shall account for the effects of other practices in the conservation management system.

Any tillage that occurs during the management period shall be limited to methods, which leave residue on the surface and maintain the planned cover conditions.

Additional Criteria to Reduce Off-site Transport of Sediment, Nutrients or Pesticides.

The amount and orientation of residue required to reduce off-site movement of

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agricultural chemicals during the specified period shall be determined using the appropriate assessment tool(s) [Windows Pesticide Screening Tool (WIN-PST), Phosphorus Index (PI), Revised Universal Soil Loss Equation (RUSLE), or other recognized tools for the site conditions.

Additional Criteria to Provide Food and Cover for Wildlife

The amount of residue, height of the stubble, and length of the management period necessary for meeting habitat requirements for the target species or wildlife population shall be determined using an approved habitat evaluation procedure.

Tillage operations shall be delayed until the end of the management period to maintain the food and cover value of the residue.

CONSIDERATIONS

Removal of plant residue by baling or grazing may have a negative impact on resources. These activities should not be performed without full evaluation of impacts on other resources.

Production of adequate amounts of crop residue necessary for the proper functioning of this practice can be enhanced by selection of high residue producing crops and crop varieties, by the use of cover crops, and by adjustment of plant populations and row spacing.

When planting in a low residue seedbed, completing tillage and planting in a single operation, or by performing primary tillage no more than three days before planting can minimize exposure to erosion; and in limited moisture areas, can conserve moisture for germination.

Leaving one or two rows of unharvested crop standing at intervals across the field can enhance the value of residue for wildlife habitat. Unharvested crop rows have the greatest value when they are adjacent to other cover types, such as grassy or brushy areas or woodland.

On highly erodible soil beyond certain slope length and steepness, supplementary practice shall be required. Residues shall be distributed horizontally across a slope on a contour or perpendicular to the prevailing wind on flat lands.

When planting on a clean seedbed in areas with limited moisture, moisture for germination can be increased by completing tillage and planting in a single operation, or by performing primary tillage no more than three days before planting.

Leaving rows of unharvested crop standing at intervals across the field can enhance the value of residue for wildlife habitat.

PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

Specifications for establishment and operation of this practice shall be prepared for each field or treatment unit according to the Criteria, Considerations, and O&M described in this standard.

Specifications shall be recorded using approved certification sheets, job sheets, narrative statements in the conservation plan, or other acceptable methods.

The following should be specified for residue management use: 1) The critical erosion period which the crop residue must be present, 2) The amount of crop residue, orientation and distribution that must be present to meet the planned purpose, and 3) Estimate percent ground cover or measure actual residue cover using the line transect method.

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

No operation and maintenance requirements, national in scope, have been identified for this practice.