United States Department of Agriculture

NRCS Natural Resources Conservation Service

Cover Crop

Conservation Practice Job Sheet FL-340-JS

Natural Resources Conservation Service, Florida August 2011

Cover crops are defined as grasses, legumes, and forbs that are used for seasonal cover and other conservation purposes. There are many purposes that cover crops are used for and these include: reduce wind and water erosion, increase soil organic matter, capture and recycle or redistribute nutrients in the soil profile, promote biological nitrogen fixation, increase biodiversity, weed suppression, supplemental forage, manage soil moisture, reduce particulate emissions, and reduce soil compaction. Cover crops are used on all lands requiring seasonal cover.

Plans and specifications for cover crop are prepared in accordance with the NRCS Field Office Technical Guide and are designed to meet the resource needs and the producer's objectives. The following components shall be included:

- Proper selection of vegetation is essential. See Table 1 in the Florida Conservation Practice Standard 340 Guidance for a list of common plants used for cover crops. Follow recommended planting rates, dates, and depths, as well as regions of the state for species selected. Plants will be selected on the basis of species characteristics, site and soil conditions, planned use, maintenance of the treated area, method of planting, time of the year to be planted, and the needs and desires of the client. Plants that benefit wildlife species are recommended. Inoculate all legume seed with the proper strain of Rhizobium bacteria.
- Minimum (i.e., No-till, Strip-till, and Mulch-till) or conventional tillage methods may be used. The seedbed must be firmed when small seed are planted. The amount of lime and fertilizer used will be based on a soil test recommendation and a nutrient management plan.
- Methods that will be used to provide adequate soil moisture for germination and establishment of the cover crop. Methods to consider could include soil amendments to increase water holding capacity, type and frequency of irrigation that will be used, or seasonal planting strategy if rainfall will be the sole source of water available during the establishment period. These decisions should be recorded below in the section on Planting Methods.

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COVER CROP JOBSHEET

Operation and maintenance activities address the following:

- Incorporate the cover crop into the soil by minimum tillage or by conventional tillage. When using minimum tillage the cover crop may be killed with an herbicide or by the use of a roller-crimper.
- Control growth of the cover crop to reduce competition from volunteer plants and shading.
- Use mowing or herbicide applications to control weeds. Timing of mowing or herbicide applications should be based on wildlife considerations.
- Soil moisture depletion should be controlled by selecting water efficient plant species and terminating the cover crop before excessive transpiration occurs.

This practice can be certified by completing the applied column in the site specific sheet or the FL-CPA-1 form.

FL- 340 - Site Specific Sheet - 3

Natural Resources Conservation Service, Florida August 2011

COVER CROP SITE SPECIFIC SHEET

Client:		County:	Date:
Farm #:	Tract #:	Field # (s):	Contract #:

Purpose\Needs (check all that apply)

☐ Reduce erosion from wind and water	☐ Weed suppression
☐ Increase soil organic matter	☐ Provide supplemental forage
☐ Manage excess nutrients	☐ Soil moisture management
☐ Promote biological fixation	☐ Reduce emissions to the atmosphere
☐ Increase biodiversity	☐ Reduce soil compaction
☐ Other:	

Layout	**Planned**	**Applied**
Acres		
Species/Cultivars		
Seeding rate (lbs/acre of pure live seed)		
Planting date		
Termination date		
Soil Amend. and Fertilization	**Planned**	**Applied**
N Fertilizer per Soil Test – (lbs/acre)		
P_2O_5 Fertilizer per Soil Test – (lbs/acre)		
K_2O Fertilizer per Soil Test – (lbs/acre)		

Seedbed Preparation (Include date(s) and methods)

Planting Methods

Operation and Maintenance

Additional Specifications and Notes:

FL-340-Site Specific Sheet-2

Natural Resources Conservation Service, Florida August 2011

COVER CROP SITE SPECIFIC SHEET

Planner/Technical Service Provider:

_____ _____

Designed by Date

_____ _____

Approved by Date

Certification

This practice(s) as applied **meets** Florida NRCS standards and specifications for Cover Crop 340.

_____ _____

Planner/Technical Service Provider Date