

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD

FIREBREAK

(FT)

CODE 394

DEFINITION

A permanent or temporary strip of bare or vegetated land planned to retard fire.

PURPOSE

- Reduce the spread of wildfire.
- Contain prescribed burns.

CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES

This practice applies on all land uses where protection from wildfire is needed or prescribed burning is applied.

CRITERIA

General Criteria Applicable to All Purposes

Firebreaks may be temporary or permanent and shall consist of fire-resistant vegetation, non-flammable materials, bare ground, or a combination of these.

Firebreaks will be of sufficient width and length to contain the expected fire or as required by a certified/approved prescribed burn plan.

Firebreaks shall be located to minimize risk to the resources being protected.

Plant species selected for vegetated firebreaks will be noninvasive and capable of retarding fire.

Erosion control measures shall be installed to prevent sediment from leaving the site.

Comply with applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations, during the installation, operation, and maintenance of this practice.

CONSIDERATIONS

Use barriers such as streams, lakes, ponds, rock cliffs, roads, field borders, skid trails, landings, drainage canals, railroads, utility right-of-ways, cultivated land, or other areas as existing firebreaks. Electric lines can be hazardous in heavy smoke as they may conduct electricity.

When using barriers, consider the effects on wildlife and fisheries.

Attempt to locate firebreaks near ridge crests and valley bottoms.

If winds are predictable, firebreaks should be located perpendicular to the wind and on the windward side of the area to be protected.

Locate on the contour where practicable to minimize risk of soil erosion.

Consider the selection of plant species that will enhance the needs of wildlife in the area.

Design and layout should include multiple uses.

Consider the beneficial and other effects of installation of the firebreak on cultural resources and threatened and endangered species, natural areas, riparian areas, and wetlands.

PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

Specifications for applying this practice shall be prepared for each site and recorded using approved specification sheets, job sheets, technical notes, and narrative statements in the conservation plan and the prescribed burn plan, or other acceptable documentation.

Follow Firebreak, Code 394 Specification Guide Sheets and/ or certified/approved prescribed burn plan to complete the job sheets and other documentation required for this practice.

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

Mow, disk, or graze vegetative firebreaks to avoid a build-up of excess litter and to control weeds. Treatment should be timed to reduce impacts to nesting when possible.

Inspect all firebreaks for woody materials such as dead limbs or blown down trees and remove them from the firebreak.

Inspect firebreaks at least annually and rework bare ground firebreaks as necessary to keep them clear of flammable vegetation.

Repair erosion control measures as necessary to ensure proper function.

Access by vehicles or people will be controlled to prevent damage.

Bare ground firebreaks, which are no longer needed, will be stabilized.