

## Residue Management, Seasonal (Ac.) 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.*

### PURPOSES

- Reduce sheet and rill erosion.
- Reduce soil erosion from wind and associated airborne particulate matter.
- Manage snow to increase plant available moisture.
- Provide food and escape cover for wildlife.

### CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES

*This practice applies to all cropland.*

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

Uniformly distribute all residues over the entire field.

Equip combines or similar harvesting machines with spreaders capable of redistributing residues over at least 80 percent of the working width of the header.

Residues shall not be burned.

Limit tillage operations during the residue management period to undercutting tools such as blades or wide sweeps that minimize residue flattening or burial.

#### Additional Criteria to Reduce Sheet and Rill Erosion and Erosion from Wind

Determine the amount and orientation of residue needed to reduce erosion within the soil loss tolerance (T) or any other planned soil loss objective using current approved erosion prediction technology. See the latest erosion prediction tools in the NRCS MI eFOTG, Section 1 Erosion Prediction. (see electronic references).

Limit partial removal of residue by means such as baling, grazing, or other harvest methods to retain the amount needed to meet the erosion reduction objective. Maintain the remaining residue on the surface through periods when erosion has the potential to occur, or until planting, whichever occurs first. Account for the effects of other practices in the conservation management system when estimating erosion.

#### Additional Criteria to Manage Snow to Increase Plant-Available Moisture

**Trapping Snow.** Crop stubble standing height during the time significant snowfall is expected to occur shall be:

- at least 10 inches for crops with a row spacing of less than 15 inches;
- at least 15 inches for crops with a row spacing of 15 inches or greater.

These heights shall be present over at least 50% of the field.

Limit fall field operations that disturb residue shall be limited to undercutting type tools and done as close to perpendicular as possible to the direction of prevailing winds during the time that significant snowfall is expected to occur.

**Additional Criteria to Provide Food and Escape Cover for Wildlife**

*Determine the amount of residue, height of the residue, and length of the management period necessary for meeting habitat requirements for the target species of wildlife population using the Michigan Wildlife Habitat Worksheet (MI Biology Technical Note 12) as guidance to develop a wildlife management plan. Also see the NRCS MI Biology Conservation Sheet (645) Upland Wildlife Habitat Management, Grain Food Plots.*

**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 into a clean tilled 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 standing stubble taller than the 15 inch minimum will increase the amount of snow trapped.

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.

In areas that are in non-attainment for PM10, and for other areas with particular sensitivities to PM from dust, residue cover is especially important and should ensure that off-site PM levels are below critical thresholds, including maintenance of proper visibility.

Consider the relationship between crop residues and soil fungi or organisms. Adequate residue will provide food and habitat to beneficial soil flora and fauna, which positively impacts: soil aggregate stability,

moisture retention, infiltration, fertility, and breakdown of inorganic compounds.

No till planting annual spring small grains appropriate for the climatic zone in the fall, that winter-kill, will provide additional cover and/or feed for wildlife, grazing animals, soil erosion protection, and water (snow) retention without adding additional weed control measures.

**PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS**

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

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

Plans and specifications shall document:

- *Field number and acres*
- *Purpose(s) for this practice*
- *Crop Residue to be managed*
- *The method of how the residue will be managed (harvest, grazed, tilled)*
- *The time of the residue will be managed (harvest, grazed, tilled)*
- *The amount of residue removed by a harvest, grazing, or tillage*
- *The amount of residue to remain after a planned residue harvest, grazing, or tillage*

**OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE**

*Evaluate the effectiveness of the planned residue management to ensure the planned purpose(s) are being achieved. Adjust the management or choose an alternative technology if the management is not achieving the planned purpose(s).*

**REFERENCES**

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Cadish, G., and K.E. Giller 1997. Driven by nature: plant litter quality and decomposition. CABI, Wallingford, UK.

Renard, K.G., G.R. Foster, G.A. Weesies, D.K. McCool, and D.C. Yoder, Coordinators. 1997. Predicting soil erosion by water: A guide to conservation planning with the Revised Universal Soil Loss Equation (RUSLE). U.S. Department of Agriculture, Agriculture Handbook No. 703.

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Tate, R.L. 1987. Soil organic matter: biological and ecological effects. John Wiley and Sons, New York.  
USDA, NRCS. 2002. National Agronomy Manual. 190-V. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed.

#### **ELECTRONIC REFERENCES:**

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/eFOTG/>

Section 1 D, Erosion Prediction

[http://efotg.nrcs.usda.gov/references/public/MI/No\\_18\\_Crop\\_Residue.pdf](http://efotg.nrcs.usda.gov/references/public/MI/No_18_Crop_Residue.pdf)

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