

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE  
CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD

**PRESCRIBED BURNING (ACRE)**

**CODE 338**

**DEFINITION**

Applying controlled fire to a predetermined area.

**PURPOSES**

- To control undesirable vegetation.
- To prepare sites for harvesting, planting, or seeding.
- To control plant disease.
- To reduce wildfire hazards.
- To improve wildlife habitat.
- To improve plant production quantity and/or quality.
- To remove slash and debris.
- To enhance seed and seedling production.
- To facilitate distribution of grazing and browsing animals.
- To restore and maintain ecological sites.

**CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES**

On rangeland, forestland, native pasture, pastureland, wildlife land, hayland, and other lands as appropriate.

**CRITERIA**

**General Criteria Applicable to All Purposes.**

**The producer's goals and objectives and the needs and feasibility of the burn will be evaluated and clearly documented.**

The procedure, equipment, and the number of trained personnel shall be adequate to accomplish the intended purposes as stated in the burn plan.

The expected weather conditions, human and vehicular traffic—that may be impeded by heat or smoke, liability (e.g., utility lines), and safety and health precautions shall be integrated into the timing, location, and expected intensity of the burn.

Timing of burning will be commensurate with soil and site conditions to maintain site productivity and minimize effects on soil erosion and soil properties (structure, soil moisture).

**As a minimum, the timing of the burn will be based on relative humidity, wind, air temperature, and fuels.**

Comply with applicable federal, state, tribal, and local laws and regulations, **including the state's Best Management Practices (BMP's)**, during the implementation of this practice.

**CONSIDERATIONS**

Burning should be managed with consideration for wildlife needs such as nesting, feeding, and cover.

**NRCS, MT  
March 2004**

**Conservation practice standards are reviewed periodically and updated if needed. To obtain the current version of this standard contact the Natural Resources Conservation Service.**

**NOTE:** This type of font (**AaBbCcDdEe 123..**) indicates NRCS National Standards.  
This type of font (**AaBbCcDdEe 123..**) indicates Montana Supplement.

**Have all firebreaks prepared before starting the burn.**

Existing barriers such as lakes, streams, wetlands, roads, and constructed firebreaks are important to the design and layout of this practice.

**Obtain the latest fire hazard information from local sheriff's department or fire district.**

Notify adjoining landowners, local fire departments, and public safety officials within the airshed prior to burning.

**Landowners/cooperators are responsible for confining prescribed burns to their own lands.**

**Liability and safety precautions are to be considered and installed beforehand and monitored during the burn. Have on-site the necessary equipment, tools, and staff to contain the fire to the planned burn area.**

Consider cultural resources and threatened and endangered plants and animals when planning this practice.

Weather parameters and other data that affect fire behavior should be monitored during the burn. Carbon release should be minimized by the timing and burn intensity.

Consider the location of utilities such as electric power lines and natural gas pipelines to prevent damage to the utility and avoid personal injury.

Smoke impacts should be considered before the burn and monitored during the burn.

**PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS**

A written burn plan will be prepared by certified individuals. Specifications for applying this practice shall be prepared for each site and recorded using approved specifications sheets, job sheets, technical notes, and narrative statements in the conservation plan, or other acceptable documentation. All necessary permits must be obtained before implementation of the practice.

As a minimum, a burning plan will include:

- Description of the burn area including present vegetation cover.
- Objective and timing of burn.
- Acceptable conditions for prescribed burn.
- Preparation of the area for burning.
- Equipment/personnel needs/safety requirements.
- Special precaution areas.
- Firing technique.

**As a minimum, the Prescribed Burn practice will have the following components in its conservation plan and specifications:**

- **A narrative that describes the producer's goals and objectives.**
- **Identify why the practice is needed and feasible.**
- **An environmental assessment of the planned practice that includes the potential impacts on soil, water, animals, plants, air, and humans.**
- **An alternatives narrative that identifies and describes several methods that could be used to address the resource issue. Also identifying the producer selected method.**
- **The Montana Prescribed Burn practice job sheet and specification.**
- **Plan map and soil map of site with location of practice on the map.**
- **Operations and maintenance instructions.**

**OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE**

The kinds and expected variability of site factors (e.g., fuel condition and moisture content, weather conditions, human and vehicular traffic that may be impeded by heat or smoke, liability, and safety and health precautions) shall be monitored during the operation of this practice. Sufficient fire suppression equipment and personnel shall be available commensurate with the expected behavior of these factors during the time of burning to prevent a wildfire or other safety, health, or liability incident.

Maintenance shall include monitoring of the burned site and adjacent areas until such time as ash, debris, and other consumed material are at pre-burn temperatures.