

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE
MONTANA CONSERVATION PRACTICE SPECIFICATION

FIELD BORDER (ACRE)

CODE 386

DEFINITION: A strip of permanent vegetation established at the edge or around the perimeter of a field.

PURPOSE: A field border is an essential practice for all land where agricultural crops and forages are grown to reduce erosion, protect soil and water quality, manage pest populations, provide wildlife food and cover, increase carbon storage, and improve air quality.

CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

A Field border is established as part of a conservation management system to address the soil, water, air, plant, animal, and human needs as related to the owner's goals and objectives. It is important to consider crop rotation, nutrient and pest management, agricultural waste utilization, livestock forage balance, wildlife habitat needs, and other supportive conservation practices when designing a field border.

The **minimum design width of a field border is 20-feet**. Functional design must accommodate turning of farm equipment that is utilized. All field borders should be established around the field edges to the extent needed to meet the resource needs and objectives of the producer.

If ephemeral gullies or rills are present in the area planned for field borders, they will be eliminated as part of seedbed preparation and as maintenance if they appear after establishment.

When erosion is a concern, field border establishment should be timed so the soil surface is protected during critical erosion periods. For wind erosion, stiff-stemmed, upright growing vegetation should be used to trap saltating soil particles. If the border is not designed to go all the way around the field the upwind edge of the field should be designed to provide a stable area determined by the prevailing wind erosion direction (using WEPS).

Where water erosion is a concern, field borders should be located around the entire perimeter of the field installed to eliminate sloping end rows, headlands, and other areas where concentrated flow will enter or leave the field.

Where water quality is a concern, field borders will not be burned as part of maintenance, but should be properly clipped, mowed, or grazed to ensure effectiveness. Field borders must be a minimum width of 30 feet with moderate to high stem density when adsorbed, dissolved, or suspended contaminants are an issue. When manure application is planned, setbacks established in the Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG), Section IV, Waste Utilization (Code 633) practice standard or CNMP must be followed.

Field borders can be used in conjunction with pest management. Field borders may be established that attract beneficial insects. When this is adopted, maintenance practices such as mowing, harvesting of border vegetation, and herbicide application should be scheduled to accommodate the life cycle of the beneficial insects. The border can also be established to attract pest insects to congregate. The use of mechanical, cultural or chemical techniques to reduce pest populations may be incorporated once insects congregate.

WILDLIFE

Properly designed field borders can also provide food and escape cover for wildlife and habitat for pollinators. Field borders can enhance wildlife and pollinator objectives depending on the vegetative species and management practiced. Consider using species that will accommodate reproduction and other life cycle requirements of target wildlife species and pollinators.