

**NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE
CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD**

FOREST SLASH TREATMENT

(Ac.)

CODE 384

DEFINITION

Treating woody plant residues created during forestry, agroforestry and horticultural activities to achieve management objectives.

PURPOSE

This practice is used to achieve one or more of the following purpose(s):

- Reduce hazardous fuels
- Reduce the risk of harmful insects and disease
- Protect/maintain air quality by reducing the risk of wildfire
- Improve access to forage for grazing and browsing animals
- Enhance aesthetics
- Reduce the risk of harm to humans and livestock
- Improve the soil organic matter
- Improve the site for natural or artificial regeneration.

CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES

This practice applies on areas with quantities of woody slash and debris requiring treatment.

CRITERIA

Use the following criteria in planning and applying this practice. The general criteria apply to all tree/shrub site preparation. Additional listed criteria may apply based on the intended purpose(s) of the practice.

General Criteria Applicable to All Purposes

Slash treatment and the final condition/extent of residual slash shall be planned on intended purpose(s).

Slash treatment methods (i.e. burning, chipping, lop and scatter, removal, crushing) will achieve landowner objectives while adequately protecting land and water resources.

Care shall be taken to minimize injury to or function of residual plant communities.

Timing of treatment shall coincide with intended purpose(s) and minimize impact on other resources.

Any burning activities shall comply with the Prescribed Burning – North Carolina (NC) Practice Standard 338.

Slash and debris left on the site after treatment will not present an unacceptable fire, safety, environmental, or pest hazard. Such remaining material will not interfere with the intended purpose or other management activities.

Additional Criteria Applicable to Reduce Hazardous Fuels

Reduce the amount of fuels to an acceptable level by controlling height, size, amount and distribution.

Additional Criteria to Reduce the Risk of

Harmful Insects and Disease

Degree, intensity and timing of treatment shall take full advantage of harmful insect or disease characteristics to enhance the effectiveness of control.

Comply with Pest Management – NC Practice Standard 595

Additional Criteria to Protect/Maintain Air Quality by Reducing the Risk of Wildfire

Activities will be consistent with established regulations and guidelines for PM10 and PM 2.5 emissions, ozone precursors (NOx and VOCs), as well as smoke and fugitive dust, and state and local permit requirements.

When feasible, use chipping, shredding, bio-fuel composting, or other technique in lieu of burning.

Additional Criteria to Improve Access to Forage for Grazing and Browsing Animals

Slash shall be piled or removed sufficiently to allow access to forage by the site's livestock and to maximize forage growth.

Additional Criteria to Enhance Aesthetics

Slash that is scattered or piled and left on the site will be further treated to meet client objectives and any state or local requirements for aesthetics and visual resources.

Additional Criteria to Reduce the Risk of Harm to Humans and Livestock

Slash that is scattered or piled and left on the site will be further treated to meet client objectives and any state or local requirements for safe use of the area.

Additional Criteria to Improve Soil Organic Matter

Slash will be of a size and closeness to soil to accelerate in decomposition.

Additional Criteria to Improve the Site for Natural or Artificial Regeneration

Slash will be treated to complement treatments specified in Tree/Shrub Site Preparation – NC Practice Standard 490.

CONSIDERATIONS

The slash treatment method should be cost effective and protect cultural resources, wildlife habitat, threatened and endangered species, water resources, and identified unique areas.

When determining method and timing of slash treatment consider air quality regulations, burning requirements, available resources, ability to use woody biomass and regeneration needs.

Consider wildlife needs when performing and timing treatment.

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

PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

Plans will address purpose and method of slash reduction; and desired outcome.

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, or other acceptable documentation.

Minimum documentation will include:

- map showing fields or areas where slash reduction will be done; additionally the map should delineate:
 - streams and water bodies
 - additional sensitive areas such as critical areas or cultural resources that need to be considered during slash reduction activities
- method(s) of slash reduction and equipment to be used; and, expected timetable of slash reduction activities.
- forest management plan (including slash reduction details) prepared by a registered forester when available.
- statement requiring compliance with all federal, state and local laws.
- required operation and maintenance instructions

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

Generally slash reduction is a temporal practice. When woody residues have been treated, slash treatment functions are considered complete until another forestry, agroforestry or horticultural activity creates residues again. The following actions shall be carried out to insure that this practice functions as intended. These actions include normal repetitive activities in the application and use of the practice (operation), and repair and upkeep of the practice (maintenance) until trees or shrubs are established.

- Monitor populations and the potential of damage by harmful pests and take controlling actions as necessary. Comply with Pest Management – NC Practice Standard 595.
- Control locally invasive and noxious plants as necessary. If pesticides are used, refer to PEST MANAGEMENT – Practice Standard 595.
- Control vehicle access during slash treatment for safety. Refer to USE EXCLUSION – NC Practice Standard 472.

REFERENCES

Bardon, Robert, 2001, Minimizing Wildfire Risk – A Forest Landowner's Guide, NC Cooperative Extension Service