NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE
CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD

BRUSH MANAGEMENT
(Acre)
CODE 314

DEFINITION

Removal, reduction, or manipulation of non-herbaceous (woody) plants.

PURPOSE

This practice may be applied as part of a conservation management system to accomplish one or more of the following:

- Restore natural plant community balance
- Reduce competition for space, moisture, and sunlight between desired and unwanted plants
- Manage noxious and/or non-native woody plants
- Restore desirable vegetative cover to protect soils, control erosion, reduce sediment, improve water quality and enhance stream flow
- Maintain or enhance wildlife habitat
- Improve forage accessibility, quality and quantity for livestock
- Protect life and property from wildfire hazards
- Enhance esthetic and recreation qualities.

CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES

The practice may be applied on native or naturalized pasture, pasture and haylands, ditchbanks, field borders, recreation areas, powerline right-of-ways or other utility easements, and wildlife areas.

CRITERIA

Brush Management will be applied in a manner to achieve the desired control of target woody species and protection of the desired species. **This will be accomplished by mechanical control, prescribed burning, chemical control, biological control, or a combination of these methods.**

Mechanical Control Criteria

Acceptable forms of mechanical control methods include handclearing, roller chopping and mowing. Mowing for Brush Management shall not occur between April 15 and September 15 to prevent disturbance of ground-nesting wildlife. Mower height should be set above 12" to preserve vertical cover for wildlife. Light disking between February 1 and April 15 may be used to reduce undesirable woody vegetation and promote beneficial wildlife plants.

Prescribed Burning Criteria

Refer to the Field Office Technical Guide, Section IV, Prescribed Burning (Code 338).

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Chemical Control Criteria

Specific herbicide recommendations will be obtained from personnel who are licensed by the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services in specialty area Forest Pest Control - Category G, in accordance with North Carolina Pesticide Laws and Regulations.

All pesticides must be registered for use in North Carolina and approved for use by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Refer to the current issue of "North Carolina Agricultural Chemicals Manual" prepared by the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, North Carolina State University, for guidelines, rules and regulations regarding use of pesticides. Users must always follow instructions and safety precautions on the container label when handling, applying or storing pesticides.

Biological Control Criteria

Acceptable forms of biological control methods include using grazing/browsing animals or using biological control agents *(e.g., insects, plants, or diseases)*. Before attempting biological control of brush using grazing/browsing animals, the desired area shall be scouted for toxic plants. Animals shall be provided with access to a good supply of clean drinking water. Prescribed Grazing *(Field Office Technical Guide, Section IV, Code 528A)* shall be applied to ensure desired response from treatments.

General Criteria

Brush Management shall be planned and applied in manner that will not adversely affect threatened, endangered, or protected plant or wildlife species (or their habitats). *Consult the NRCS State Biologist or the NRCS State Plant Materials Specialist for species listings and geographic distribution.* Carefully evaluate and maximize benefits to wildlife, beneficial plant species, and other resources such as air and water.

Brush Management shall be applied in a manner which does not result in wildfire hazard conditions.

CONSIDERATIONS

When selecting a brush management control method, consider:

- Objective(s) of the land user
- Land use
- Topography
- Species of woody plants to be controlled
- Size, abundance, and distribution of woody plants
- Hazard(s) of treatment
- Impact to wildlife habitat, water quality, air quality and other natural resources of concern
- Soil compaction and erosion potential
- Cost(s) in relation to expected benefits.

PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

Plans and specifications will be prepared for each site *(e.g., pasture, paddock, field, or area)* where brush management will be applied.

Plans and specifications will be based on this practice standard and may include narratives, maps, drawings, job sheets, or similar documents. These documents will contain the following data as a minimum:

For **mechanical control** methods, plans and specifications will include:

- Type(s) of equipment and any modifications necessary to enable the equipment to adequately complete the job
- Date(s) of treatment
- Operating instructions.

For **prescribed burning** methods, refer to the Field Office Technical Guide, Section IV, Prescribed Burning (Code 338), for requirements for plans and specifications.

For **chemical control** methods, plans and specifications will include the following statements:

"Specific pesticide recommendations will be obtained from personnel who are licensed by the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services in specialty area Forest Pest Control - Category G, in accordance with North Carolina Pesticide Laws and Regulations."

"All pesticides must be registered for use in North Carolina and approved for use by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Refer to the current issue of "North Carolina Agricultural Chemicals Manual" prepared by the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, North Carolina State University, for guidelines, rules and regulations regarding use of pesticides. Users must **always** follow instructions and safety precautions on the container label when handling, applying or storing pesticides."

For **biological control** methods, plans and specifications will include:

- Kind of animal or biological agent to be used
- Timing, duration, and intensity of grazing or browsing
- Desired degree of grazing or browsing use for effective control of target species
- Special precautions or requirements when using insects or plants as control agents.

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

Brush Management practices shall be applied using approved materials and procedures. Operations will comply with all local, state, and federal laws and ordinances. Success of the practice shall be determined by:

- Evaluation of regrowth or reoccurrence of target species after sufficient time has passed.
- Evaluation of the impact on beneficial plants and wildlife. Evaluation periods will depend on the methods and materials used.

Following initial application, some regrowth, resprouting, or reoccurrence of brush should be expected. Spot treatment of individual plants or retreatment of entire areas may be necessary.

For areas denoted as pastureland, or hayland, the conservation plan may include follow up practices such as Prescribed Grazing (see the Field Office Technical Guide, Section IV, Code 528A), Pasture and Hayland Planting (Code 512) and Forage Harvest Management (Code 511).

REFERENCES

Multiflora Rose Control, Bulletin 857. The Ohio State University, 1996.

North Carolina Agricultural Chemicals Manual, 1997. College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, North Carolina State University. Raleigh, NC.