

**NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE
CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD**

CRITICAL AREA PLANTING

(Ac.)

CODE 342

DEFINITION

Establishing permanent vegetation on sites that have or are expected to have high erosion rates, and on sites that have physical, chemical or biological conditions that prevent the establishment of vegetation with normal practices.

PURPOSE

- Stabilize areas with existing or expected high rates of soil erosion by water.
- Stabilize areas with existing or expected high rates of soil erosion by wind.
- Restore degraded sites that cannot be stabilized through normal methods.

CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES

On areas with existing or expected high rates of erosion or degraded sites that usually cannot be stabilized by ordinary conservation treatment and/or management, and if left untreated, could be severely damaged by erosion or sedimentation or could cause significant off-site damage.

CRITERIA

General Criteria Applicable To All Purposes

Species selected for seeding or planting shall be suited to current site conditions and intended uses. Selected species will have the capacity to achieve adequate density and vigor within an appropriate time frame to stabilize the site sufficiently to permit suited uses with ordinary management activities.

Species, rates of seeding or planting, minimum quality of planting stock, such as PLS or stem caliper, and method of establishment shall be

specified before application. Only viable, high quality seed or planting stock will be used.

Site preparation and seeding or planting shall be done at a time and in a manner that best ensures survival and growth of the selected species. What constitutes successful establishment, e.g. minimum percent ground/canopy cover, percent survival, stand density, etc. shall be specified before application.

Fertilization, mulching, or other facilitating cultural practices for plant growth shall be timed and applied to accelerate establishment of selected species. If the recommended fertilizer rate exceeds the criteria in Conservation Practice Standard (590) Nutrient Management, appropriate mitigating practices will be installed to reduce the risk of nutrient losses from the site.

Site specific specifications shall be developed from specification guides found in the North Carolina Supplements.

Comply with all applicable federal, state, and local laws, rules, and regulations.

Additional Criteria To Restore Degraded Sites

If gullies or deep rills are present, they will be treated, if feasible, to allow equipment operation and ensure proper site and seedbed preparation.

Soil amendments will be added as necessary to ameliorate or eliminate physical or chemical conditions that inhibit plant establishment and growth. Required amendments, such as compost or manure to add organic matter and improve soil structure and water holding capacity; agricultural limestone to increase the pH of acid soils; or elemental sulfur to lower the pH of calcareous soils shall be included in

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

the site specification with amounts, timing, and method of application.

CONSIDERATIONS

Native species or mixes that are adapted to the site and have multiple values should be considered.

Avoid species that may harbor pests. Species diversity should be considered to avoid loss of function due to species-specific pests.

PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

Specifications for applying this practice shall be prepared for each site and recorded and filed using the approved specification sheets or specifications stated in the conservation plan.

At a minimum, specifications provided to the client must include:

- Site or seedbed preparation guidance
- Fertilization, liming or other soil amendments.
- Plant or seed selection and rates
- Special seeding instructions as applicable
- Mulching type and rate.
- Any requirements for handling concentrated flow of surface water.

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

Operation and Maintenance consists of repetitive actions necessary to insure that the practice performs adequately throughout its life expectancy.

As part of the Operation and Maintenance guidance, the client will complete the following:

Use of the area shall be managed as long as necessary to stabilize the site and achieve the intended purpose.

Control or exclude pests that will interfere with the timely establishment of vegetation.

Annual inspections and compliance with recommendations are required for the intended life of this practice. Reseeding or replanting, fertilization, and pest control shall be specified as a result of identified deficiencies.