

**NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE
CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD**

FUEL BREAK

(Ac.)

CODE 383

DEFINITION

A strip or block of land on which the vegetation, debris, and detritus have been reduced and/or modified to control or diminish the risk of the spread of fire crossing the strip or block of land.

PURPOSE

Control and reduce the risk of the spread of fire by treating, removing, or modifying vegetation, debris, and detritus.

CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES

This practice applies on all land where protection from wildfire is needed.

CRITERIA

General Criteria Applicable To All Purposes

Fuel break strips or blocks will be of sufficient width and length to meet the intended purposes.

Fuel breaks shall be located to minimize risk to the resources and structures being protected.

Thin the overstory stand sufficiently to reduce the tree canopy and the potential of a crown fire.

Maintain vertical separation between fuel layers to remove "ladder" fuels, i.e., lowest layers of flammable vegetation do not connect to upper layers so that a fire cannot "step up" to higher canopies.

Treat or remove slash sufficiently and at a time to minimize fuel loadings to acceptable fire risk levels and reduce incidence of harmful insects and disease. Comply with Forest Slash Treatment (384).

Manage grasses and forbs to minimize fine fuels

Establish fire-resistant vegetation to further decrease the risk of the spread of fire.

CONSIDERATIONS

Attempt to locate fuel breaks near ridge crests and valley bottoms. If winds are predictable, fuel breaks can be located perpendicular to the wind and on the windward side of the area to be protected.

Prescribed grazing may be used as a management tool to reduce understory fine fuels.

Slash produced in the establishment of a fuel break that is not removed from the site will be treated or arranged to enhance wildlife habitat.

Select plant species that will enhance the needs of desired wildlife in the area.

Design and layout should include enhancement of multiple uses.

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

PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

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, burn plan, or other acceptable documentation.

Conservation practice standards are reviewed periodically, and updated if needed. To obtain the current version of this standard, contact your Natural Resources Conservation Service [State Office](#), or visit the [electronic Field Office Technical Guide](#).

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Section IV
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OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

Treat or graze vegetative fuel breaks to avoid a build-up of excess litter and to control noxious and invasive plants.

Inspect all fuel breaks for woody materials such as dead limbs or blown down trees and

remove or treat as necessary to maintain the desired level of fire spread risk.

Inspect fuel breaks at frequencies to assure that the desired level of fire spread risk is maintained.

Maintain the functionality of the original design throughout the life of the practice.