

## Cover Crop

### Virginia Conservation Practice Job Sheet

340



#### Definition

Crops including grasses, legumes, and forbs for seasonal cover and other conservation purposes.

#### Criteria Applicable to All Purposes

Ensure selected species and management are compatible with producer's objectives, site conditions, and other aspects of farming system.

Ensure selected species and management are consistent with approved guidance such as VA Plant Establishment Guide, Tech Notes, etc.

Ensure species designated in Virginia as noxious weeds are not used as cover crops.

Ensure that cover crop residue is not burned.

Ensure non-irrigated cover crop is terminated no later than five days after planting the subsequent crop, but before emergence of subsequent crop.

#### Additional Criteria to Reduce Erosion from Wind and Water

Select and manage cover crops for adequate protection of soil during critical erosion periods.

#### Additional Criteria to Increase Soil Organic Matter Content

Select/manage covers to produce and return to soil large amounts of organic material.

#### Additional Criteria to Capture and Recycle Excess Nutrients in the Soil Profile

Select/manage covers to optimize uptake of one or more target nutrients from the soil.

#### Additional Criteria to Promote Biological Nitrogen Fixation and Reduce Energy Use

Select/manage legume covers (or mixes with significant legume component) to fix N for plant use. Ensure proper N fixing bacteria are present.

#### Additional Criteria to Increase Biodiversity

Select/manage covers to increase plant diversity in order to:

- Improve soil biodiversity & soil quality.
- Suppress diseases and other non-weed pests.
- Improve beneficial insect / pollinator habitat.
- Draw pests away from main crops toward trap crops / cover crops.

#### Additional Criteria for Weed Suppression

Select/manage covers to suppress weeds or reduce seed bank through any of following:

- Competition by actively growing cover crops.
- Mulching effects of dead cover crop residues.
- Allelopathic effects due to chemicals released by cover crops or cover crop residues.

#### Additional Criteria for Soil Moisture Management

Select/manage covers to eliminate or conserve soil moisture, depending on need of next crop(s).

#### Additional Criteria to Minimize and Reduce Soil Compaction

Select/manage covers to improve soil porosity through any of following:

- Production of large diameter roots.
- Production of deep roots.
- Production of large quantities of root biomass.

**NOTE: This summary does not address all requirements and considerations in the VA Cover Crop Standard (VA-340). Consult Standard for further details.**

General Information	
Client: _____	County: _____
Field Office: _____	Contract #: _____
Farm #: _____	Tract #: _____
Field # and acreage: _____	

Client's Purpose(s) (check all that apply)
<i>Note: Some purposes trigger additional requirements to include in Specifications – see page 1 or Standard for details.</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> Reduce erosion from wind and water
<input type="checkbox"/> Increase soil organic matter content
<input type="checkbox"/> Capture and recycle or redistribute nutrients in the soil profile
<input type="checkbox"/> Promote biological nitrogen fixation and reduce energy use
<input type="checkbox"/> Increase biodiversity
<input type="checkbox"/> Suppress weeds
<input type="checkbox"/> Manage soil moisture
<input type="checkbox"/> Minimize and reduce soil compaction

Practice Specifications
<b>Follow all specifications and recommendations below for practice implementation.</b>
<b><u>General Criteria Required by Standard in All Cases</u></b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Selected cover crop species and management shall be compatible with producer's objectives, site conditions, and other crops and practices in farming system.</li> <li>2. Selected cover crop species and management shall be consistent with approved guidance such as Plant Establishment Guide for Virginia, Tech Notes, etc.</li> <li>3. Plants designated in Virginia as noxious weeds shall not be used as cover crops.</li> <li>4. Cover crop residue shall not be burned.</li> <li>5. Non-irrigated cover crops shall be terminated no later than five days after planting the subsequent crop, but before emergence of the subsequent crop.</li> </ol>
<b><u>Timing of Cover Crops in Planned Cropping Sequence</u></b>
<i>As appropriate, specify timing / role of cover crops in overall crop rotation. Consider using and attaching Cropping System Description &amp; Evaluation (D&amp;E) Specification Sheets (see VA NRCS Tech Notes Sharepoint Site for D&amp;E Spec Sheet document).</i>

**Recommendations/Specifications for Cover Crop Establishment, Management, and Termination**

Field Number(s)	Establishment				In-season		Termination		Other recs/specs	Target for cover crop performance (% cover or biomass yield)
	Species to plant	Planting date(s)	Planting rate(s)	Planting method/depth	Is harvest acceptable?	Other management	Kill method	Kill timing		

**Additional Specifications / Criteria Required by Standard Depending on Client's Purpose(s)**

*Write in applicable additional criteria, if any, based on client's purpose(s); see complete Standard for details*

**Additional Site-specific Recommendations**

*List any additional recommendations related to site preparation, cover crop management or complementary practices (conservation tillage, crop rotation, etc.) to achieve conservation objectives. Refer to attached Cropping System D&E Specification Sheet if needed.*

## Operation & Maintenance (O&M)

Carry out the following to ensure that the planned cover crop practice functions as intended after initial implementation / establishment.

### Minimum O&M Requirements:

1. Verify that cover crops are established and performing as desired.
2. Reseed as needed or carry out other in-season management such as weed control, fertilization, etc. to ensure targets for plant performance are achieved.

### Additional O&M Recommendations

*Provide any additional practical guidance for actions to ensure the long-term effectiveness of practice.*

## Planner Certification

The cover crop practice planned in this job sheet fulfills minimum requirements of Virginia NRCS Conservation Practice Standard 340.

.....  
Signature

.....  
Title

.....  
Date

## Certification of Practice Completion

The cover crop practice planned in this job sheet has been completed according to NRCS specifications (indicate in Specifications any changes to planned activities and acreage).

.....  
Signature

.....  
Title

.....  
Date

