

## Conservation Cover

### Virginia Conservation Practice Job Sheet

327



#### Definition

Establishing and maintaining permanent vegetative cover.

#### Criteria

Plant species suitable for the planned purpose and site conditions. Avoid using invasive species. Avoid persistent, mat-forming species such as bermudagrass and fescue.

Select appropriate planting dates, planting methods and take care in handling and planting of the seed or planting stock to ensure that planted materials have an acceptable rate of survival.

Use appropriate timing and planting equipment for the site and soil conditions.

Use planting methods that are designed to protect the soil resource from erosion.

If planting a pollinator mix, plant grasses, forbs and legumes to promote diversity. **A minimum of 2 grasses and 9 flowering forbs shall be planted.** The maximum seeding rate for all species will not exceed 15 lbs/acre.

The species selected shall be chosen from the *Virginia Plant Establishment Guide* (Part B) Select at least one species from each part of the growing season: early (April-June); middle (June-August); and late (August-September). This will provide habitat for insects and color for the entire growing season.

If shrubs are included in the mixture, plant 4-5 different species in clumps (5 clumps/acre at 5' x 10' spacing between plants) to promote diversity. The species selected should provide food at different seasons as well as cover throughout the year. A circular, clumped planting is a good choice where space permits as it provides more interior habitat. Use shrub shelters at least 2' tall and mats at planting, as needed.

Do not perform maintenance practices or activities during the reproductive period for grassland wildlife species. These dates for Virginia are April 15 to August 15.

Use adequate maintenance measures to control noxious weeds and other invasive species.

Plants will be selected on the basis of producing high volumes of organic material to maintain or improve soil organic matter. The amount of biomass needed will be determined using the current soil condition index procedure.

Producer \_\_\_\_\_ Farm # \_\_\_\_\_ Tract # \_\_\_\_\_

Field Office \_\_\_\_\_ Contract # \_\_\_\_\_

Planting Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Producer's Purpose**

- Reduce soil erosion and sedimentation
- Improve water quality
- Improve air quality
- Enhance wildlife habitat
- Improve soil quality
- Manage plant pests

**Practice Specifications**

**Site Preparation**

Conventional seedbed preparation, herbicide application or both may be used to control competition prior to planting.

Several steps are required to get successful undesirable competition control when using herbicide especially on fescue stands. The first step in killing fescue is to mow the area in late summer for a fall herbicide burn down. If possible, after mowing and prior to herbicide application, remove the cut vegetation by prescribed burn to provide a better seed bed and allow for better herbicide contact with vegetation.

If needed, a second herbicide application should be planned. This application should occur after the remaining vegetation has re-grown to a 4 – 6 inch height. All herbicide applications shall be made when vegetation is actively growing. Table 3 provides herbicide treatment options.

A second herbicide application is required for dense fescue or orchard grass stands and other areas where competition may not be controlled by one herbicide application.

Field Number	Species Selected	Seeding Date	Planting method	Planting rate/depth

**Operation and Maintenance**

Monitoring and controlling weeds is very critical in the first and second years. Prescribed Burning (338) about every three years, in early spring, can prevent shrub invasion.

First Year

Observation of the growth of weed competition is essential. When undesirable vegetation reaches 12-18” tall, mow to no less than 6” high to prevent weeds from going to seed. Most native plants will grow deeper root systems than tops in the first year, and mowing 6-8” high will not hurt them.

Second Year

Mow once, close to the ground, in early spring. Postponing mowing until early spring provides winter cover for wildlife.

Wildflowers may also be mowed for rebloom in summer when drought/heat stress causes significant loss of color. This shall be done when seeds have matured at a minimum of 3 weeks following bloom. Mowing high (four to six inches) and light fertilization will initiate rebloom of several species in three to four weeks.

Shrublands require management to keep them from undergoing succession. Periodic disturbances such as prescribed burning, mowing, grazing, herbicide use and selective removal of trees shall occur about every 5 years at a minimum.

**Additional instructions:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Planner Certification**

This Conservation Cover plan meets the requirements of NRCS Conservation Practice Standard 327.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature Title Date

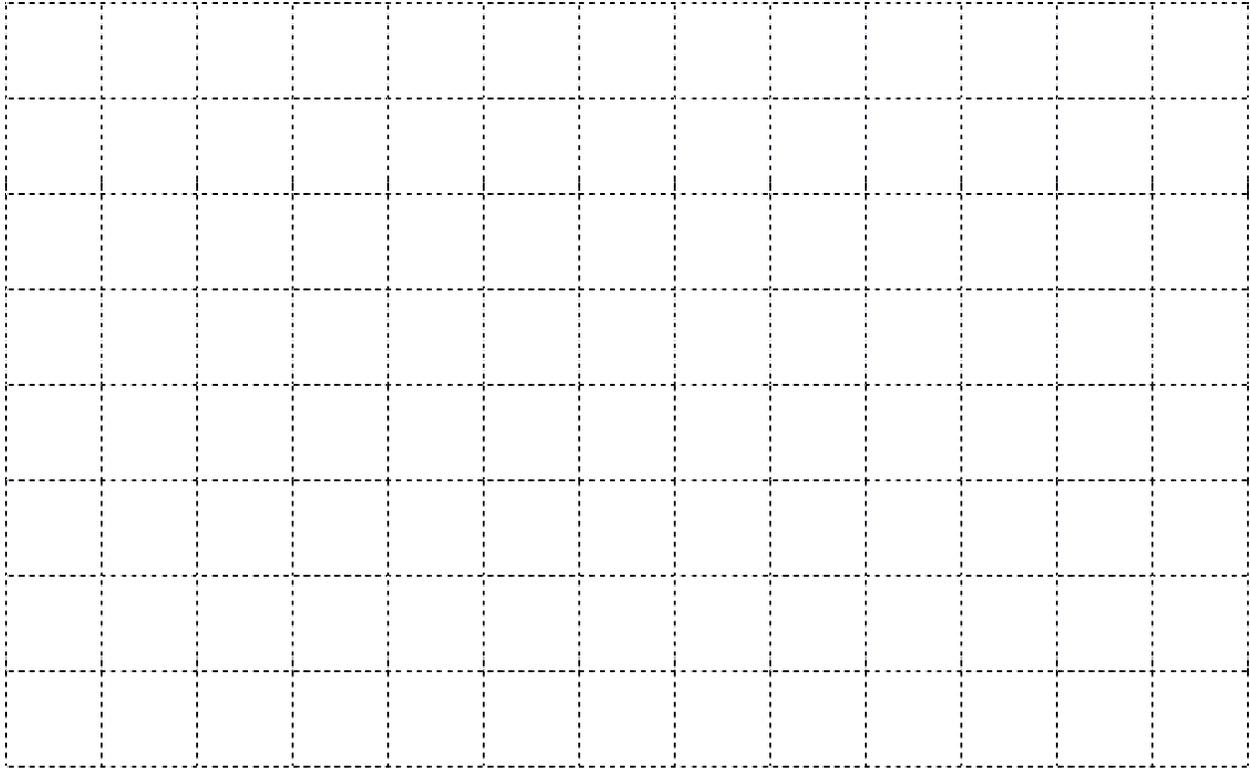
**Certification of Practice Completion**

This conservation cover has been completed and maintained according to NRCS plans and specifications. (Indicate in Practice Specifications if there were any changes to the planned practice and acreage.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature Title Date

If needed, an aerial view or a side view of the practice can be shown below. Other relevant information, complementary practices and measures, and additional specifications may be included.

Scale 1"= \_\_\_\_\_ ft. (NA indicates sketch not to scale: grid size=1/2" by 1/2")



Additional Specifications and Notes:

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This table contains several options for controlling competing, non-desirable vegetation during plant establishment. If two burn downs are planned, records should indicate that the herbicide was applied to the field twice. Switchgrass is not tolerant of imazapic. All herbicides shall be applied and used according to label recommendations and may slightly differ from that listed below.

Option	Current Condition	Timing	Method
1 Single Burn Down	Grassland Or Cropland	Spring	<p><b>(Use option 2 when pasture grass is the predominant cover.)</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Remove excess vegetation in fall or winter.</li> <li>Apply tank mixture after vegetation has grown 4 to 6 inches. <u>Tank Mixture: per acre in April – June</u> Apply a glyphosate/imazapic mixture at a rate of 16-32 oz/acre (“Journey” is pre-mixed; follow label)</li> </ol> <p>If imazapic alone is available (Plateau), it can be applied instead of the glyphosate/imazapic mixture at a rate of 4-12 oz per acre. Follow all label instructions.</p>
2 Two Burn Downs	Grassland	Fall And Spring	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Remove excess vegetation in late summer (Aug./Sept.).</li> <li>Apply tank mixture after vegetation has actively grown to 4 to 6 inches. <u>Tank Mixture: per acre in Sept./Oct.</u> 1 to 2 quarts glyphosate based product. Follow all label instructions.</li> </ol> <p>AND</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Apply tank mixture just prior to planting and after remaining vegetation grows 4 to 6 inches <u>Tank Mixture: per acre in April-June</u> Apply a glyphosate/imazapic mixture at a rate of 16-32 oz/acre (“Journey” is pre-mixed; follow label)</li> </ol> <p>If imazapic alone is available (Plateau), it can be applied instead of the glyphosate/imazapic mixture at a rate of 4-12 oz per acre. Follow all label instructions.</p>
3 Two Burn Downs	Grassland	Spring And Spring	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Remove excess vegetation in fall or winter</li> <li>Apply tank mixture after vegetation has actively grown 4 to 6 inches. <u>Tank mixture: per acre in April</u> 1 to 2 quarts glyphosate based product.</li> </ol> <p>IF green-up occurs two to four weeks after initial spraying:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Apply tank mixture just prior to planting and after remaining vegetation grows at least 4 to 6 inches. <u>Tank mixture: per acre in April-June</u> Apply a glyphosate/imazapic mixture at a rate of 16-32 oz/acre (“Journey” is pre-mixed; follow label)</li> </ol> <p>If imazapic alone is available (Plateau), it can be applied instead of the glyphosate/imazapic mixture at a rate of 4-12 oz per acre. Follow all label instructions.</p>

\*NRCS does not require specific herbicides by trade name and are listed only as a reference. Recommendations on specific herbicide use, application rates and timing should come from an extension agent or similarly certified agent.

