

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE
CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD

RECREATION AREA IMPROVEMENT (ACRE)

CODE 562

DEFINITION

Establishing grasses, legumes, vines, shrubs, trees, or other plants or selectively reducing stand density and trimming woody plants to improve an area for recreation.

PURPOSES

- To increase the attractiveness and usefulness of recreation areas
- To protect the soil and plant resources

CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES

On any area planned for recreation use.

CRITERIA

All federal, state, and local laws, rules, and regulations must be followed. **All buffer and filter plantings/removals need to follow Montana's Streamside Management Zone (SMZ) law.**

Determine the objectives for the site.

Use the specific **Field Office Technical Guide, (FOTG) Section IV–Practice Standards and Specifications**, standard applicable to the needs of the area. Examples are 327–Conservation Cover, 666–Forest Stand Improvement, 566–Recreation Land Grading and Shaping, 568–Recreation Trail and Walkway, 660–Tree/Shrub Pruning, 342–Critical Area Planting, and 612–Tree/Shrub Establishment.

Additional Criteria

Recreation area plantings are designed for special purposes and a variety of conditions. The utility

areas are subject to trampling, mowing, grazing, or wildlife use. Select plants adapted to the soil and climatic conditions that will fulfill a specific need. Select plant materials that are resilient to foot traffic. Select low growing monocultures of grasses for tent set-up areas.

Plant materials are arranged in two groups:

1. Trees and shrubs;
2. Grasses and legumes.

TABLE I– Trees, Shrubs, and Evergreens and TABLE II– Grasses and Legumes list species suitable to certain site conditions and the principal use of the plant materials. Specification 562 contains TABLE I and TABLE II.

The establishment of a windbreak will provide protection for areas lacking trees or shrubs and improve the site conditions for ornamental plantings. Specifications for site preparation, planting, and maintenance will be the same as for FOTG, Section IV–Practice Standard and Specification 380–Windbreak/Shelterbelt Establishment. For ornamentals, screening and barriers, plant individual specimens and group plants instead of row plantings.

For ornamental purposes, use planting stock that is larger than that used for windbreak/shelterbelt establishment plantings. The larger stock will make a quicker showing, but supplemental watering and control of competing vegetation is needed.

Evergreen species shall be potted or balled and burlapped.

Specifications for seedbed preparation, seeding and maintenance for grasses, legumes and large forage plants use FOTG, Section IV–Practice Standard and Specification 550–Range Seeding and/or 342–Critical Area Planting.

NRCS, MT
March 2002

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

NOTE: This type of font (AaBbCcDdEe 123..) indicates NRCS National Standards.
This type of font (AaBbCcDdEe 123..) indicates Montana Supplement.

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Use local, native plant, **species or recommended cultivars**, and recycled materials when available.

Chemicals used must be federally and locally registered and must be applied strictly in accordance with authorized registered uses, directions on the label, and other federal, state, or local policies and requirements.

Use FOTG Section IV–Practice Standard and Specification 391– Riparian Forest Buffer for riparian area improvements.

CONSIDERATIONS

Contact the local agricultural extension agent for assistance concerning disease and insect control recommendations.

Consider safety and security issues.

Consider water quality and quantity issues.

Consider there may be situations where one would want to use plant materials that won't attract wildlife (i.e. deer, elk, bear). For example, planting chokecherry (*Prunus virginiana*) shrubs around campsites that might attract bears in the fall.

Consider step logs for trails with slopes to prevent erosion.

Pruning along riparian areas is not recommended.

Consider diverse plant communities with attractive flowering forbs for restoration of camp perimeter perimeter, access road, following campsite construction, etc.

Consider the effects of erosion and the movement of sediment, pathogens, and soluble and sediment attached substances that could be carried by runoff. Important factors are short-term changes caused by construction (sediments, fuel, oils, and other chemicals) compared to long-term changes caused by the same substances resulting from recreation activities. Consider the effects of changes in ground water from infiltrating soluble substances associated with vegetation management and recreation activities.

PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

Based on this and other applicable Field Office Technical Guide standards, plans and specifications shall be prepared for each specific site. The plan shall include information about location, **soils, existing vegetation**, vegetation establishment, **plant materials, methods, treatments**, management, and maintenance requirements.

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

An operation and maintenance plan must be prepared. The plan should provide specific instructions for operating and maintaining the system.

Control undesired weed species, especially state-listed noxious weeds.

Inspect the area after storm events, and repair **all eroded areas**, re-seed disturbed areas, remove **debris and hazardous trees**.