

Conservation Cover...establishing and maintaining permanent vegetative cover to protect soil and water resources



photo by Brett Roberts, USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service

Purposes

The establishment of conservation cover can accomplish one or more of the following:

- A reduction in soil erosion and resulting sedimentation**
- An improvement in water quality**
- Enhanced wildlife habitat**

Benefits

The establishment of permanent vegetative cover provides several benefits. Once the cover is established, the rate of water runoff from the field or area is reduced, and damage from soil erosion is minimized. In addition, cover also improves water quality by decreasing the amounts of sediment, nutrients and chemicals that enter local waterways in runoff water. When properly installed and maintained, conservation cover can also provide food and shelter for a variety of wildlife species.

Applications

This practice applies on land to be retired from agricultural production requiring permanent protective cover, and on other lands needing permanent protective cover. This practice does not apply to plantings for forage production or to critical area plantings.



Native grass planting
photo courtesy USDA-NRCS

Design and Installation

A successful installation of this practice will include the selection of appropriate seed or seed mixtures based on the desired purpose, application of necessary soil amendments based on a recent soil test, and preparation of the seedbed through either conventional till or alternative no-till methods.

Necessary equipment for this practice could include a plow, disc, field cultivator, conventional drill, Brillion type seeder, no-till drill, warm season grass drill, tractor, and fertilizer spreader.

Maintenance

Maintenance goals for conservation cover include weed control, proper stand establishment, and development of stand diversity for wildlife benefits. Management measures used to achieve these goals can include mowing, spot treatment of weeds, prescribed burning, strip disking, or strip mowing as necessary.

Relative Cost

Installation low ●●○○○ high

Maintenance low ●●○○○ high

For Additional Information...

Visit the Indiana NRCS office online at <http://www.in.nrcs.usda.gov/>, see Indiana Job Sheet or Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG) Standard (327) Conservation Cover, or contact your local USDA-NRCS office.

Local USDA-NRCS contact information