

**NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE
CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD**

LAND CLEARING

(ac.)
CODE 460

DEFINITION

Removing trees, stumps, and other vegetation to achieve a conservation objective.

PURPOSE.

Allow needed land use adjustments and improvements in the interest of conservation.

CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES

This practice applies to areas where the removal of trees, stumps, brush, and other vegetation is needed in carrying out a conservation plan.

CRITERIA

Laws and Regulations. This practice must conform to all federal, state, and local laws and regulations. Laws and regulations of particular concern include those involving safety, pollution, water rights, property easements, wetlands, preservation of cultural resources, and endangered species.

Other Criteria. Clearing shall be done when the soil moisture content limits soil structural damage and compaction.

A 50-foot wide undisturbed area will be left between the area being cleared and all wetlands, water bodies and streams.

Sheet, rill, and wind erosion must be controlled on the cleared area.

The cleared area shall be left in a condition that will facilitate planned uses and treatments.

Limit pushing clearing debris into other wooded areas to reduce maintenance and fire hazards. Piles should be at least 100 feet from woodlands, buildings, and roads.

Where debris burial is allowed, minimum soil cover depth shall be at least two feet.

CONSIDERATIONS

Consider clearing land when the soil is dry or frozen with minimal snow cover to minimize soil disturbance and movement. Clearing during wet conditions can create deep rutting and partially bury debris.

Ground disturbing activities associated with this practice have the potential to affect significant cultural resources. Consider using methods that cause the least disturbance to the ground surface.

Special attention should be given to maintaining habitat for fish and wildlife. Strip clearing, windrowing debris, and maintaining den and food trees can minimize impacts on wildlife.

Orientation and layout of berm piles should be considered. Consider placing tree trunks parallel to each other, following topographical contours. Piles should be tall, narrow, compact and free of topsoil, snow and nonorganic debris. A break of 30 feet between berms is recommended for every 200 feet of berm length to act as a firebreak, allow natural drainage or runoff, and facilitate equipment operation.

Land clearing can increase the volume and rate of runoff, particularly on steeper slopes.

Consider the steepness of slopes when specifying sizes and types of equipment.

Consider activities to minimize the spread or introduction of weeds.

PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

Specify details of any required timber salvage. Disposal methods shall be specified for all material not salvaged.

Specify details of required erosion control measures.

Conservation practice standards are reviewed periodically and updated if needed. The current version of this standard is posted on our website at www.sd.nrcs.usda.gov or may be obtained at your local Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Plans and specifications for this practice shall meet this standard and shall include requirements needed to achieve its purpose.

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE (O&M)

An O&M plan shall be prepared for use of the owner/operator. The plan must include the following as appropriate.

Control weeds and maintain planned vegetative cover.

Protect watercourses and water quality.

Avoid crossing the area with heavy equipment when soils are wet.

The use of machinery, prescribed burning, pesticides, or other chemicals shall not compromise the purpose.

Remove non-vegetative debris.