

**NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE
VIRGINIA CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD**

PRESCRIBED BURNING

(Ac.)

CODE 338

DEFINITION

Controlled fire applied to a predetermined area.

PURPOSES

- Control undesirable vegetation.
- Prepare sites for harvesting, planting or seeding.
- Control plant disease.
- Reduce wildfire hazards.
- Improve wildlife habitat.
- Improve plant production quantity and/or seeding.
- Remove slash and debris.
- Enhance seed and seedling production.
- Restore and maintain ecological sites.

CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES

This practice applies on all lands as appropriate.

CRITERIA

General Criteria Applicable to All Purposes

Comply with applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations, including the state's voluntary Best Management Practices (BMP's), air pollution and fire laws.

NRCS personnel can be present during burns for observation and training experience.

NRCS responsibilities are to make a preliminary need/suitability determination and communicate important conservation plan and case file information to the certified burner preparing the plan.

A Virginia Certified Prescribed Burn Manager must prepare a burn plan that includes the following items:

- Resource management objectives.
- Location and description of the burn area.
- Smoke management.
- Location and specifications for firebreak establishment.
- Identify the location of utility lines.
- Pre-burn vegetation cover.
- Required weather conditions for prescribed burn.
- Notification check list.
- Equipment checklist/personnel assignments and needs/safety requirements.
- Firing sequence.
- Ignition method.
- Approval signatures.
- Post burn evaluation criteria.

Follow the burn plan parameters and use an appropriate level of personnel and equipment support.

Contact the Virginia Department of Forestry for information on weather and other conditions immediately prior to the burn.

Notify nearby residents and adjacent landowners of the intent to burn.

Notify the local fire department of burn intentions to reduce public concern, false response and to remain on alert if needed.

Maintain site productivity and minimize effects on soil erosion and soil properties (structure, soil moisture) by burning when soil and site conditions are appropriate. Monitor weather parameters and other data that affect fire behavior and smoke management during the burn.

Attend the fire at all times.

CONSIDERATIONS

Consider using VDOF Form 69 for the burn plan template.

Burning should be managed with consideration for wildlife needs such as nesting, feeding and cover.

Consider burning 1/3 of managed habitat each year to encourage diversity of plant species and wildlife.

Existing barriers such as lakes, streams, wetlands, roads and constructed firebreaks are important to the design and layout of this practice.

Increased moisture content results in more smoke. Carbon release can be minimized with proper burn timing and fire type selection.

PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

Minimum documentation for this practice includes:

- Burn plan
- Map, generally the conservation plan map, showing desired burn areas; additionally the map should delineate:

- Existing natural or constructed barriers to fire such as streams, water bodies, roads, etc.
- Sensitive areas such as critical habitat areas, cultural resources, wetlands, natural areas, etc.

- Extent (acreage) of prescribed burn
- Timing of prescribed burn

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

The kinds and expected variability of site factors (e.g., fuel condition and moisture content, weather conditions, human and vehicular traffic that may be impeded by heat or smoke, liability, and safety and health precautions) shall be monitored during the operation of this practice. Sufficient fire suppression equipment and personnel shall be available commensurate with the expected behavior of these factors during the time of burning to prevent a wildfire or other safety, health or liability incident.

Monitor the burned site and adjacent areas until ash, debris and other consumed material are at pre-burn temperatures.

REFERENCES

USDA Forest Service, 1989. A Guide for Prescribed Fire in Southern Forests, Technical Publication R8-TR11.

Virginia Department of Forestry, June 1988. Prescribed Fire – Smoke Management Guide.

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