NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD

FOREST SLASH TREATMENT

(Ac.)

CODE 384

DEFINITION

Treating woody plant residues created during forestry, agroforestry and horticultural activities to achieve management objectives.

PURPOSE

- Reduce hazardous fuels.
- Reduce the risk of harmful insects and disease.
- Protect/maintain air quality by reducing the risk of wildfire.
- Improve access to forage for grazing and browsing animals.
- Enhance aesthetics.
- Reduce the risk of harm to humans and livestock.
- Improve the soil organic matter
- Improve the site for natural or artificial regeneration.

CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES

This practice applies on areas with quantities of woody slash and debris requiring treatment.

CRITERIA

General Criteria Applicable to All Purposes

Slash treatment and the condition and extent of residual slash shall be planned and the method selected based on purpose(s).

Slash treatment methods (i.e. burning, chipping, lop and scatter, removal, crushing) will achieve landowner objectives while adequately protecting land and water resources.

Care shall be taken to minimize injury to or function of the residual plant communities.

Timing of treatment shall coincide with intended purpose(s) and minimize impact on other resources.

Any burning activities shall comply with the Prescribed Burning practice (338).

Slash and debris left on the site after treatment will not present an unacceptable fire, safety, environmental, or pest hazard. Such remaining material will not interfere with the intended purpose or other management activities.

Additional Criteria Applicable to Reduce Hazardous Fuels

Reduce the amount of fuels to an acceptable level by controlling height, size, amount and distribution.

Conservation practice standards are reviewed periodically, and updated if needed. To obtain the current version of this standard, contact the Natural Resources Conservation Service State Office, or download it from the electronic Field Office Technical Guide for your state.

Additional Criteria to Reduce the Risk of Harmful Insects and Disease

Degree, intensity and timing of treatment shall take full advantage of harmful insect or disease characteristics to enhance the effectiveness of control.

Comply with Pest Management (595).

Additional Criteria to Protect/Maintain Air Quality by Reducing the Risk of Wildfire

Activities will be consistent with established regulations and guidelines for PM 10 and PM 2.5 emissions, ozone precursors (NOx and VOCs), as well as smoke and fugitive dust, and state and local permit requirements.

In lieu of burning (when feasible) use slash in:

- Biofuel production
- Composting
- Chipping
- Shredding
- Erosion control

Additional Criteria to Improve Access to Forage for Grazing and Browsing Animals

Slash shall be piled or removed sufficiently to allow access to forage by the site's livestock and to maximize forage growth.

Additional Criteria to Enhance Aesthetics

Slash that is scattered or piled and left on the site will be further treated to meet client objectives and any state or local requirements for aesthetics and visual resources.

Additional Criteria to Reduce the Risk of Harm to Humans and Livestock

Slash that is scattered or piled and left on the site will be further treated reduce it to the state standard of three feet maximum height. Chip depth will not exceed two inches.

Additional Criteria to Improve Soil Organic Matter

Slash will be of a size and closeness to soil to accelerate in decomposition. Slash piles or chips may be placed in areas of accelerated erosion in order to reduce sheet flow, run off, and the formation of head cuts or gullies.

Additional Criteria to Improve the Site for Natural or Artificial Regeneration

Slash will be treated to complement treatments specified in Tree/Shrub Site Preparation (490). Where livestock or wildlife may damage newly planted or naturally-regenerating tree seedlings, leave a sufficient distribution, structure and maximally-allowed height of slash.

Additional Utilization Criteria

Material will be used to the New Mexico Forestry Division's minimum standards of utilization during a timber harvest or thinning. See (FPG's). Options must be considered to utilize slash material in biofuels or other small-diameter industries.

CONSIDERATIONS

When determining method and timing of slash treatment consider air quality regulations, burning requirements, available resources, ability to use woody biomass and regeneration needs.

Consider wildlife needs when performing and timing treatment. Risk to calving mothers is higher with large quantities of slash on the ground.

Consider potential beneficial and negative effects on cultural resources, threatened and endangered species, natural areas, and wetlands.

Depending on the size and extent of residual slash, this practice could be used to accomplish Access Control (472), e.g.,

use of off-highway vehicles (OHV) could be deterred by strategic placement of large slash.

PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

Specifications for applying this practice shall be prepared for each site and recorded using approved specification sheets, job sheets, technical notes and narrative statements in the conservation plan, or other acceptable documentation.

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

Monitor populations and the potential of damage to site resources by harmful pests and take controlling actions as necessary. Comply with Pest Management (595).

Access by vehicles, animals or people will be controlled during treatment for safety. Comply with Access Control (472).

NRCS, NM

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