United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

Conservation Reserve Program
MCM Job Sheet

Ohio – January 2013

CRP MID-CONTRACT MANAGEMENT: PRESCRIBED BURNING

For:					
Field(s):	Acres:	Farm #	Tract #:	CRP CN	
Planned By:					Date:

BACKGROUND

Grassland fields need to be managed so that grasses do not crowd out the forbs and legumes over time. If no disturbance occurs the composition of grassland communities will change over several years through normal plant succession. Typically, grasses begin to dominate stands to the point that beneficial forbs are reduced. Also, the amount of bare ground declines, litter accumulates and overall vegetation density increases. These changes may lead to a decline in habitat value for many desirable wildlife species.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this *Prescribed Burning* practice is to enhance the wildlife habitat value of the enrolled acres by increasing the amount of bare soil, encouraging a diverse forb/legume community and increasing structural diversity. Forbs (any broadleaf plant) and legumes in grasslands are beneficial to birds, insects such as butterflies, and other wildlife. Prescribed burning is an effective management tool that can be utilized where vegetation has become too thick to benefit the target species.

In addition, Prescribed Burning removes naturally occurring wildfire hazards, enhances the aesthetic appearance of natural landscapes, and may keep maintenance costs low.

Fire can improve grassland habitats by: creating open ground for wildlife movement by reducing excess plant litter, allowing sunlight to reach the soil surface, encouraging the germination and growth of forbs and legumes and suppressing woody plants, and retarding the growth of nonnative plants.

Disturbance is especially helpful for maintaining brood-rearing habitat for bobwhite quail, wild turkey, and ring-necked pheasant. The insects associated with annual forb species provide critical nutrients for growing nestlings and chicks. Reduced plant residue and bare ground are critical for young chick mobility in grassland areas.

Many other grassland songbirds have shown significant declines over the last 50 years. Providing diversity in vegetation structure benefits a wider range of species.

Many of the native, warm-season grasses used in CRP plantings are adapted to fire; that is fire encourages their growth and allows them to be competitive with introduced, cool season grasses. Properly timed, prescribed burning can suppress competition to warm season grasses such as cool season grasses or trees. The fire usually does not burn evenly as it moves across the land so patches of varying plant suppression are left which results in a desirable diversity of plant cover.

Prescribed burning can be an effective technique for preparing a site for a follow-up interseeding of desirable forbs, legumes or grasses.

The stand assessment will determine the objectives of the management activity. The assessment will also identify the plant community characteristics that must be addressed to meet the desired objectives.

APPLICABILITY

This practice may be used on CP1, CP2, CP3, CP3A, CP4B, CP4D, CP9, CP10, CP15A, CP21, CP23, CP23A, CP25, CP27, CP28, CP29, CP30, CP33 and CP39.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service provides leadership in a partnership effort to help people conserve, maintain, and improve our natural resources and environment.

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SPECIFICATIONS

The following are specifications for Prescribed Burning on CRP acreage.

- NRCS eFOTG Standard *Upland Wildlife Habitat Management* (645) and *Prescribed Burning* (338) will be utilized for this practice.
- Grassland fields must be established for a minimum of three years before initiating burning.
- This practice may only be used where recommended by a site assessor based on site conditions.
- All burning must be done under an approved burn plan prepared by a qualified individual. Certification under the Ohio Certified Prescribed Fire Manager program is strongly recommended. **NRCS will not prepare this burn plan.**
- At a minimum, the burn plan will include:
  - Description of the burn area including present vegetative cover
  - Objective and timing of burn
  - Acceptable conditions for the prescribed burn
  - Preparation of the area for burning
  - Equipment/personnel needs
  - Safety requirements
  - Special precaution areas
  - Firing techniques
- The landowner is responsible for adhering to the burn plan, as well as all applicable laws and regulations. In particular, prescribed burning shall be carried out in compliance with ODNR-Forestry's Open Burning regulations; Ohio EPA's Outdoor Burning Law and local regulations.
- Prescribed burning is prohibited in unincorporated areas during March, April, May, October and November between 6 am and 6 pm unless a waiver is granted by Ohio Division of Forestry; waivers are only granted to Certified Prescribed Fire Managers and requires the submission of a burn plan.
- Smoke waivers from the Ohio EPA are required for most prescribed burns.
- Prescribed burning may be conducted between July 16 and April 30.
- Prescribed burning shall not be performed in the following areas:
  - Areas where burning will have minimal affect or potentially cause a negative impact on existing cover.
  - Areas planted to trees and/or shrubs unless prescribed.
  - Riparian forest buffers
  - Environmentally sensitive areas marked on the plan map.
- When prescribed burning will be used as site preparation for inter-seeding forbs, the burn will result in a seedbed that consists of 40-70% bare soil.
- Firebreaks will be constructed according to the specifications stated in the burn plan. See NRCS FOTG Standard 394 *Firebreak* for additional guidance.

CONSIDERATIONS

- Plant species suppressed or benefited will vary depending on the time of the burn. The burn plan should be developed based on desired vegetation objectives.
  - Fall and late winter burns will promote increased forb production
  - Late spring burns reduce cool season grasses and promote native warm season grasses.
- If soil erosion is a concern, landowners should rule out a fall or early spring burn since the burn will remove plant vegetation and make the site more susceptible to erosion from rainfall.
- Use discretion if soil conditions are dry or drought conditions are predicted as burning under these conditions may damage or destroy prairie plant crowns and plants.
- Whenever practical, warm season grass fields should be divided into 3-5 sections, or units, so that each unit can be managed individually. Under these conditions, it would be ideal to burn 20-33% of your total grasslands in any given year. By having your warm season grass fields in various stages of development, you will increase plant diversity, which is beneficial to many wildlife species. This will not be practical for small sites.

CERTIFICATION

The participant is responsible for certifying to FSA when the practice has been completed.

Burning Application Schedule

CRP Field Number	Targeted Plant to Suppress	Other Identified Concerns/Recommendations

Mid-Contract Management cost-share payment for this practice is $50.00 per acre.

Cost-share Payment Limitations for all MCM activities are:

- $50.00 per acre per year
- $100.00 per acre total for the life of the contract

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) is responsible for administering the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). CRP policy requires that starting with Signup 26, participants must perform management activities that maintain or enhance the quality of conservation cover for wildlife benefits.

The FSA has requested the assistance of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and/or other partners to conduct an on-site assessment of the conservation cover. NRCS and/or the partners have evaluated the condition and density of the stand; the grass/forb species present; and have recommended this MCM practice to the FSA and the participant. FSA and NRCS representatives will meet with the participant and discuss the MCM options available and the appropriate incentive payments if applicable.

Signing this MCM Job Sheet is considered an addendum to the Conservation Plan of Operations (CPO). No modification of the CPO will be necessary.

SIGNATURES	
NRCS Representative Date	FSA Representative Date
I understand the plan and specifications and agree to perform this practice accordingly. Participant Date	

AD-862 Control Number: