

**NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE  
CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD**

**PRESCRIBED FORESTRY**

(Ac.)

**CODE 409**

**DEFINITION**

Manage forested areas for forest health, wood and/or fiber, water, recreation, aesthetics, wildlife habitat and plant biodiversity.

**PURPOSE**

- Maintain or improve forest health
- Protect soil quality and condition
- Maintain or enhance water quality and quantity
- Maintain or improve forest productivity
- Maintain or improve plant diversity
- Improve aesthetic and recreational values
- Improve wildlife habitat
- Achieve or maintain a desired understory plant community for forest products, grazing, and browsing.
- storing carbon in biomass

**CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES**

- On all forest land
- On land capable and suited to growing trees.

**CRITERIA**

**General Criteria Applicable to All Purposes**

Activities to achieve the intended purpose(s) shall be based on a forest prescription that addresses the owner's objectives as well as perpetuates a sustainable forest ecosystem

based on ecological parameters such as forest types, soil types, past harvest history, natural community types and successional trends.

A forest prescription that contain elements of a more comprehensive conservation plan shall recognize other requirements of the conservation plan and be compatible with its other requirements.

The prescription should include a description of the existing forest condition and desired forest condition using ecological site descriptions as guides.

The prescription shall be developed for a minimum management period of 10 years.

Describe and give rationale for selection of silvicultural system. This must include ecological and economic considerations.

Planned activities shall be examined collectively. Coordinate and time activities to optimize the stated purposes of conservation practices. Activities are not limited to conservation practices.

Planned activities shall lead to a silvicultural system with appropriate age classes suited to forest conditions and economics, landowner objectives and local ecosystems.

Provide a schedule of activities over at least a 5 year period.

**Additional Criteria to Protect Soil Quality and Condition**

Develop written guidelines to protect the soil resource during and after harvest operations and site preparation for planting.

Control or prevent erosion. Soil loss will not exceed allowable average annual soil loss (T)

as defined by current, approved erosion prediction technology.

Minimize impacts on landscape and soil resources when placing roads, harvest trails and landings.

Seed disturbed areas for erosion and sediment control.

Maintain adequate cover to control soil erosion. Use proper grazing, where applicable, that will not adversely impact new seeding of erosion control species.

Prevent gully formation.

Avoid long term soil compaction during all activities occurring in the forest.

#### **Additional Criteria to Maintain Water Quality and Quantity**

Maintain the quality and quantity of water flowing from and through forest lands.

Ensure road location, design, construction, use, maintenance, and vegetation reestablishment reduces or does not contribute to water pollution.

Use and maintain filter strips or buffers to remove or reduce the transportation of sediment or organic matter into streams, lakes or other sensitive areas.

Develop written guidelines for stream crossings. Avoid altering stream courses and drainage patterns.

Assess and manage the impacts of forest activities on water quantities.

#### **Additional Criteria to Maintain Forest Productivity**

Sustainable harvest levels shall be based on one or more of the following:

- Clearly document growth and regeneration data
- Site index models
- Site productivity or culmination of mean annual increment (CMAI) growth
- Desired future condition
- Consideration of cyclical and natural disturbances.

Develop written guidelines on protecting the residual forest, including regeneration, following harvest operations.

Identify tree and shrub species to be retained.

Follow established guidelines for spacing, density, size class, number and amounts of trees and understory species to be retained.

Ensure spacing is by species and size class distribution.

Identify pest problems, including insects, diseases, mammals and invasive/noxious plants, and develop management guidelines.

#### **Additional Criteria to Maintain Plant Diversity**

Assess current conditions including ecological processes such as disturbance regimes, unique natural communities such as old-growth, rare and imperiled plant species including those that are state or federally listed, and water and soil resources.

Develop written guidelines addressing the management of these special plant species and their communities.

Native plant species shall be inventoried and managed for vertical and horizontal structural complexity, and understory species diversity.

Vary the criteria according to state, federal or local requirements.

#### **Additional Criteria to Improve Aesthetic and Recreational Values**

Develop written guidelines to improve ecotourism and recreation, including hunting and fishing.

Select and manage plant materials adapted to the soil and climatic conditions and that fulfill a specific aesthetic or recreational need.

#### **Additional Criteria to Improve Wildlife Habitat**

Develop written guidelines to recognize and maintain forest resources for terrestrial and aquatic life.

Identify and develop specific management guidelines for habitat protection areas, including riparian buffers, critical habitats for at risk or focus species.

Coordinate forest and wildlife management objectives and activities. Maximize forest

diversity structurally and spatially to the extent practicable while implementing the primary intent of the practice.

**Additional Criteria to Maintain a Desired Understory Plant Community for Forest Products, Grazing, and Browsing**

Develop written guidelines for inventorying plants, monitoring plant populations and protecting the forest ecology while allowing the sustainable harvest of non-timber products.

Assess the impacts of timber production and harvest on the non-timber products.

Space trees properly to produce desired forage production, increase desirable woody plants for browsing, and provide conditions favorable for understory forest products.

**CONSIDERATIONS**

Consider adjacent and cumulative land use effects.

Consider social effects of decisions.

Assess potential landowner and user liability in the development of specifications for this practice.

**PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS**

Plans and specifications shall be in keeping with this standard and shall describe the requirements for applying the practice to achieve its intended purpose(s).

The following components shall be included in the forest management plan:

- Statement of landowner's goals and objectives

- Description of ecological and silvicultural systems and rationale for selection of silvicultural system
- Maps of forest cover types and soil types
- Location of roads, property boundaries, streams and water bodies, protected areas
- Forest Inventory if needed and to the correct intensity for the development of prescription development.
- Planned management activities, including regeneration/harvest strategies and guidelines for addressing soil, water, air, plant, animal and human resource problems and concerns. They may or may not be conservation practices.

**OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE**

Maintain a yearly summary of forest management activities and maintain records of yield for all forest products harvested, including non-timber resources.

Conduct periodic inspections during and after treatment activities to ensure that the purposes are achieved and resource damage is minimized, e.g., post harvest inspection, assessment of insects, disease and other pests, storm damage, and damage by trespass. The results of the inspections shall determine the need for additional treatment under this practice.

Review timetables, schedules and coordination actions periodically and modify as needed.

**REFERENCES**

Forest Stewardship Council-U.S. 2001. U.S. Regional Standards.  
(<http://www.fscstandards.org/>)