

**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.

**PURPOSES**

- 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, mastication, 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 - 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.

Consider cultural resources and threatened and endangered plants and animals when planning this practice.

**Additional Criteria Applicable to Reduce Hazardous Fuels**

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

**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 PM10 and PM 2.5 emissions, ozone precursors (NOx and VOCs), as well as smoke and fugitive dust, and state

and local permit requirements.

When feasible, use chipping, shredding, bio-fuel composting, or other technique in lieu of burning.

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

Slash shall be piled or removed sufficiently to allow access to forage and to maximize forage growth.

**Additional Criteria to Enhance Aesthetics**

Slash that is scattered or piled and left on the site will be 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 treated to meet client objectives and any state or local requirements for safe use of the area.

**Additional Criteria to Improve Soil Organic Matter**

Slash will be of a size and closeness to soil to accelerate in decomposition.

**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.

**CONSIDERATIONS**

Discuss proper slash disposal, either by lopping and scattering, chipping, piling, removal, piling and burning, mastication or by controlled burns.

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.

Consider the beneficial and other effects on cultural resources, and threatened and endangered species, natural areas, and wetlands.

For wildlife use, it may be desirable to leave an occasional hollow tree, larger than 10 inch diameter tree on the ground and sometimes a dead snag. These should not be left, however, if they are a hazard to either animals or people, or if they are a severe fire hazard

The best time for thinning to avoid Ips beetle damage is September through April.

Slash disposal, cutting permits, and use of power equipment should comply with the respective state laws.

**Cultural Resources Considerations**

NRCS policy is to avoid any effect to cultural resources and protect them in their original location. Determine if installation of this practice or associated practices in the plan could have an effect on cultural resources. The National Historic Preservation Act may require consultation with the California State Historic Preservation Officer.

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/cultural.html>

is the primary website for cultural resources information. The California Environmental Handbook and the California Environmental Assessment Worksheet also provide guidance on how the NRCS must account for cultural resources. The e-Field Office Technical Guide, Section II contains general information, with Web sites for additional information.

Document any specific considerations for cultural resources in the design docket and the Practice Requirements worksheet.

**Endangered Species Considerations**

If during the Environmental Assessment, NRCS determines that installation of this practice, along with any others proposed, will have an effect on any federal or state listed Rare, Threatened or Endangered species or their habitat, NRCS will advise the client of the requirements of the Endangered Species Act and recommend alternative conservation treatments that avoid the adverse effects. Further assistance will be provided only if the client selects one of the alternative conservation treatments for installation; or with concurrence of the client, NRCS initiates consultations concerning the listed species with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Marine Fisheries

Service and/or California Department of Fish and Game.

### **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.

Specifications shall be based upon best season for treating or disposing of slash; and special treatments, if needed, to forestall the spread of disease, fungi, or insects. If beauty or wildlife habitat are considerations, specify the species to be favored, how many of each and size per acre, and where to leave them shall be indicated

For herbaceous species; (1) dates of periods for effective treatment; (2) acceptable alternative materials, equipment, and methods; (3) types of areas, patterns of vegetation, and kinds and amounts that should be favored (left) for wildlife: species to be favored, how many of each and size per acre, and spacing and if important, location; (4) maintenance and management needed to follow treatment.

### **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 or people may need to be controlled during treatment for safety. Comply with Standard - 472.

### **REFERENCES**

State of California:

Public Resources Code 4290 and 4291

Forest Practice Rules

USFS, Photo Series for Quantifying Forest Residues (various)

