



Land User	County
Farm #	Date
Tract #	Assisted by

Conservation Cover



Definition

Use the Conservation Cover standard to establish and maintain permanent vegetative cover to protect soil and water resources and other resources. This practice is applied on land to be retired from agricultural production and on other lands needing permanent protective cover. This practice does not apply to plantings for forage production or to critical area plantings.

Purposes

This practice is applied as part of a conservation management system to support one or more of the following purposes. It is likely to be implemented by seeding clover in pecan orchards and row crops as described in Appendices I and II, respectively.

Select one or more purpose and provide the required documentation. Provide seeding information in Table 1. A printout of the soil conditioning index (SCI ≥ 0) or soil loss erosion reduction, obtained from RUSLE2 (or the current soil erosion prediction software),

is required for the first three purpose in row crops. These purposes may also be concerns in orchards. Document this information in Table 2. Provide the documentation from other practice standards as noted below.

- Improve soil health. This purpose is primarily a concern in row crops.
- Reduce sheet, rill, and wind erosion and sedimentation. This purpose applies to land to be retired from agricultural production and on other lands needing permanent protective cover. Use the Forage and Biomass Planting (512) native warm season grass option, if the only purpose is to reduce erosion and sedimentation. Use the Native Grasses for Wildlife Habitat jobsheet if the objective also includes wildlife. It is filed alphabetically in the Table of Contents of the FOGT. Alternatively, it can be obtained in the Early Successional Habitat Management (647) folder in Section IV.
- Reduce ground and surface water quality degradation by nutrients or surface water quality degradation by sediment. Also, estimate the contribution of the clover cover to the nitrogen requirements of the cash crops as described in Appendices I and II when water quality/nutrient management is the objective.
- Enhance wildlife, pollinator and beneficial organism habitat in pecan orchards. No additional vegetation or documentation is required because of the established prey/predator relationship between aphids in pecans and lady beetles and lacewings attracted by the clover.

___ Establish permanent vegetation, including mix of native grasses, legume or forbs established on other land needing permanent vegetative cover to provide habitat for wildlife, pollinators and other beneficial insects. The following tools for evaluating wildlife habitat within cropland are located in FOTG and can be accessed using this link

[http://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov/toc.aspx?CatID=2918:](http://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov/toc.aspx?CatID=2918)

- Wildlife Habitat Suitability Index (for general wildlife habitat evaluation and planning)
- 327 Conservation Cover Pollinator Job Sheet
- Native Bee Pollinator Habitat Assessment Form and Guide – Farms and Agricultural Landscapes
- Beneficial Insect Habitat Assessment Form and Guide.

___ Reduce emissions of particulate matter (PM), PM precursors, and greenhouse gases. This objective is not

likely because particulate emissions are probably not a problem.

Conservation Management System

Rarely does one conservation practice provide the treatment needed for all of our natural resources. Conservation cover is a component of conservation management systems. A conservation management system is a combination of conservation practices and management that achieves a level of treatment for our soil, water, air, plant and animal resources while also meeting the objectives of the land user.

Additional practices such as nutrient management, deep tillage, wildlife habitat management, firebreaks and prescribed burning may be planned at the same time. Structures may also be needed.

General Specifications

Plant and manage permanent cover according to information in the standard and the statement of work.

Practice Lifespan 5 years

Table 1. Seeding information

Purpose or Activity	Description
Purpose	
Field number and size	
Site preparation including lime and fertilizer	
Species	
Seeding rate (PLS¹) and method	
Other information	

¹ PLS represents Pure Live Seed. To calculate PLS, multiply the purity % times the germination %. Then divide the recommended seeding rate by the PLS to get the actual seeding rate.

For example: Rye seed has a purity of 90% and germination of 85%.

Step 1: The PLS = $0.90 \times 0.85 = 0.77$. (Only 77% of the material in the sack of seed is seed that will germinate.)

Step 2: Divide the recommended seeding rate (60 lb. in this example) by 0.77 to get the actual seeding rate of 78 pounds per acre that is needed in order to be planting 60 pounds of good seed.

Note: The use of seed with a low PLS usually has low vigor and will not grow satisfactorily.

Table 2. Record field operations and the amount of residue (Appendix 3, dry lbs./acre) for each crop for the entire rotation needed for RUSLE2, or other software, if the purpose is to reduce erosion or enhance soil quality.

Attach software printout or provide soil loss (t./ac. compared to tolerable level) or soil condition index (SCI>0), depending upon the purpose of the practice.

Date	Notes

Operation and Maintenance

Mowing and harvest operations in a perennial crop system such as orchards, vineyards, berries, and nursery stock shall be done in a manner which minimizes the generation of particulate matter.

If wildlife habitat enhancement is a purpose, maintenance practices and activities shall not disturb cover during the reproductive period for the desired species. Exceptions should be considered for periodic burning or mowing when necessary to maintain the health of the plant community.

Control noxious weeds and other invasive species.

Mowing may be needed during the establishment period to reduce competition from weeds.

To benefit insect food sources for grassland nesting birds, spraying or other control of noxious weeds shall be done on a “spot” basis to protect forbs and legumes that benefit native pollinators and other wildlife. Do not mow during the fawning/nesting period of April 1 – August 31.

Re-vegetate bare spots.

Date	O&M Notes

Job Sheet Certification

Prepared by: _____ Title _____ Date _____

Approved by: _____ Title _____ Date _____

Installation Meets NRCS Standards and Specifications

Certified by: _____ Title _____ Date: _____

For More Information

Contact your local NRCS Office or Soil and Water Conservation District

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