USDA

United States Department of Agriculture

Field Border

Iowa Job Sheet

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
Des Moines, Iowa

Iowa Conservation Practice 386
August 2014

What is a field border?

A field border is a band or strip of perennial vegetation established at the edge or around the perimeter of a field. Used with contour or cross slope farming patterns, it eliminates planting end rows up and down hill and provides turning area for farm equipment.

How it helps the land

Field borders control sheet, rill, gully and wind erosion at the edges of a field where end rows would run up and down hill. Field borders also provide wildlife food and cover, protect soil and water quality and help in managing pest populations.

Where the practice applies

Field borders should be used on any cropland field where wind, sheet, rill and gully erosion exceed tolerable limits on end row areas. It can be used to support or connect other buffer practices within and between fields.

Field borders protect soil and water quality by reducing compaction and decreasing the amount of nutrients from surface and groundwater.

This practice is particularly important where no-till is not practiced and on sensitive soils, including:

- those with 14% slopes, or steeper
- 2, 3, & 4 “T” ton soils
- areas of concentrated flow
- areas where limited topsoil is severely eroded

Where to get help

For assistance in planning and establishing field borders on your farm contact your local Natural Resources Conservation Service. For more job sheets and conservation information visit the NRCS website at www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov.

Applying the practice

This practice will be considered to be applied when the permanent vegetation recommended above is established in strips wide enough to turn farm equipment without the use of end rows. Field borders must be a minimum of 30

feet wide but must be wide enough to allow you to turn our farm equipment. Normally this is twice the width of the equipment used.

When establishing field borders follow the Critical Area Planting (342) standard:

- Prepare a firm seedbed.
- Apply lime and fertilizer before seeding according to soil tests. Apply fertilizer before seeding when soil tests are in the Low or Very Low category according to ISU Extension PM 1688 publication. Apply Lime when the soil pH is below 6.0 or 6.9, or if it will be an alfalfa-grass mix.
- Drill grass and legume seed uniformly over the strip 1/4” to 1/2” deep or broadcast uniformly over the field border. Harrow and culitpack to establish good seed to soil contact.
- Seed the area with the recommended seeding mixture.
- Oats may be seeded as a companion crop at the rate of 1 to 1 1/2 bushels per acre during the spring. Mow oats before they head out or harvest for grain if allowed

- Drill across the slope, not up and down, if possible to help control erosion.
- Seeding may be completed during the spring seeding period, March 1 to May 15 or during the late summer seeding period, August 1 to September 15. The seeding period for warm season grasses is April 1 to July 1. Refer to your plan schedule for your planned planting dates.

Maintaining the practice

- Protect from livestock during nesting season to maximize wildlife benefits.
- Establish stiff-stemmed, upright grasses, grass/legume or forbs to trap wind or water-borne particles.
- Mow to control weeds or shrub development. Delay mowing until August 1 to avoid harming nesting birds.
- Maintain desired vegetation and plant vigor by liming, fertilizing, mowing, disking, burning, and controlling noxious weeds to ensure effectiveness of the border.
- Re-seed as necessary to maintain desired plant species.
- On adjacent sloping cropland, till soil on the contour, at right angles to the field border. This prevents water from forming gullies along the edge of field borders.
- Shut off farm chemical sprayers when turning on a field border, and insist custom chemical applicators do the same.
- Shape and reseed border areas damaged by storms, animals, chemicals, tillage or equipment traffic.
- Remove sediment from above or withing the field border when accumulated sediment either alters the function of the field border or threatens the degradation of the plant species.

Requirements of field borders

Field borders are required as shown on your conservation plan map. Approximately _____ feet of field border at _____ width will be established. Following are the recommended seeding and fertilizer rates for your field border.

Recommended seeding for your field borders

species	lbs./acre
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Recommended fertilizer (lbs./acre)

N	P	K	Lime
_____	_____	_____	_____

CONSERVATION PRACTICE INSTALLATION CERTIFICATION

Landowner_____ Tract Number_____

Practices_____ _____ _____

Comments_____

Information and measurements are attached to show the work was completed in compliance with the practice plans and specifications. This is based upon check-out of the as-built (applied) practice at the time construction and/or application was completed.

Show the extent of the practice(s) completed and, when applicable, an itemization of materials furnished and installed or activities completed for the practice(s). Attach additional sheets if necessary.

Field No.	Field Border Seeding Mix	Length & Width	Acres
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Date Seeding Completed: _____

I certify that the above listed practice(s) was completed according to the NRCS standards and specifications on the field and area identified above. I understand that this practice(s) may be checked at anytime to insure compliance with the NRCS standards and specifications.
Attach aerial photo or plan map w/location of field borders.

_____ _____

Landowner/Contractor/Technical Service Provider ***Signature*** *Date*

Practice(s) **(does)** or **(does not)** meet approved plans, standards and specifications.

_____ _____

NRCS Employee/SWCD Employee/Technical Service Provider ***Signature*** *Date*

_____NRCS (original) _____Cooperator (copy) _____Contractor (copy)

On NRCS copy only, attach required field notes, sketch of practice location on farm, designs, computations, measurements, and quantities. Place this information in the field office case file.