

**NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE
CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD**

LAND CLEARING

(Ac.)

CODE 460

DEFINITION

Removing trees, stumps, and other vegetation to achieve a conservation objective.

issues for re-clearing and the potential of creating a fire hazard. A pile should not be closer than 100 feet (ft) from adjacent woodland, buildings, or roads.

PURPOSE

- Allow needed land use adjustments and improvements in the interest of conservation.

CONSIDERATIONS

Land clearing when the soil is frozen with minimal snow cover or during the dryer periods of the year will reduce the disturbance and movement of topsoil.

CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES

This practice applies to wooded areas where the removal of trees, stumps, brush, and other vegetation is needed in carrying out a conservation plan.

Ground disturbing activities associated with this practice have the potential to affect significant cultural resources. Consider using methods that cause the least disturbance to the ground surface.

CRITERIA

Clearing and disposal methods shall be performed according to applicable federal, state, and local laws and with due regard to the safety of persons and property.

Land clearing is usually more efficient if the tree is less than 4 inches (in) in diameter. For larger trees, the root wad or crown should be removed during drier soil conditions. Rough pushing under wet conditions can create deep rutting and can bury debris complicating final cleanup.

Clearing shall be done when the soil moisture content is such that soil structural damage or compaction is minimized.

If a salvage harvest is made before clearing, leaving taller stumps will facilitate final clearing and grubbing activities.

A 50-foot wide undisturbed area will be left between the area being cleared and all wetlands, water bodies and perennial streams.

Special attention should be given to maintaining habitat for fish and wildlife. Strip clearing, windrowing debris, and maintaining den and food trees can minimize impacts on wildlife.

Temporary cover will be established as necessary to control sheet and rill and/or wind erosion on the cleared area until the planned land use is in place.

Consider the retention of riparian buffers wider than 50 feet when clearing next to wetlands, water bodies and perennial streams. Use Practice Standard 391 – Riparian Forest Buffers as a guide.

The cleared area shall be left in a condition that will facilitate the planned use and treatment of the land.

The orientation and layout of berm piles should be considered. Consider chaining or pushing

Limit pushing the clearing debris into standing or green timber due to increased maintenance

trees down parallel to each other, and to follow topographical contours. The pile should be high, narrow, and compact and free of topsoil and snow. Piles with excess debris do not cure properly. Berms are normally 15 to 25 ft wide by 10 to 15 ft high, and are spaced 150 to 200 ft apart. A break of 30 ft between berms is recommended for every 200 ft of berm length to act as a firebreak, allow natural drainage or runoff, and facilitate equipment.

Land clearing can increase the volume and rate of runoff. This is more pronounced on steeper land.

Consider the steepness of slope when selecting the size and type of equipment needed to clear land.

Consider activities to minimize the spread or introduction of weeds into a newly cleared field.

Consider the disposal of vegetation with regards to carbon sequestration. Burying, composting, or mulching the debris would limit the release of carbon.

Consider depth of bedrock if debris is to be buried.

PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

The plan shall specify the kinds of timber to be salvaged, lengths of logs, place of stacking, and limits of areas to be cleared.

The plan shall include descriptions of permanent and/or temporary disposal sites. The method of disposal shall be specified for all material not salvaged.

The plan shall provide for the measures necessary to protect the cleared area from erosion.

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

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

A maintenance program shall be established to maintain vegetative cover while controlling undesired and exotic vegetation.

Watercourses and water quality shall be protected during and after removal of trees and vegetation.

Avoid crossing with heavy equipment when wet.

The use of mechanical treatments, prescribed burning, pesticides or other chemicals shall not compromise the intended purpose.

Select equipment sizes and capacities that will handle the clearing tasks in a timely and economically feasible manner.

Remove excess non-vegetative debris present or as it surfaces during clearing.