

Practice: 340 - Cover Crop

Scenario: #1 - Chemical or Mechanical Kill Species

Scenario Description:

A single species grass/legume/brassica or mixed grass/legume/brassica cover will be planted as a cover crop immediately after harvest of a row crop (within 30 days), and will be followed by a row crop that will utilize fixed nitrogen and cover crop biomass as a mulch. This scenario assumes that seed will be planted with a no-till drill. Legume seeds must be inoculated with the proper inoculant prior to planting. The cover crop should be allowed to generate as much biomass as possible (reach early to mid-bloom) before it is terminated, without delaying the planting of the following crop. Termination methods include using approved chemical and/or mechanical methods, in order to maximize nitrogen fixation. The legume will promote biological nitrogen fixation and reduce energy use by reducing the need for commercial nitrogen fertilizer in following crops.

Before Situation:

Row crops such as corn, soybeans, or cotton are grown and harvested in mid-late fall. Fields are disked immediately following harvest, with rows in some fields being hipped for drainage (in some cases). Residue amounts after harvest average 30% or less, resulting in bare soil being exposed to wind erosion and/or intense rainfall during the fall, winter, and early spring. Over the winter residue degrades and sediment/nutrient runoff from fields increases. Sheet and rill erosion occurs with visible rills by spring. Runoff from the fields flows into streams, water courses or other water bodies causing degradation to the receiving waters. Soil health (soil organic matter) declines over time as a result of tillage practices, low residue crops, and long periods of bare soil. Only commercial nitrogen fertilizer is used for following crops.

After Situation:

Within 30 days after harvest of row crop, fields are planted with a single species grass or legume cover crop, such as annual ryegrass, clover or vetch species. The cover crop is seeded with a no-till drill. No fertilizer is applied with the cover crop. The cover crop provides soil cover by late fall, throughout the winter, and into the early spring. Runoff and erosion are reduced and no rills are visible on the soil surface in the spring. Wind erosion is reduced by standing residues. The cover crop is terminated chemically and/or mechanically prior to spring planting as late as feasible to maximize plant biomass production. Over time, soil health is improved due to the additional biomass, ground cover, soil infiltration, and plant diversity introduced to the cropping system. Cover crop residues left on the surface may maximize weed control by increasing allelopathic and mulching effect. By utilizing the nitrogen that is fixed by the legume cover crop, the amount of energy is reduced by reducing the amount of commercial fertilizer that will be needed for the following crop.

Scenario Feature Measure: Area planted

Scenario Unit: Acre

Scenario Typical Size: 100

Scenario Cost: \$8,224.00

Scenario Cost/Unit: \$82.24

Cost Details (by category):

Component Name	ID	Component Description	Unit	Price (\$/unit)	Quantity	Cost
Equipment/Installation						
Chemical, ground application	948	Chemical application performed by ground equipment. Includes equipment, power unit and labor costs.	Acre	\$6.10	100	\$610.00
Seeding Operation, No Till/Grass Drill	960	No Till drill or grass drill for seeding. Includes equipment, power unit and labor costs.	Acre	\$21.22	100	\$2,122.00
Materials						
One Species, Cool Season, Annual Grass or Legume	2311	Cool season annual grass or legume. Includes material and shipping only.	Acre	\$39.29	100	\$3,929.00
Herbicide, Glyphosate	334	A broad-spectrum, non-selective systemic herbicide. Refer to WIN-PST for product names and active ingredients. Includes materials and shipping only.	Acre	\$15.63	100	\$1,563.00

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Scenario: #2 - Winter Kill Species

Scenario Description:

Typically a small grain or small grain-brassica mix (may also use forage sorghum, legumes, buckwheat, etc) will be planted as a cover crop immediately after harvest of a row crop (within 30 days), and will be followed by a row crop that will utilize the residue as a mulch. This scenario assumes that seed will be planted with a no-till drill. The cover crop species established under this scenario will winter kill, meaning no species termination is required.

Before Situation:

Row crops such as corn, soybeans, or cotton are grown and harvested in mid-late fall. Fields are disked immediately following harvest, with rows in some fields being hipped for drainage (in some cases). Residue amounts after harvest average 30% or less, resulting in bare soil being exposed to wind erosion and/or intense rainfall during the fall, winter, and early spring. Over the winter residue degrades and sediment/nutrient runoff from fields increases. Sheet and rill erosion occurs with visible rills by spring. Runoff from the fields flows into streams, water courses or other water bodies causing degradation to the receiving waters. Soil health (soil organic matter) declines over time as a result of tillage practices, low residue crops, and long periods of bare soil.

After Situation:

Within 30 days after harvest of row crop, fields are planted with a small grain-brassica mix cover crop, typically oats and oilseed radish. The cover crop is seeded with a no-till drill. No additional fertilizer is applied with the cover crop. The cover crop provides soil cover by late fall, throughout the winter, and into the early spring. Runoff and erosion are reduced and no rills are visible on the soil surface in the spring. The cover crop is established using winter kill species which should not require termination in the spring. Over time, soil health is improved due to the additional biomass, ground cover, and plant diversity introduced to the cropping system. Wind erosion is reduced by standing residues. Cover crop residues left on the surface may maximize weed control by increasing allelopathic and mulching effect.

Scenario Feature Measure: Area planted

Scenario Unit: Acre

Scenario Typical Size: 100

Scenario Cost: \$6,051.00

Scenario Cost/Unit: \$60.51

Cost Details (by category):

Component Name	ID	Component Description	Unit	Price (\$/unit)	Quantity	Cost
Equipment/Installation						
Seeding Operation, No Till/Grass Drill	960	No Till drill or grass drill for seeding. Includes equipment, power unit and labor costs.	Acre	\$21.22	100	\$2,122.00
Materials						
One Species, Cool Season, Annual Grass or Legume	2311	Cool season annual grass or legume. Includes material and shipping only.	Acre	\$39.29	100	\$3,929.00

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Scenario: #5 - Organic Cover Crop

Scenario Description:

Typically a small grain or small grain-legume mix (may also use forage sorghum, radishes, turnips, buckwheat, etc) will be planted as a cover crop immediately after harvest of an organically grown crop, and will be followed by an organically grown crop that will utilize the residue as a mulch. This scenario assumes that seed will be planted with a drill. The cover crop should be allowed to generate as much biomass as possible, without delaying planting of the following crop. The cover crop will be terminated using a mechanical kill method (mowing, rolling, undercutting, etc.), prior to planting the subsequent crop. This scenario **REQUIRES** use of Certified Organic Seed.

Before Situation:

Organically grown crops such as various vegetable and fruit crops (along with organically produced row crops) are grown and harvested in mid-late fall. Fields are disked immediately following harvest. Residue amounts after harvest average 30% or less, resulting in bare soil being exposed to wind erosion and/or intense rainfall during the fall, winter, and early spring. Over the winter residue degrades and sediment/nutrient runoff from fields increases. Sheet and rill erosion occurs with visible rills by spring. Runoff from the fields flows into streams, water courses or other water bodies causing degradation to the receiving waters. Soil health (soil organic matter) declines over time as a result of tillage practices, low residue crops, and long periods of bare soil.

After Situation:

Within 30 days after harvest of organic crop, fields are planted with a small grain-legume mix cover crop, typically rye and clover. The average field size is 25 acres. The cover crop is seeded with a no-till drill. No additional fertilizer is applied with the cover crop. The cover crop provides soil cover by late fall, throughout the winter, and into the early spring. Runoff and erosion are reduced and no rills are visible on the soil surface in the spring. The cover crop is terminated with using a mechanical kill method (mowing, rolling, undercutting, etc.), prior to spring planting as late as feasible to maximize plant biomass production. Over time, soil health is improved due to the additional biomass, ground cover, and plant diversity introduced to the cropping system. Wind erosion is reduced by standing residues. Cover crop residues left on the surface may maximize weed control by increasing allelopathic and mulching effect.

Scenario Feature Measure: Area planted

Scenario Unit: Acre

Scenario Typical Size: 25

Scenario Cost: \$4,367.75

Scenario Cost/Unit: \$174.71

Cost Details (by category):

Component Name	ID	Component Description	Unit	Price (\$/unit)	Quantity	Cost
Equipment/Installation						
Mechanical weed control, Vegetation termination	957	Mechanical operations, Includes: Roller/crimper, mower, shredder, etc. Includes equipment, power unit and labor costs.	Acre	\$20.41	25	\$510.25
Tillage, Light	945	Includes light disking (tandem) or field cultivator. Includes equipment, power unit and labor costs.	Acre	\$11.07	25	\$276.75
Seeding Operation, No Till/Grass Drill	960	No Till drill or grass drill for seeding. Includes equipment, power unit and labor costs.	Acre	\$21.22	25	\$530.50
Materials						
Certified Organic, One Species, Cool Season, Annual Legume	2337	Certified organic cool season annual legume. Includes material and shipping only.	Acre	\$122.01	25	\$3,050.25

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Scenario: #6 - Adaptive Mgt

Scenario Description:

The practice scenario is for the implementation of cover crops in small replicated plots to allow the producer to learn how to manage cover crops on their operation. Scenario includes implementing replicated strip trials on a field plot to evaluate, identify and implement a particular cover crop management strategy (e.g., cover crop vs no cover crop, multiple species vs, single specie, evaluate different termination methods or timings, using a legume vs no legume for nitrogen credits). This will be done following the interim guidance for cover crop adaptive management to be issued to all field offices.

Before Situation:

Row crops such as corn, soybeans, or cotton are grown and harvested in mid-late fall. Fields are disked immediately following harvest, with rows in some fields being hipped for drainage (in some cases). Residue amounts after harvest average 30% or less, resulting in bare soil being exposed to wind erosion and/or intense rainfall during the fall, winter, and early spring. Over the winter residue degrades and sediment/nutrient runoff from fields increases. Sheet and rill erosion occurs with visible rills by spring. Runoff from the fields flows into streams, water courses or other water bodies causing degradation to the receiving waters. Soil health (soil organic matter) declines over time as a result of tillage practices, low residue crops, and long periods of bare soil. The producer is considering the use of cover crops but is unsure how to manage on their unique operation or is seeking a way to better manage cover crops in the operation.

After Situation:

Installation of this scenario will result in establishment of cover crop replicated plots to compare to different management strategies for cover crop management following the guidance in the Agronomy Technical Note 11 - Adaptive Management and the Interim Guidance for Cover Crop Adaptive Management to be issued to all field offices for FY15. Implementation involves establishing the replicated plots to evaluate one or more cover crop management strategies. The plot will consist of at least 4 replicated plots designed, laid out, managed and evaluated with the assistance of a consultant knowledgeable in cover crop management. Results are used to make cover crop management decisions to address erosion and water quality issues. Yields will be measured and statistically summarized following the procedures in Agronomy Technical Note 11 - Adaptive Management. The yields for each plot will be adjusted to the appropriate moisture content. This would be repeated for 3 years.

Scenario Feature Measure: Area planted

Scenario Unit: Acre

Scenario Typical Size: 2

Scenario Cost: \$3,583.50

Scenario Cost/Unit: \$1,791.75

Cost Details (by category):

Component Name	ID	Component Description	Unit	Price (\$/unit)	Quantity	Cost
Equipment/Installation						
Chemical, ground application	948	Chemical application performed by ground equipment. Includes equipment, power unit and labor costs.	Acre	\$6.10	2	\$12.20
Seeding Operation, No Till/Grass Drill	960	No Till drill or grass drill for seeding. Includes equipment, power unit and labor costs.	Acre	\$21.22	2	\$42.44
Labor						
Specialist Labor	235	Labor requiring a specialized skill set: Includes Agronomists, Foresters, Biologists, etc. to provide additional technical information during the planning and implementation of the practice. Does not include NRCS or TSP services.	Hour	\$90.67	30	\$2,720.10
General Labor	231	Labor performed using basic tools such as power tool, shovels, and other tools that do not require extensive training. Ex. pipe layer, herder, concrete placement, materials spreader, flagger, etc.	Hour	\$22.31	30	\$669.30
Materials						
Herbicide, Glyphosate	334	A broad-spectrum, non-selective systemic herbicide. Refer to WIN-PST for product names and active ingredients. Includes materials and shipping only.	Acre	\$15.63	2	\$31.26
Two Species Mix, Cool Season Annual (1 grass and 1 legume)	2314	Cool season annual grass and legume mix. Includes material and shipping only.	Acre	\$54.10	2	\$108.20