

**Natural Resources Conservation Service
Conservation Practice Standard**

**FIELD BORDER
(Ft.)
CODE 386**

DEFINITION

A strip of permanent vegetation established at the edge or around the perimeter of a field.

PURPOSE

- Reduce erosion from water at field edges.
- Provide turn rows for farm machinery.
- Provide wildlife food and cover.
- Soil and water quality protection.

CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES

At the edges of cropland fields and to connect other buffer practices within the field. May also apply to recreation land or other land users where agronomic crops are grown.

CRITERIA

Minimum field border width will be 20 feet. When large farm equipment is used, field border widths may be increased to 30-35 feet.

Field borders may be allowed to establish by natural revegetation provided a 75 percent ground cover is obtained during the first growing season. Field borders may also be established to adapted plant species of perennial grass or a combination of perennial grass and clovers as shown in Table 1. Planting should be carried out according to the pasture and hayland planting specification practice Code 512.

All ephemeral gullies and rills present in the planned field border will be smoothed as part of the seedbed preparation.

Additional Criteria to Reduce Soil Erosion and Protect Water Quality

Locate border around the entire perimeter of the field, or as a minimum install borders to eliminate sloping end rows and other areas where concentrated water flows will enter or exit a field.

Additional Criteria to Provide Wildlife Food and Cover

To enhance wildlife, field borders may be wider than 20 to 35 feet in designated areas. If wider field borders are planted for wildlife, "Wildlife Upland Habitat Management", Practice Code 645, will be planned and applied for specific wildlife species. Plant species listed in Practice Code 645 will be planted. This will be in addition to the minimum 20-foot field border, which must be planted next to the cropland field. If wider field borders are planted to enhance wildlife, management of the planned area will be in accordance with "Wildlife Upland Habitat Management", Practice Code 645. Planting bicolor Lespedeza transplants on the outer edge of field border will enhance wildlife.

CONSIDERATIONS

- Field borders are more effective and provide more environmental benefits when planted around the entire field.
- To increase trapping efficiency, consider establishing a narrow strip (3 to 5 feet) of Alamo switchgrass at the outer edge of the field border.
- Consider overseeding or sodseeding the borders with winter annual grasses (ryegrass, wheat, rye or oats) or clovers for wildlife benefits.
- Waterbars or berms may be needed to breakup or redirect concentrated water flows within the borders.

PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

Specification for establishment and operation of this practice will be prepared for each field or treatment unit according to the criteria, planning considerations and operation and maintenance described in this standard. Specifications will be

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recorded using approved specification sheets, job sheets (approved by the state agronomist) or narrative statement in the conservation plan.

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

Field borders require careful management and maintenance for performance and longevity.

The following will be planned and applied as needed:

- Storm damage repair.
- Sediment removal - when six (6) inches of sediment has accumulated at the field border/cropland interface.
- Shut off sprayers and raise tillage equipment to avoid damage to field borders.

- Shape and reseed border areas damaged by chemicals, tillage or equipment traffic.
- Fertilize, mow and control noxious weeds to maintain plant vigor.
- Gullies and rills that develop in the border will be filled and reseeded.

Recommended Combinations. Bahiagrass and Annual Lespedeza; Tall fescue and White and/or Red clover; Bahiagrass and Crimson clover; Tall fescue and Vetch and/or Rough peas; Dallisgrass and White and/or Crimson clover.

Note: When seeding winter clovers with summer grasses, plant the summer grass then sod seed or over seed winter clovers in the fall.

Table 1 - ELIGIBLE PLANTS FOR PLANTING FIELD BORDERS

Perennial Grasses^{1/}

Bahiagrass
Tall Fescue
Sericea Lespedeza
Dallisgrass
Caucasian Bluestem
Alamo Switchgrass (outer edge only)

Clovers^{2/}

White
Crimson
Annual Lespedeza
Red Clover
Vetch
Rough Peas (wild winter)
Ball Clover
Bicolor Lespedeza (outer edge only)

^{1/} At least one of the eligible perennial grasses must be used when planting a field border.

^{2/} All clover seed will be inoculated with recommended inoculant.