

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE
MONTANA CONSERVATION PRACTICE SPECIFICATION

CONSERVATION CROP ROTATION (ACRE)

CODE 328(A)

ANNUAL CROPPING

DEFINITION: A planned sequence of adapted crops designed to maintain, protect, or improve the health and productivity of the soil and related natural resources.

Annual Crop Rotation: This rotation applies to all land where all annual crops make up at least one-third of the crop sequence on a time basis. It does not apply to long-term hay or pasture rotations where annual crops are planted for the purpose of re-establishment of perennial species.

CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT SYSTEM: A conservation crop rotation is established as part of a conservation management system to address the soil, water, air, plant, animal, and human needs as related to the owner's goals and objectives. It is important to consider nutrient and pest management, crop residue management, agricultural waste utilization, and other supportive conservation practices when designing a crop rotation. A properly designed crop rotation can improve soil health and the overall sustainability of the agricultural production system. A crop rotation is most effective in providing conservation benefits when used in combination with other agronomic or structural practices.

The crop rotation, in combination with other supporting practices, must include enough high residue-producing crops to protect soil from erosion (planned to "T" or below). High residue crops include corn or sorghum for grain, small grains harvested for grain, alfalfa and grass cut for hay, winter cover crops, or the addition of manure (10 tons per acre is approximately equal to 20-30% residue).

If crop residues are to be removed or low residue crops are grown, protection against erosion may be provided by fall seeded grain crops, cover crops, legumes, grasses or the addition of residue or manure. Current wind (WEPS) and water (RUSLE2) erosion prediction technology should be used to ensure that adequate residue is maintained.

WILDLIFE: Crop rotations can enhance wildlife and pollinator objectives depending on the vegetative species used and management practiced. Consider using species that can provide food and cover for important wildlife and pollinator species.