

**NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE
CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD**

BRUSH MANAGEMENT

(Ac.)

CODE 314

DEFINITION

The management or removal of woody (non-herbaceous or succulent) plants including those that are invasive and noxious.

PURPOSE

- Create the desired plant community consistent with the ecological site
- Restore or release desired vegetative cover to protect soils, control erosion, reduce sediment, improve water quality or enhance stream flow
- Maintain, modify, or enhance fish and wildlife habitat
- Improve forage accessibility, quality and quantity for livestock and wildlife
- Manage fuel loads to achieve desired conditions
- Control pervasive plant species to a desired level of treatment that will ultimately contribute to creation or maintenance of an ecological "steady state," addressing the need for forage, wildlife habitat, and/or water quality

CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES

On all lands except active cropland where the removal, reduction, or manipulation of woody (non-herbaceous or succulent) plants is desired.

This practice does not apply to removal of woody vegetation by prescribed fire (use Prescribed Burning - 338) or removal of woody vegetation to facilitate a land use change.

When the intent is to manage trees for silvicultural purposes, use Forest Stand Improvement (666).

CRITERIA

General Criteria Applicable to All Purposes

Brush management will be designed to achieve the desired plant community based on species composition, structure, density, and canopy (or foliar) cover or height.

Brush management will be applied in a manner to achieve the desired control of the target woody species and protection of desired species. This will be accomplished by mechanical, chemical, burning, or biological methods either alone or in combination. When prescribed burning is used as a method, the Prescribed Burning standard (338) will also be applied.

NRCS will not develop biological or chemical treatment recommendations except for biological control utilizing grazing animals. In such cases, Prescribed Grazing (528) is used to ensure desired results are achieved and maintained. NRCS may provide clients with acceptable biological and/or chemical control references.

When herbicides are used, environmental hazards and site-specific application criteria listed on pesticide labels and contained in extension service and other approved pest management references must be followed. Adverse effects to threatened and endangered species must be avoided.

Brush management will include post treatment measures as needed to achieve resource management objectives.

Conservation practice standards are reviewed periodically and updated if needed. To obtain the current version of this standard, contact your Natural Resources Conservation Service [State Office](#) or visit the [Field Office Technical Guide](#).

Livestock and people access will be controlled based on management methods applied and restrictions as listed on the chemical labels.

Manage and/or dispose of treated weed species in a manner that will prevent the spread of weeds to new sites.

Additional Criteria for Restoring or Releasing Desired Vegetative Cover to Protect Soils, Control Erosion, Reduce Sediment, Improve Water Quality or Enhance Stream Flow

Choose a method of control that results in the least amount of soil disturbance if soil erosion potential is high and revegetation is slow or uncertain leaving the site vulnerable to long-term exposure to soil loss.

In conjunction with other conservation practices, the number, sequence and timing of soil disturbing operations shall be managed to maintain soil loss within acceptable levels using approved erosion prediction technology.

Additional Criteria to Restore, Release or Create Native or Desired Plant Communities and Wildlife Habitats

Apply brush management in a manner to protect the health and vigor of native or desired plant species.

Use specifications that are ecologically sound and defensible. Treatments must consider the vegetation dynamics, and the potential and capability to support the desired plant community. Utilize ecological site descriptions or plant community classifications, if available, or base specifications on the best approximation of the desired plant community composition, structure, and function.

Treatments will be conducted during periods of the year when weed species are most vulnerable and will promote restoration of the native or desired plant communities.

Apply herbaceous weed control in a manner that maintain or enhance important wildlife habitat requirements.

Treatments will be conducted during periods of the year that accommodate reproduction and other life-cycle requirements of target wildlife and pollinator species.

Apply treatments that maintain or enhance plant community composition and structure to meet the requirements of target wildlife species.

Additional Criteria to Improve Forage Accessibility, Quality and Quantity for Livestock and Wildlife

Timing and sequence of brush management shall be planned in coordination with specifications developed for Prescribed Grazing (528).

Additional Criteria to Manage Fuel Loads to Achieve Desired Conditions

Control undesirable woody plants in a manner that creates the desired plant community, including the desired fuel load, to reduce the risk of wildfire, facilitate the future application of prescribed fire.

Additional Criteria to Control Pervasive Plant Species

Pervasive plant species are controlled to a desired level of treatment that will ultimately contribute to creation or maintenance of an ecological "steady state," addressing the need for forage, wildlife habitat, and/or water quality.

Plan and apply additional treatments to achieve effective control of pervasive plant species through reapplication.

Note: Financial assistance programs may dictate criteria in addition to, or more restrictive than those specified in this practice standard, including limits on the number of treatments that may be applied.

CONSIDERATIONS

Consider using Integrated Pest Management (595) in support of brush management.

Consider the appropriate time period for treatment. Some brush management activities can be effective when applied within a single year; others may require multiple years of treatment(s) to achieve desired objectives.

Consider impacts and consequences to obligate species (species dependent on the target woody species) when significant changes are planned to existing and adjacent plant communities.

Consider impacts to wildlife food supplies, space, and cover availability when planning the method and amount of brush management.

State issued licenses may be required when using chemical pesticide treatments.

For air quality purposes, consider using chemical methods of brush management that minimize chemical drift and excessive chemical usage and consider mechanical methods of brush

management that minimize the entrainment of particulate matter.

PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

Plans and specifications for the treatment option(s) selected by the decision maker will be recorded for each field or management unit where brush management will be applied.

Prepare brush management plans and specifications that conform to all applicable federal, state, and local laws. These documents will contain the following data as a minimum:

- Goals and objectives clearly stated.
- Pre-treatment cover or density of the target plant(s) and the planned post-treatment cover or density and desired efficacy.
- Maps, drawings, and/or narratives detailing or identifying areas to be treated, pattern of treatment (if applicable), and areas that will not be disturbed.
- A monitoring plan that identifies what should be measured (including timing and frequency) and that documents the changes in the plant community (compare with objectives) will be implemented.

For Mechanical Treatment Methods: Plans and specifications will include items 1 through 4, above, plus the following:

- Types of equipment and any modifications necessary to enable the equipment to adequately complete the job.
- Dates of treatment to best effect control
- Operating instructions (if applicable)
- Techniques or procedures to be followed

For Chemical Treatment Methods: Plans and specifications will include items 1 through 4, above, plus the following:

- Acceptable chemical treatment references for containment and management or control of target species
- Evaluation and interpretation of herbicide risks associated with the selected treatment(s)
- Acceptable dates or plant growth stage at application to best effect control and dampen reinvasion

- Any special mitigation, timing considerations or other factors (such as soil texture and organic matter content) that must be considered to ensure the safest, most effective application of the herbicide
- Reference to product label instructions

For Biological Treatment Methods: Plans and specifications will include items 1 through 4, above, plus the following:

- Acceptable biological treatment references for containment and management or control of target species
- Kind of grazing animal to be used, if applicable
- Timing, frequency, duration and intensity of grazing or browsing
- Desired degree of grazing or browsing use for effective control of target species
- Maximum allowable degree of use on desirable non-target species
- Special mitigation, precautions, or requirements associated with the selected treatment(s)

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

Operation: Brush management practices shall be applied using approved materials and procedures. Operations will comply with all local, state, and federal laws and ordinances.

Success of the practice shall be determined by evaluating post-treatment regrowth of target species after sufficient time has passed to monitor the situation and gather reliable data. Length of evaluation periods will depend on the woody species being monitored, proximity of propagules (seeds, branches, and roots) to the site, transport mode of seeds (wind or animals) and methods and materials used.

The operator will develop a safety plan for individuals exposed to chemicals, including telephone numbers and addresses of emergency treatment centers and the telephone number for the nearest poison control center. The National Pesticide Information Center (NPIC) telephone number in Corvallis, Oregon, may also be given for non-emergency information: **1-800-858-7384**, Monday to Friday, 6:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Pacific Time.

The national Chemical Transportation Emergency Center (CHEMTRAC) telephone number is: 1-800-424-9300.

When using chemical treatment, the following operation requirements shall be included in the plan:

- Follow label requirements for mixing/loading setbacks from wells, intermittent streams and rivers, natural or impounded ponds and lakes, and reservoirs.
- Post signs, according to label directions and/or federal, state, tribal, and local laws, around fields that have been treated. Follow restricted entry intervals.
- Dispose of herbicides and herbicide containers in accordance with label directions and adhere to federal, state, tribal, and local regulations.
- Read and follow label directions and maintain appropriate Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS). MSDS and pesticide labels may be accessed on the Internet at: <http://www.greenbook.net/>
- Calibrate application equipment according to recommendations before each seasonal use and with each major chemical and site change.
- Replace worn nozzle tips, cracked hoses, and faulty gauges on spray equipment.
- Maintain records of brush/shrub control for at least two years. Herbicide application records shall be in accordance with USDA Agricultural Marketing Service's Pesticide Recordkeeping Program and state-specific requirements.

Maintenance: Following initial application, some regrowth, resprouting, or reoccurrence of brush may be expected. Spot treatment of individual plants or areas needing re-treatment should be completed as needed while woody vegetation is small and most vulnerable to desired treatment procedures.

Review and update the plan periodically in order to:

- Incorporate new IPM technology;

- Respond to grazing management and complex plant population changes; and
- Avoid the development of plant resistance to herbicide chemicals.

REFERENCES

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