

**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.

**CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES**

On all lands (rangeland, native or naturalized pasture, pasture, and hayland) 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 (use Land Clearing (460)).

**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.

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

NRCS will not develop biological or chemical treatment recommendations except for biological control utilizing grazing animals. NRCS may provide clients with acceptable biological and/or chemical control references. For control of invasive woody plants, refer to Nebraska Range and Pasture Technical Note #18, Procedures Using Targeted Grazing – Invasive Plant Management, and the current “Guide for Weed Management in Nebraska” UNL Extension EC130. In such cases, Prescribed Grazing (528) is used to ensure desired results are achieved and maintained on grazing lands.

Follow-up treatments may be necessary to achieve objectives.

**Additional Criteria for Creating the Desired Plant Community Consistent with the Ecological Site**

Use applicable Ecological Site Description (ESD) State and Transition models, to develop specifications that are ecologically sound and defensible. Treatments must be congruent with dynamics of the ecological site(s) and keyed to state and plant community phases that have the potential and capability to support the desired plant community. If an ESD is not available, base specifications on the best approximation of the desired plant community composition, structure, and function.

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](#).

**NE-T.G. Notice 648  
Section IV  
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### **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 Maintain, Modify or Enhance Fish and Wildlife Habitat**

Brush management will be planned and applied in a manner to meet the habitat requirements for target wildlife species as determined by an approved habitat evaluation procedure. Refer to Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Worksheets, WHEW, (NE-CPA-33, NE-CPA-34, NE-CPA-35, NE-CPA-36 and NE-CPA-43) for the appropriate landuse or the species-based Habitat Evaluation Tool (Nebraska Conservation Planning Sheets NE-PS-23, NE-PS-24, and NE-PS-25).

Conduct treatments during periods of the year that accommodate reproduction and other life-cycle requirements of target wildlife and pollinator species, or species of concern, and in accordance with specifications developed for Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management (644) and Upland Wildlife Habitat Management (645). Brush management will be planned in a manner that it will not adversely affect an endangered or threatened species (plant, or animal) or their habitats. The destruction of nesting habitat for migratory birds is not allowed between April 1 and July 15 due to the potential for that activity to result in a "take" of a migratory bird. Refer to applicable guide sheets in the NE-CPA-52.

### **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.

If brush management practices result in large amounts of downed debris in sensitive locations that would contribute to wildfire intensity or hazard, removal should be recommended. Refer to Firebreak (394) standard for recommended protection procedures.

## **CONSIDERATIONS**

Consider the use of prescribed burning for control of Eastern Red Cedar by itself or in conjunction with Brush Management, refer to Prescribed Burning (338) for details.

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.

Cultural resources will be considered when planning this practice. This practice has the

potential for adversely affecting cultural resources and compliance with GM 420; Part 401 during the planning process is necessary.

Local cultural values will be incorporated into the practice design in a technically sound manner where appropriate.

### 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:

1. Goals and objectives clearly stated.
2. Pre-treatment cover or density of the target plant(s) and the planned post-treatment cover or density and desired efficacy.
3. Maps, drawings, and/or narratives detailing or identifying areas to be treated, pattern of treatment (if applicable), and areas that will not be disturbed.
4. 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.
5. Appropriate Nebraska Conservation Planning form NE-CPA-314 (Plan for Mechanical and/or Chemical Brush Control), NE-CPA-19 (Brush Management Plan)

**For Mechanical Treatment Methods:** Plans and specifications will include items 1 through 5, 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 5, 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
- Pesticide leaching and runoff potential of each soil map unit.
- Location of sensitive areas such as streams, wetlands or other areas and setbacks, if applicable.
  - Reference to product label instructions
  - Special precautions to avoid damaging non-target species (such as chemical treatments that can affect nearby desirable trees, cause off-site damage, etc.)
- Refer to the current "Guide for Weed Management in Nebraska". The weed management guide can be found at: <http://www.ianr.unl.edu/pubs/fieldcrops/ec130.html>
- Acceptable chemical treatment references for containment and management of target species
- Document techniques to be used, planned dates and rates of application

Evaluation and interpretation of herbicide risks associated with the selected treatment(s) using WIN-PST or other approved tools. The University of Nebraska Weedsoft Program can be substituted for leach loss potential when runoff solution/adsorbed is not a concern on the site.

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**For Biological Treatment Methods:** Plans and specifications will include items 1 through 5, 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)

For Prescribed Burning Treatment in Conjunction with Brush Management:

- Brush Management Plan must be developed and implemented to accommodate Prescribe Burn Plan requirements (i.e. placement of brush piles to be burned)
- Refer to Prescribed Burning (338) for guidance.

### 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

- 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.
- monitoring of reoccurring brush will be done annually and appropriate treatment applied within the first year following initial treatment and thereafter on an annual basis.
- Follow-up treatments using a combination of control methods or using a different control method than the initial treatment (mechanical, chemical, biological and/or prescribed burning) may be needed to maintain desired control.

## REFERENCES

Branson, F. A, G. F. Gifford, K. G. Renard, R. F Hadley, and E. H. Reid, ed. 1981. Rangeland Hydrology, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Society for Range Management, CO.

Guide for Weed Management in Nebraska UNL Extension EC130  
<http://www.ianrpubs.unl.edu/eublic/live/ec130/build/ec130.pdf>

Heady, H. F. and D. Child, 1994. Rangeland Ecology and Management, Westview Press, CO.

Holechek, J. L., R. D. Pieper and C. H. Herbel. 2000. Range management principles and practices, 5<sup>th</sup> edition. Prentice Hall, NJ.

Job Sheet for Grass Seeding  
[http://efotg.nrcs.usda.gov/references/public/NE/NE-CPA-8\(grass\\_seeding\\_jobsheet\).pdf](http://efotg.nrcs.usda.gov/references/public/NE/NE-CPA-8(grass_seeding_jobsheet).pdf)

Krausman, P. R., ed. 1996. Rangeland Wildlife. Society for Range Management, CO.

Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) and pesticide labels may be accessed on the Internet at: <http://www.greenbook.net/>

Monsen, S. B., R. Stevens, and N.L. Shaw, comps. 2004. Restoring Western Ranges and Wildlands, Volume 1. Gen. Tech. Rep. RMRS-

GTR-136-1, USDA, Forest Service, Fort Collins, CO.

Nebraska Conservation Planning Sheets PS-23, Northern Bobwhite Quail (BWQ) Habitat Evaluation Tool  
[http://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov/references/public/NE/PS23\(BWQ\\_Appraisal\\_Form\).xlsx](http://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov/references/public/NE/PS23(BWQ_Appraisal_Form).xlsx)

Nebraska Conservation Planning Sheets PS-24, Greater Prairie Chicken (GPC) Habitat Evaluation Tool  
[http://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov/references/public/NE/PS24\(GPC\\_Appraisal\\_Form\).xlsx](http://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov/references/public/NE/PS24(GPC_Appraisal_Form).xlsx)

Nebraska Conservation Planning Sheets PS-25 Plains Sharp-tailed Grouse (STG) Habitat Evaluation Tool  
[http://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov/references/public/NE/PS25\(STG\\_Appraisal\\_Form\).xlsx](http://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov/references/public/NE/PS25(STG_Appraisal_Form).xlsx)

Nebraska Range and Pasture Technical Note #18, Procedures Using Targeted Grazing – Invasive Plant Management.  
[http://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov//references/public/NE/Range\\_and\\_Pasture\\_Technical\\_Note\\_18.pdf](http://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov//references/public/NE/Range_and_Pasture_Technical_Note_18.pdf)

NRCS Land Clearing (460) <ftp://ftp-fc.sc.egov.usda.gov/NHQ/practice-standards/standards/460.pdf>

NRCS Nebraska Firebreak (394)  
NRCS Nebraska Forest Stand Improvement (666)  
<http://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov//references/public/NE/NE666.pdf>

NRCS Nebraska NE-CPA-19 Brush Management Plan  
[http://efotg.nrcs.usda.gov/references/public/NE/NE-CPA-19\(Brush\\_Management\\_Plan\).xlsx](http://efotg.nrcs.usda.gov/references/public/NE/NE-CPA-19(Brush_Management_Plan).xlsx)

NRCS Nebraska NE-CPA-52 Environmental Evaluation Worksheet  
[http://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov/references/public/NE/NE-CPA-52\(Environmental\\_Evaluation\\_for\\_Conservation\\_Planning\).xlsx](http://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov/references/public/NE/NE-CPA-52(Environmental_Evaluation_for_Conservation_Planning).xlsx)

## BRUSH MANAGEMENT (314)-6

NRCS Nebraska NE-CPA-314 Plan for Mechanical and/or Chemical Brush Control  
[http://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov/references/public/NE/NE-CPA-314\(chemical\\_and\\_or\\_mechanical\\_brush\\_control\\_jobsheet\).pdf](http://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov/references/public/NE/NE-CPA-314(chemical_and_or_mechanical_brush_control_jobsheet).pdf)

NRCS Nebraska Prescribed Burning (338)  
<http://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov//references/public/NE/NE338.pdf>

NRCS Nebraska Prescribed Grazing (528)  
<http://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov//references/public/NE/NE528.pdf>

NRCS Nebraska Upland Wildlife Habitat Management (645).  
<http://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov//references/public/NE/NE645.pdf>

NRCS Nebraska Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management (644)  
<http://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov//references/public/NE/NE644.pdf>

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Valentine, J. R., 1989. Range Developments and Improvements, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Academic Press, MA.

Vavra, M., W. A. Laycock, R. D Pieper, eds. 1994. Ecological Implications of Livestock Herbivory in the West. Society for Range Management, CO.

Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Worksheets, WHEW, NE-CPA-34  
[http://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov/references/public/NE/NE-CPA-34\(Pastureland\\_Habitat\\_Worksheet\).docx](http://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov/references/public/NE/NE-CPA-34(Pastureland_Habitat_Worksheet).docx)

Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Worksheets, WHEW, NE-CPA-35  
[http://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov/references/public/NE/NE-CPA-35\(Rangeland\\_Habitat\\_Worksheet\).docx](http://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov/references/public/NE/NE-CPA-35(Rangeland_Habitat_Worksheet).docx)

Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Worksheets, WHEW, NE-CPA-36  
[http://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov/references/public/NE/NE-CPA-36\(Woodland\\_Habitat\\_Worksheet\).docx](http://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov/references/public/NE/NE-CPA-36(Woodland_Habitat_Worksheet).docx)

Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Worksheets, WHEW, NE-CPA-43  
[http://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov/references/public/NE/NE-CPA-43\(Riparian\\_Habitat\\_Worksheet\).docx](http://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov/references/public/NE/NE-CPA-43(Riparian_Habitat_Worksheet).docx)

Wildlife Hayland Habitat Evaluation Worksheets, WHEW, NE-CPA-33  
[http://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov/references/public/NE/NE-CPA-33\(Hayland\\_Habitat\\_Worksheet\).docx](http://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov/references/public/NE/NE-CPA-33(Hayland_Habitat_Worksheet).docx)