

FORAGE HARVEST MANAGEMENT

PRACTICE INTRODUCTION

USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service—Practice Code 511



FORAGE HARVEST MANAGEMENT

Forage harvest management is the cutting and removal of forages from the field as hay, greenchop, or ensilage.

PRACTICE INFORMATION

This practice applies to all land uses where machine harvested forage crops are grown. It is designed to help the farmer or rancher optimize the economic yield of forage at the desired quality and quantity. In addition, the practice provides the following functions:

- Promote vigorous plant growth for improved ground cover and protection from erosion
- Soil improvement provided by healthy vigorous plants that increase soil organic matter, root channels, water-holding capacity, earthworms, etc.
- Maintain stand life for the desired time period
- Maintain desired species composition
- Use forage plants as a nutrient uptake tool to utilize or reduce excess plant nutrients available in the soil
- Provide food and cover for wildlife

The following management concepts are considered in the specifications of this practice:

- Stage of maturity and harvest interval
- Moisture content for cutting silage/haylage, as well as baling as hay
- Length of cut for silage/haylage
- Stubble height maintained for plant health and vigor
- Management considerations that help improve wildlife food and cover
- Control of disease, insects, and weed infestations

COMMON ASSOCIATED PRACTICES

Forage Harvest Management is commonly used in a Conservation Management System with practices such as Nutrient Management (590), Pest Management (595), Pasture and Hay Planting (512), Prescribed Grazing (528), and Conservation Crop Rotation (328).

For more information, refer to the practice standard in the NRCS Field Office Technical Guide and associated specifications and design criteria.

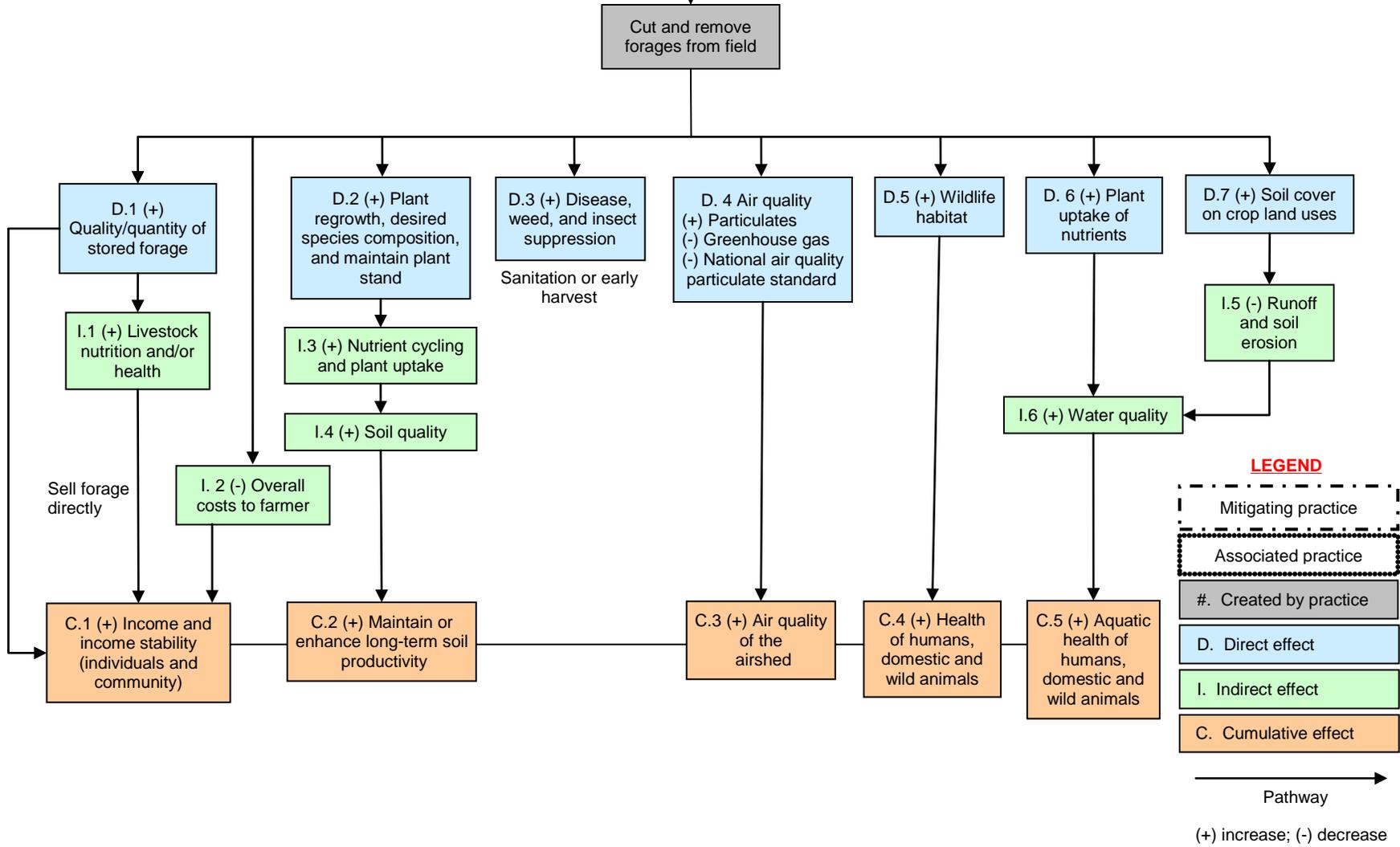
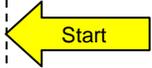
The following page identifies the effects expected to occur when this practice is applied. These effects are subjective and somewhat dependent on variables such as climate, terrain, soil, etc. All appropriate local, State, Tribal, and Federal permits and approvals are the responsibility of the landowners and are presumed to have been obtained. Users are cautioned that these effects are estimates that may or may not apply to a specific site.

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November 2011

Forage Harvest Management (511)

Initial setting: All land uses where machine harvested forage crops are grown



Note: Effects are qualified with a plus (+) or minus (-). These symbols indicate only an increase (+) or a decrease (-) in the effect upon the resource, not whether the effect is beneficial or adverse.

The diagram above identifies the effects expected to occur when this practice is applied according to NRCS practice standards and specifications. These effects are subjective and somewhat dependent on variables such as climate, terrain, soil, etc. All appropriate local, State, Tribal, and Federal permits and approvals are the responsibility of the landowners and are presumed to have been obtained. All income changes are partially dependent upon market fluctuations which are independent of the conservation practices. Users are cautioned that these effects are estimates that may or may not apply to a specific site.