

WETLANDS RESERVE PROGRAM (WRP)
COVER ESTABLISHMENT AND MAINTENANCE REQUIREMENTS
Nebraska Conservation Planning Sheet 19-WRP (January 2008)

Landuser: _____ OPID: _____ County: _____ Date: _____ W
 WRP Contract No./Revision No. : _____ Tract No. _____ Field No(s). _____

**CONDITIONS THAT REQUIRE ACTION TO ESTABLISH AND/OR MAINTAIN
 PROPER VEGETATIVE COVER (OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE REQUIREMENTS)**

1. *Undesirable plants are interfering with the establishment/survival of desirable grasses/legumes/forbs.*
2. *Noxious weeds are present.*
3. *Lack of plant diversity and proper vegetative cover (vegetative cover agreed to in WRP contract is not present).*
4. *Bare ground (stand is not thick enough to provide erosion control and/or proper vegetative cover).*
5. *Undesirable plants are interfering with the establishment/survival of desired trees/shrubs (only applicable when trees/shrubs are planted).*
6. *Undesirable plants are interfering with desired wetland functions (only applicable on wetlands acres).*

ACTIONS NEEDED TO ESTABLISH AND/OR MAINTAIN PROPER VEGETATIVE COVER
General Requirements for Maintaining Proper Vegetative Cover

Appropriate maintenance activities will control noxious weeds and establish desired vegetative cover (as agreed to in the WRP contract). When any of the conditions listed above are present, the use of appropriate maintenance is required. Once vegetative cover is fully established, management activities will be required on herbaceous cover to enhance the vegetative cover diversity and wildlife habitat (refer to Nebraska Conservation Planning Sheet 20 – WRP Vegetation and Hydrology Management Considerations for guidance). General maintenance activities are described below. When trees/shrubs are planted on the contract acreage, refer to the general requirements below and the tree and shrub planting plan for maintenance requirements. For wetlands on the contract acreage, refer to the general requirements below for additional guidance and Nebraska Conservation Planning Sheet 20 – WRP Vegetation and Hydrology Management Considerations for information on management options.

General Weed Control Requirements for Establishing Grass/Legume/Forb Cover

The primary cause of grass/legume/forb seeding failures is weed competition, especially grassy weeds such as foxtail. Every attempt should be made to control weeds prior to seeding (i.e., use of pre-emergent herbicides, cover crops, previous weed control efforts, etc.). Appropriate weed control methods will be used in a timely fashion only when weeds threaten stand establishment.

General Requirements for the Establishment and Maintenance of Tree/Shrub Cover

WEED CONTROL

The primary cause of tree/shrub planting failures is weed competition or improper seedbed preparation. Every attempt should be made to control weeds prior to planting (i.e., use of pre-emergent herbicides, cover crops, previous weed control efforts, etc.). When weeds inhibit tree/shrub establishment, weeds will be mowed/clipped next to the trees/shrubs, or sprayed with appropriate herbicides. Consider using fabric mulch in areas where moisture is severely limited or serious weed competition exists.

REPLANTING

Trees/shrubs will be replanted as necessary in 2nd and subsequent years until the desired stand is obtained. Tree/shrub plantings are considered established when survival for the entire planting is at least 70% and/or meets minimum density by size class for riparian forest buffers (refer to Forestry Technical Note No. 63 for more information).

General Requirements for the Establishment and Maintenance of Natural Regeneration Wetland Vegetation

Natural regeneration of wetland vegetation is preferred where suitable seed banks exist or where natural succession or colonization of desired native wetland species will dominate within five years. Desired cover will initially include mostly annual wetland plants and eventually a diverse stand of both annual and perennial wetland cover. Some sites will be subject to long-term flooding or erosion/scouring which will set-back the natural regeneration process. Open water and bare mud flats are a natural condition within wetlands and provide important habitat for shorebirds, waterfowl, and many other wildlife species. Management practices may be needed to control undesirable vegetation such as: invasive or exotic plant species; trees; or solid stands of cattail, bulrush, reed canarygrass and others. Detailed information on management options for wetlands can be found in Nebraska Conservation Planning Sheet 20 – WRP Vegetation and Hydrology Management Considerations.

Mechanical Weed Control Requirements

- Shredding/mowing will only be conducted in areas of the field where broadleaf weeds are threatening stand establishment (e.g., spot treatment) to avoid unnecessary detrimental impacts to wildlife habitat.
- Shredding/mowing is relatively ineffective for annual grass weed control.
- Shredding/mowing must be above the height of the seeded grasses/legumes/forbs, and is most effective in June and early July for broadleaf weed control (*shredding/mowing during this timeframe can be detrimental to nesting birds and should be minimized*).

General Herbicide Use Requirements

- All herbicides must be applied according to the current GUIDE FOR WEED MANAGEMENT IN NEBRASKA and specific product label restrictions (if trees/shrubs are present, care must be taken to avoid damage).
- Use of labeled herbicides is appropriate when undesirable plants are hindering establishment of grass/legumes/forbs, or as a tool to maintain and enhance proper vegetative cover as agreed to in the WRP contract.
- Spot spraying at the appropriate time for target weed species is preferred.
- Avoid herbicides that cause damage to the proper stand of grasses/legumes/forbs or wetland vegetation (if applicable).
- PLATEAU herbicide may be used (for post and/or pre-emergent weed control) prior to seeding and after establishment on warm season grasses with forbs/legumes.

Noxious Weed Control Requirements

- State law requires the control of noxious weeds.
- The best control method for specific noxious weed species will be used. (Contact your county weed authority for best methods.)
- Scout and treat for noxious weeds on a timely basis.
- Always make follow-up inspections after each control treatment for missed plants.
- Individual plants of Musk or Plumeless Thistle, Spotted or Diffuse Knawweed, and Purple Loosestrife can be dug or pulled.
- Spot spraying with appropriate herbicides, such as PLATEAU or TORDON (see current GUIDE FOR WEED MANAGEMENT IN NEBRASKA and specific product label), is often the preferred control method, and in some cases the only acceptable method, to control established stands of Canada Thistle or Leafy Spurge.
- Avoid disking and/or interseeding legumes/forbs in areas of fields infested with any **noxious** weeds. Tillage may cause germination of seeds and spread of infestations by the transport of seed (of any of the noxious weeds) or by the transport of roots (of Canada Thistle and Leafy Spurge).

Weed Control Activities and Wildlife Habitat Considerations

Wildlife habitat is a primary objective within the Wetlands Reserve Program and should be addressed when implementing maintenance activities. Annual broadleaf plants or weeds such as ragweeds, sunflowers, kochia, marehail, and several others are a natural part of the “succession” between bare ground and established perennial grasses, forbs/legumes, and/or trees/shrubs and provide important habitat to a broad array of wildlife species. When present at low levels, these plants do not inhibit the long-term establishment of seeded or planted species and may even improve the growing conditions by providing protecting seedlings from hot sun and wind during the summer, trapping additional moisture as snow during the winter, and suppressing troublesome grassy weeds. Proper site preparation, including the use of cover crops, is an important step to ensure that subsequent weed populations do not become excessive. The control of non-noxious, broadleaf weeds using mechanical or chemical means is not recommended unless the conditions are likely to cause a seeding failure. If control methods are used, “spot treatments” and timing outside of the primary nesting period (May 1 through July 15) will reduce the impacts to wildlife habitat.

Volunteer Tree Removal Requirements for Maintaining Herbaceous Seedings

On some sites, the encroachment of volunteer woody species (primarily trees) will gradually reduce the habitat quality of WRP tracts planted to herbaceous seedings. The volunteer establishment of species such as Siberian elm, cottonwood, red cedar, and others has been documented on WRP tracts in Nebraska. Management practices such as prescribed burning will reduce the likelihood of volunteer trees colonizing a WRP tract. However, it may become necessary to remove larger/older individual trees with mechanical methods. Treatment of stumps with appropriate herbicides should be conducted for species capable of re-sprouting.