

# CONSERVATION RESERVE PROGRAM (CRP) TREE PRACTICE MAINTENANCE & MID-CONTRACT MANAGEMENT

## Nebraska Conservation Planning Sheet 20D-CRP (June 2008)

Landuser: \_\_\_\_\_ OPID: \_\_\_\_\_ County: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
CRP Contract No./Revision No. : \_\_\_\_\_ Tract No. \_\_\_\_\_ Field No(s). \_\_\_\_\_

### MAINTENANCE AND MANAGEMENT REQUIREMENTS ON RE-ENROLLED CRP CONTRACTS

**Note:** Use Planning Sheet 19 and guidance in Tree Planting Procedures (380TPP) for maintenance on new tree plantings.

#### General Guidance on Tree Maintenance and Management Plans

The maintenance/management plan that is developed and provided to the cooperator for implementation shall be site specific and include measurable items that must be completed to fulfill maintenance obligations and/or mid-contract management requirements. Check all maintenance/management items applicable to the site that must be addressed. Where appropriate, specific numbers, sizes, distances, timeframes, and other measurable parameters will be included in the comment section for each checked item. An aerial photo or plan map should also be attached to clearly identify areas which to be treated. The plan must also be provided to the local Farm Service Agency office in order to allow for reimbursement of cost-share assistance on applicable items related to the implementation of mid-contract management activities.

Plan requirements shall be balanced between measures that: 1) will result in benefits to plant diversity and wildlife habitat, 2) preserve the intended function of the tree planting, and 3) are reasonable and practical to implement.

Activities which remove habitats that provide benefits to specific wildlife species such as standing dead trees (snags), dead limbs, and brush piles or result in routine mowing of herbaceous vegetation do not fulfill the mid-contract management requirements.

#### Maintenance

Tree plantings require several important maintenance activities to be conducted on a periodic basis. These include: replanting following tree/shrub mortality to establish approved vegetative cover; control of noxious weeds and competitive vegetation; and prevention of animal-caused damage. Dead or damaged trees should be replaced by replanting as needed within 3 years after the initial planting. However, there may be instances when replants need to be installed at a much later time. Livestock will be excluded to prevent damage to the tree planting. Competitive vegetation, including noxious weeds, excessive annual weed growth, and perennial, sod-forming grasses, will be controlled before and after planting. The 2-CRP Manual, Para. 238, outlines maintenance as the participant's responsibility without additional cost-share, since the payment rate calculation includes maintenance costs.

- Replanting due to mortality of original trees and shrubs may be necessary for field windbreaks, shelterbelts, and living snowfences which rely on a continuous line of trees without blank spaces within rows. Minor alterations in species selection for replants are acceptable if poor survival was due to failure of species adaptation to microsites.  
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- Control of undesirable perennial grasses (e.g., smooth brome) or weeds is necessary if they are inhibiting tree growth due to competition. Careful use of tillage or burn down herbicide applications can be used to remedy these situations. In some cases, grasses or weeds may be present within the weed barrier slots and must also be addressed.  
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- Sites with weed barrier fabric should be inspected on a regular basis (e.g., every 3-5 years) to ensure fabric slots are opened up enough to prevent girdling of any tree trunks. Weed barrier fabric that is loose must be anchored or removed as appropriate.  
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- Removal of undesirable volunteer and/or invasive trees or shrubs may be necessary. Invasive tree species detract from the intended purpose of the tree planting (e.g., volunteer elm trees growing between rows of a windbreak).  
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**Management**

The 2-CRP Manual, Para. 239, and the associated NE Exhibit 5, require that management which “ensures plant diversity and wildlife benefits” be implemented during the second contract period on re-enrolled CRP tree/shrub planting contracts. These activities are eligible for cost-share. Consultation with a forester is necessary prior to implementation of management actions. Management recommendations must include items to be accomplished so that the tree planting fulfills its intended function (e.g., windbreak established during first contract period).

- Thinning may be appropriate in cases where trees have or will become too crowded to allow for adequate space and sunlight. This is especially true for riparian forest buffers, wildlife plantings, and block tree plantings. Depending on the site, it may be possible to stack removed trees into brush piles or girdle the bark of the tree and leave it standing to provide added wildlife habitat features. All thinning must be prescribed by a forester.

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- Enhanced diversity of herbaceous vegetation may be needed in areas where vegetation between tree rows is greater than 20 feet wide. Management activities can include disking, or the application of a burn down herbicide, to set back or kill existing vegetation, followed by interseeding of desired legumes and/or native forbs.

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- Interplanting of new tree or shrub species to increase plant diversity and benefit wildlife habitat may be appropriate within some established tree plantings. Native shrubs provide several habitat elements desired by many wildlife species and can be added as an understory, or on the outer perimeter of established tree plantings. A site-specific planting plan will be needed.

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- Pruning of dead and broken branches improves the health and vigor of existing trees. It is important that efforts to “clean up” a tree planting are not so intensive as to result in a reduction of wildlife habitat. Standing dead trees (snags), dead limbs, and brush piles provide benefits to specific wildlife species that use these areas to forage on insects, create nesting cavities, and provide shelter.

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Additional Comments:

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**I (We) concur in the maintenance/management provisions outlined in Nebraska Conservation Planning Sheet 20D-CRP.**

COOPERATOR (Producer):		Date:	
COOPERATOR (Producer):		Date:	
NRCS Representative:		Date:	
FSA Representative:		Date:	
NRD Representative:		Date:	
Forester:(agency) _____		Date:	