

**NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE  
CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD**

**FOREST LAND MANAGEMENT**

(Acre)

**CODE 709**

**DEFINITION**

Manage forested areas for fiber, food, water, recreation, aesthetics, wildlife habitat, plant biodiversity and forest health.

**PURPOSE**

- Protect soil quality and condition
- Maintain or enhance water quality and quantity
- Maintain or improve forest productivity
- Maintain or improve forest health
- Maintain or improve plant diversity
- Improve aesthetic and recreational values
- Improve wildlife habitat
- Achieve or maintain a desired understory plant community for forest products, grazing, and browsing.

**CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES**

- On all forest land
- On land capable and suited to growing trees.

**CRITERIA**

**General Criteria Applicable to All Purposes**

Forest Management to achieve the intended purpose(s) shall be based on a forest management plan that addresses the owner's objectives as well as perpetuating a sustainable forest ecosystem based on ecological parameters such as forest types, soil types, past harvest history, natural community types and successional trends.

Plans for forest management shall be developed in accordance with policy requirements of the NRCS National Forestry Manual (NFM) Section 536.01b and the technical requirements of the NRCS Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG), and procedures contained in the National Planning Procedures Handbook (NPPH), and the NRCS National Forestry Handbook (NFH) Section 636.1

Plans for forest management shall comply with all applicable federal, state and local laws and regulations.

Plans for forest management that are elements of a more comprehensive conservation plan shall recognize other requirements of the conservation plan and be compatible with its other requirements.

**NRCS, NHFOTG**

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The plan should include a description of the existing forest condition and desired forest condition.

The plan shall be developed for a minimum management period of 10 years.

Describe and give rationale for selection of silvicultural system including ecological and economic considerations.

Planned activities shall be examined collectively. Coordinate and time activities to optimize the stated purposes of conservation practices. Activities are not limited to conservation practices.

Planned activities shall lead to a distribution of age classes appropriate to forest conditions, landowner objectives and local ecosystems.

Provide a schedule of activities over at least a 5 year period.

#### **General Criteria Applicable to Protect Soil Quality and Condition**

Develop written guidelines to protect the soil resource during and after harvest operations and site preparation for planting.

Control or prevent erosion. Soil loss will not exceed allowable average annual soil loss (T) as defined by the Universal Soil Loss Equation.

Minimize impacts on landscape when placing roads, harvest trails and landings.

Seed disturbed areas for erosion and sediment control.

Maintain adequate cover to control soil erosion.

Use proper grazing that will not adversely impact new seeding of erosion control species.

Prevent gully formation.

Avoid soil compaction during all activities occurring in the forest.

#### **General Criteria Applicable to Maintain Water Quality and Quantity**

Maintain the quality and quantity of water flowing from and through forest lands.

Ensure road location, design, construction maintenance, and vegetation reestablishment reduces water pollution.

Use and maintain filter strips or buffers to remove or reduce the transportation of sediment or organic matter into streams, lakes or other sensitive areas.

Develop written guidelines for stream crossings. Avoid altering stream courses and drainage patterns.

Assess and manage the impacts of forest activities on water quantities.

#### **General Criteria Applicable to Maintain Forest Productivity**

Sustainable harvest levels shall be based on one or more of the following:

- Clearly document growth and regeneration data
- Site index models
- Site productivity or culmination of mean annual increment (CMAI) growth
- Desired future condition
- Consideration of cyclical and natural disturbances.

Develop written guidelines on protecting the residual forest, including regeneration, from damage from harvest operations.

Identify tree and shrub species to be retained.

Follow established guide lines for spacing, density, size class, number and amounts of trees and understory species to be retained.

Ensure spacing is by species and size class distribution.

Identify pest problems, including insects, mammals and invasive plants, and develop management guidelines.

Identify noxious and invasive species needing control.

**General Criteria Applicable to Maintain Plant Diversity**

Assess current conditions including ecological processes such as disturbance regimes, unique natural communities such as old-growth, rare and imperiled plant species including those that are state or federally listed, and water and soil resources.

Develop written guidelines addressing the management of these special plant species and their communities.

Native plant species shall be inventoried and managed for vertical and horizontal structural complexity, and understory species diversity.

Vary the criteria according to state, federal or local requirements.

**General Criteria Applicable to Improve Aesthetic and Recreational Values**

Develop written guidelines to improve ecotourism and recreation, including hunting and fishing.

Select and manage plant materials adapted to the soil and climatic conditions and that fulfill a specific need.

**General Criteria Applicable to Improve Wildlife Habitat**

Develop written guidelines to recognize and maintain forest resources for terrestrial and aquatic life.

Identify and develop specific management guidelines for habitat protection areas, including riparian buffers, critical habitats and those with special needs.

Coordinate forest and wildlife management objectives and activities.

**General Criteria Applicable to Maintain a Desired Understory Plant Community for Forest Products, Grazing, and Browsing**

Develop written guidelines for inventorying plants, monitoring plant populations and protecting the forest ecology while allowing the sustainable harvest of non-timber products.

Assess the impacts of timber production and harvest on the non-timber products.

Space trees properly to produce desired forage production, increase desirable woody plants for browsing, and provide conditions favorable for understory forest products.

**CONSIDERATIONS**

Consider adjacent and cumulative land use effects.

Consider social effects of decisions.

Assess potential landowner and user liability in the development of specifications for this practice.

**PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS**

Plans and specifications shall be in keeping with this standard and shall describe the requirements for applying the practice to achieve its intended purpose(s).

The following components shall be included in the forest management plan:

- Statement of landowner's goals and objectives
- Description of ecological and silvicultural systems and rationale for selection of silvicultural system
- Maps of forest and soil types
- Location of roads, property boundaries, protected areas
- Planned management activities, including regeneration/harvest strategies and guidelines for addressing soil, water, air, plant, animal, and human resource problems and concerns. They may or may not be conservation practices.

## **OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE**

Provide a yearly summary of forest management activities and maintain records of yield for all forest products harvested, including non-timber resources.

Conduct periodic inspections during and after treatment activities to ensure that the purposes are achieved and resource damage is minimized, e.g., post harvest inspection, assessment of insects, disease and other pests, storm damage, and damage by trespass. The results of the inspections shall determine the need for additional treatment under this practice.

Review timetables, schedules and coordination actions periodically and modify as needed.

## **REFERENCES**

Forest Stewardship Council-U.S. 2001. U.S. Regional Standards. ([www.fscstandards.org](http://www.fscstandards.org))