

**NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE
CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD**

LAND CLEARING

(acre)
CODE 460

DEFINITION

Removing trees, stumps, and other vegetation from wooded areas to achieve a conservation objective.

PURPOSE

Facilitate needed land use adjustments and improvements to an existing site in the interest of natural resource conservation.

CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES

This practice applies to wooded areas where the removal of trees, stumps, brush, and other vegetation is needed in carrying out a soil and water conservation plan, and the land to be cleared will be used according to its capabilities.

CRITERIA

The plan shall specify the kinds of timber to be salvaged, lengths of logs, and place of stacking. Method of disposal shall be specified for all material not salvaged. Clearing and disposal methods shall be according to applicable state laws and with due regard to the safety of persons and property.

Special attention shall be given to maintaining or improving habitat for fish and wildlife where applicable. Consideration of such things as strip clearing, windrowing debris, and maintaining den and food trees shall be explored.

The cleared area shall be left in a neat and esthetically pleasing condition that will facilitate the planned use and treatment of the land.

This practice shall only be used as part of a complete conservation management system. Other practices will be applied on the same land as appropriate. These practices may include critical area planting (342), cover crop (340) and others.

A 50-foot wide undisturbed area will be left between the area being cleared and all wetlands, water bodies and perennial streams.

Temporary cover will be established as necessary to control sheet and rill and/or wind erosion on the cleared area until the planned land use is in place.

CONSIDERATIONS

Consider land clearing when the soil is frozen with minimal snow cover or during a dry summer period to minimize disturbance and movement of topsoil.

Ground disturbing activities associated with this practice have the potential to affect significant cultural resources. Consider using methods that cause the least disturbance to the ground surface.

Land clearing is usually more efficient if the tree is less than 4 inches (in) in diameter. For larger trees, the root wad or crown should be removed during drier soil conditions. Rough pushing under wet conditions can create deep rutting and can bury debris complicating final cleanup.

If a salvage harvest is made before clearing, leaving taller stumps will facilitate final clearing and grubbing activities.

Special attention should be given to maintaining habitat for fish and wildlife. Strip clearing, windrowing debris, and maintaining den and food trees can minimize impacts on wildlife.

The orientation and layout of berm piles should be considered. Consider chaining or pushing trees down parallel to each other, and to follow topographical contours. The pile should be high, narrow, and compact and free of topsoil and snow. Piles with excess debris do not cure properly. Berms are normally 15 to 25 ft wide by 10 to 15 ft high, and are spaced 150 to

Conservation practice standards are reviewed periodically, and updated if needed. To obtain the current version of this standard, contact the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

200 ft apart. A break of 30 ft between berms is recommended for every 200 ft of berm length to act as a firebreak, allow natural drainage or runoff, and facilitate equipment.

Land clearing can increase the volume and rate of runoff. This is more pronounced on steeper land.

Consider the steepness of slope when selecting the size and type of equipment needed to clear land.

Consider activities to minimize the spread or introduction of weeds into a newly cleared field.

Consider the disposal of vegetation with regards to carbon sequestration. Burying, composting, or mulching the debris would limit the release of carbon.

PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

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

The plan shall provide for the measures necessary to protect the cleared area from erosion.

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

Provisions shall be made as necessary for operations and maintenance requirements and may include a formal plan for larger or more complex designs.

The following actions shall be carried out to ensure the practice functions as intended throughout its expected life. These actions include normal repetitive activities in the application and use of the practice (operation), repair, and upkeep.

A maintenance program shall be established to maintain vegetative cover while controlling undesired and exotic vegetation.

Watercourses and water quality shall be protected during and after removal of trees and vegetation.

Avoid crossing with heavy equipment when wet.

The use of mechanical treatments, prescribed burning, pesticides or other chemicals shall not compromise the intended purpose.