United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

Conservation Reserve Program
MCM Job Sheet

Ohio – March 2016

CRP MID-CONTRACT MANAGEMENT: PRESCRIBED MOWING

For:					
Field(s):	Acres:	Farm #	Tract #:	CRP CN	
Planned By:					Date:

BACKGROUND

Grassland fields need to be managed so that grasses do not crowd out the forbs and legumes over time. If no disturbance occurs the composition of grassland communities will change over several years through normal plant succession. Typically, grasses begin to dominate stands to the point that beneficial forbs are reduced. Also, the amount of bare ground declines, litter accumulates and overall vegetation density increases. These changes may lead to a decline in habitat value for many desirable wildlife species.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this Prescribed Mowing practice (when used in conjunction with other practices) is to enhance the wildlife habitat value of the enrolled acres by encouraging a more diverse forb/legume community or greater structural diversity. Forbs (any broadleaf plant) and legumes in grasslands are beneficial to birds, insects such as butterflies, and other wildlife. Typically, mowing does not provide the type of benefits the other disturbance activities do. However, in some cases it may be the best method to use to prepare a site for other management practices. **Mowing for CRP mid-contract management may only be used in conjunction with another activity.**

Mowing (when done with other activities) enhances the habitat quality in a variety of ways. Areas that are mowed may be seeded or grow back naturally to a greater variety of plant species, especially forbs; this increases food sources both from seeds and insects found on these plants. Mowing may improve the effectiveness of herbicide application. Mowing may be used prior to soil disturbance to increase the amount of plant residue buried by tillage or to improve the ability to till the ground.

Mowing for mid-contract management is different than mowing used for routine maintenance. Maintenance mowing is primarily directed at reducing unwanted vegetation; prescribed mowing is focused on altering the plant diversity for wildlife.

APPLICABILITY

This practice may be used on CP1, CP2, CP4B, CP4D, CP9, CP10, CP15A, CP21, CP23, CP23A, CP25, CP27, CP28, CP29, CP30, CP33 and CP39.

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SPECIFICATIONS

The following are specifications for prescribed mowing on CRP acreage:

- NRCS eFOTG Standard *Upland Wildlife Habitat Management* (645) will be utilized for this practice.
- Grassland fields must be established for a minimum of three years before initiating prescribed mowing for mid-contract management purposes.
- This practice may only be used where recommended by a site assessor based on site conditions.
- Generally, entire fields will not be mowed; however, in some cases, the plan may call for mowing the entire field.
- If mowing only part of the field, it may be done in strips or blocks as called for in the specifications. Alternate mowed areas with unmowed areas.
- Prescribed mowing of any one area is limited to no more than once every three years.
- Timing and mowing height shall be based on associated management practice and desired conditions.
- For cool season grasses, mowing may be done between July 16 and August 16. Warm season grasses may be mowed between November 1 and February 28. However, there may be circumstances in which other mowing dates are recommended.
- Cutting height shall be at least 4 inches for cool season grasses and 8 inches for warm season grasses unless otherwise specified.
- Mowing residue should be shredded or well distributed to prevent deep litter accumulation or smothering existing plants.
- Mowing shall not be performed in the following areas:
    - Areas where mowing will have minimal affect or potentially cause a negative impact on existing cover.
    - Areas planted to trees and/or shrubs.
    - Riparian forest buffers

CONSIDERATIONS

- Consider spot spraying or mowing areas where noxious or invasive weeds, such as Canada thistle, johnsongrass or reed canarygrass exist. This will reduce the potential for unintentional establishment of these species.
- Mowing in low, wet areas currently dominated by wetland vegetation should be avoided because these areas often add additional plant diversity to the site.
- Consider seeding areas that have been mowed to a mixture of forbs and legumes. Also, native grasses may be added to stands after mowing. See NRCS CRP Job Sheet *Mid-Contract Management: Inter-seeding Fobs, Legumes, Grasses* for guidance on species selection selection.
- Participants should be wary of tile blowholes, groundhog holes, fallen tree limbs, and other hazards that may have developed since they were last in the field.
- Mowing may be a good choice on areas where other MCM practices involving soil disturbance would cause soil erosion or water quality concerns.

CERTIFICATION

The participant is responsible for certifying to FSA when the practice has been completed.

Mowing Schedule

CRP Field Number	Associated MCM Activity	Date Mowing Will Occur	Other Identified Concerns/Recommendations

Mid-Contract Management cost-share payment for this practice is $9.59 per acre.

Cost-share Payment Limitation for all MCM activities is $100.00 per acre total for the life of the contract for a 10-year contract and $125.00 per acre total for a contract in excess of 10 years.

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) is responsible for administering the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). CRP policy requires that starting with Signup 26, participants must perform management activities that maintain or enhance the quality of conservation cover for wildlife benefits.

The FSA has requested the assistance of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and/or other partners to conduct an on-site assessment of the conservation cover. NRCS and/or the partners have evaluated the condition and density of the stand; the grass/forb species present; and have recommended this MCM practice to the FSA and the participant. FSA and NRCS representatives will meet with the participant and discuss the MCM options available and the appropriate incentive payments if applicable.

Signing this MCM Job Sheet is considered an addendum to the Conservation Plan of Operations (CPO). No modification of the CPO will be necessary.

SIGNATURES			
NRCS Representative	Date	FSA Representative	Date
I understand the plan and specifications and agree to perform this practice accordingly.			
Participant			Date

FSA-848 Control Number: