

**NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE
CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD**

RANGE PLANTING

(Acre)
Code 550

DEFINITION

Establishing adapted plants by seeding on native or naturalized grazing land (does not include pasture and hayland planting).

PURPOSES

To prevent excessive soil and water loss and improve water quality, to produce more forage for grazing or browsing animals on rangeland or land used as range from other uses, and to improve the visual quality of grazing land.

CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES

On rangeland, native pasture or naturalized, grazable woodland, and grazed wildlife land.

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Land to be seeded must have soil and climate that can support a satisfactory cover of adapted range forage plants. Grazing management alone cannot restore a satisfactory cover of desirable species within a reasonable period of time. Species or cultivars selected for seeding must be compatible with the planned management of the entire operation unit. Management must be able to maintain the stand after seeding is completed.

SPECIFICATIONS

Most favorable periods for range seeding are considered to be the short rainfall spells occurring in the ranges; in the Caribbean Area this period begins in August.

Seed used should be perennial species adapted to the climatic site conditions that exist and can be expected to remain under good grazing practices. Seed should be of genetic and climatic origin known to be locally adapted.

Guineagrass and buffelgrass are grasses suitable for seeding in most range situations. For seeding rates see Supplement I.

Seedbed preparation is essential to successful grass seeding. This may be soil disturbance by bulldozing, chopping, and disking. At places where seedbed preparation is impractical, satisfactory results may be obtained following a heavy organizing, and broadcasting grass seed by hand.

Many seedlings fail because of weedy invasion. Mowing or chemical sprays may be effectively utilized to control weeds. The area should be deferred from grazing long enough to permit the establishment of seedling, and when grass has made full growth and produced one seed crop. Light grazing, soon after the seeds mature, will usually assist in the spreading and establishment of new seedlings.

Method of seeding: a) Broadcast by hand or spreader mounted on brush control equipment. b) Seed culm or stalk method - culm or stalk with seed still in it. Hay may be scattered by hand, from back or a vehicle, or may be run through a manure spreader. Mulching effect of hay usually gives good stand of grass. Culm should be cut when approximately 2/3 of the grass seeds have matured. c) Drills and planters - where terrain permits its use. Planting depth should not exceed 1/2 inch.

CAUTION

Landusers using chemical herbicides should be cautioned as follows: If herbicides are handled or improperly applied, or if unused portions are not disposed of safely, they may injure humans, domestic animals, desirable plants, and fish, or other wildlife and many contaminate nearby

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crops and other vegetation. Follow the directions and take all precautions on the container label. Herbicides should not be used over or directly adjacent to ponds, lakes, or streams. Landusers should be aware of and adhere to the provisions of local, commonwealth or federal laws and regulations concerning the use of agricultural chemicals.

Water quantity effects - This practice is designed to reestablish and/or enhance vegetation in an area. Runoff may increase during the establishment period, but will be reduced when the reseeded area becomes established. Vegetation will reduce evaporation by providing cover over the soil surface. Established and growing vegetation will utilize and transpire the increased soil moisture resultant from increased infiltration and decreased evaporation. On many rangeland areas, increase in the more desirable grasses causes prolonged stream flow and aquifer recharge. Hoof pans will be broken during this process if mechanical seedbed practices are used, allowing for greater infiltration.

Water quality effects - Increased erosion and sediment yield may occur during the establishment of this practice. This is a temporary situation and sediment yields decrease when reseeded area becomes established. If chemicals are used in the re-establishment process, chances of chemical runoff into downstream water courses are reduced if application is applied according to label instructions. After establishment of the grass cover, grass sod slows runoff, acts as a filter to trap sediment, sediment-attached substances, increases infiltration, and decreases sediment yields.

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

Identify any required items needed to assist in stand establishment such as mowing, flash grazing and herbicides to control weeds. Address insect and disease control needs where they are likely to create establishment problems.

Any necessary reseeding due to drought, insects or other events which prevent adequate stand establishment should be addressed as soon as possible. Recommendations may vary from complete re-establishment to overseeding or spot replanting. Thin stands may only need additional grazing deferment during the growing season.