

**NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE
CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD**

FUEL BREAK

(Ac.)

CODE 383

DEFINITION

A strip or block of land on which the vegetation, debris and detritus have been reduced and/or modified to control or diminish the risk of the spread of fire crossing the strip or block of land.

PURPOSE

Control and reduce the risk of the spread of fire by treating, removing or modifying vegetation, debris and detritus. Also used for prescribed burning by reducing the fuel load and removing vegetation to create an area to buffer the burn area.

CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES

This practice applies on all land where protection from wildfire is needed, lands severely impacted by natural events (ice, tornadoes, fire, etc) and areas to be prescribed burned that require special precautions.

CRITERIA

General Criteria Applicable To All Purposes

Fuel breaks strips or blocks will be of sufficient width and length to meet the intended purposes, but at a minimum of 66 ft wide.

Fuel breaks shall be located to minimize risk to the resources and structures being protected.

Thin the overstory stand sufficiently to reduce the tree canopy and the potential of a crown fire. Space needs to exist between most of the residual tree crowns.

Maintain vertical separation between fuel layers to remove "ladder" fuels, i.e., lowest layers of flammable vegetation do not connect to upper layers so that a fire cannot "step up" to higher canopies.

Treat or remove slash sufficiently and at a time to minimize fuel loadings to acceptable fire risk levels and reduce incidence of harmful insects and disease. Slash can be piled and burned, cut and scattered, chipped or removed from the site.

Manage grasses and forbs to minimize fine fuels through mowing, grazing or burning.

Establish fire-resistant vegetation to further decrease the risk of the spread of fire.

Conservation practice standards are reviewed periodically, and updated if needed. To obtain the current version of this standard, contact the Natural Resources Conservation Service State Office , or download it from the electronic Field Office Technical Guide for your state.

CONSIDERATIONS

Attempt to locate fuel breaks near ridge crests and valley bottoms. If winds are predictable, fuel breaks can be located perpendicular to the wind and on the windward side of the area to be protected.

Prescribed grazing may be used as a management tool to reduce understory fine fuels.

Slash produced in the establishment of a fuel break that is not removed from the site will be treated or arranged to enhance wildlife habitat.

Select plant species that will enhance the needs of desired wildlife in the area. The exposed soil can be planted to herbaceous vegetation beneficial to wildlife.

Design and layout should include enhancement of multiple uses.

Consider beneficial and other effects of installation of the fuel break on cultural resources and threatened and endangered species, natural areas, and wetlands.

PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

Specifications for applying this practice shall be prepared for each site and recorded using approved specification sheets, job sheets, technical notes, and narrative statements in the conservation plan and the burn plan, or other acceptable documentation.

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

Treat or graze vegetative fuel breaks to avoid a build-up of excess litter.

Treat brush and stump sprouts to maintain the integrity of the fuelbreak.

Inspect and control noxious and invasive plants if present on the site.

Inspect all fuel breaks for woody materials such as dead limbs or blown down trees and remove or treat as necessary to maintain a level of wildfire protection.

Inspect fuel breaks at frequencies to assure that the desired level of fire spread risk is maintained.

Maintain the functionality of the original design throughout the life of the practice.

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APPROVAL AND CERTIFICATION

**Fuelbreak
Code 383
(acres)**

PRACTICE SPECIFICATIONS APPROVED:

/s/ Rick Williams
State Forester

1/11/2013
Date

State Resource Conservationist

Date

These practice specifications are needed in Section IV, Conservation Practices of the Field Office Technical Guide under Fuelbreak 383.

CERTIFICATION:

Reviewed and determined adequate without need of revision.

/s/ Mary Webb-Marek
(Zone Specialist)

1/11/2013
(Date)