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**TECH DEV APPL 450-15-ISSUE-395**

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**SUBJECT: VIRGINIA FIELD OFFICE TECHNICAL GUIDE – SECTION IV –  
Virginia Conservation Practice Standards**

**Purpose:** To transmit the following Virginia Conservation Practice Standards:

Brush Management (314), dated September 2010  
Deep Tillage (324), dated September 2010  
Contour Farming (330), dated September 2010  
Contour Buffer Strips (332), dated September 2010  
Residue Management-Seasonal (344), dated September 2010  
Residue Management-Ridge Till (346), dated September 2010  
Windbreak/Shelterbelt Establishment (380), dated September 2010  
Mulching (484), dated September 2010  
Forge and Biomass Planting (512), dated September 2010  
Herbaceous Wind Barriers (603), dated September 2010

**Effective Date:** Upon receipt.

**Filing Instructions:** These standards can be accessed electronically in Section IV of the Virginia Electronic Field Office Technical Guide at:  
<http://efotg.nrcs.usda.gov/treemenuFS.aspx>.

If your office maintains a hard copy of the Field Office Technical Guide, please replace the old standards with these updated ones.

Current Job Sheets and Statements of Work for each of these Practice Standards are located in Section IV of the Virginia Electronic Field Office Technical Guide.

The outdated standards will be archived in the archive folder in Section IV of the Virginia Electronic Field Office Technical Guide.

**Explanation:** **Brush Management (Code 314):** Substantial changes have been made to this practice standard. Prescribed Burning is removed as a brush management treatment. Only chemical, mechanical and biological treatments are included. Prescribed burning for brush management purposes is covered in the Prescribed Burning (Code 338) standard. In the Criteria Section, use of Ecological Site Descriptions has been added as a requirement. Further, the Criteria Section was enhanced to specifically address wildlife



concerns. The Plans and Specifications Section has been expanded to include requirements for monitoring.

**Deep Tillage (Code 324):** This is an existing standard. Only minor edits were made to this standard.

**Contour Farming (Code 330):** Changes were made throughout the standard. In particular, maximum row grade criteria have been modified to be slightly easier to achieve than under the previous Virginia version of this standard.

**Contour Buffer Strips (Code 332):** Changes were made throughout this standard, primarily with respect to criteria for contour farming that must occur on cropped land between buffer strips. All the contouring criteria under the revised Virginia 332 are now consistent with contouring criteria under the revised Virginia 330.

**Residue Management Seasonal (Code 344):** Substantial changes have been made to this standard. Most significantly, the revised standard sets new limits on the timing of tillage that ends the residue management period. In all cases, tillage to bury residue may not begin until two weeks before planting the next crop. In addition, the revised standard sets specific residue cover targets for purposes of erosion control (30%) and improving soil condition (60%).

**Residue and Tillage Management, Ridge Till (Code 346):** Minor changes were made to this standard, which applies to a conservation tillage system very rarely used in Virginia. The general criteria applicable to all purposes now emphasize that a controlled traffic system is required to avoid all wheel traffic on ridges throughout the year. In addition, the revised standard sets specific residue cover targets for purposes of erosion control (30%) and improving soil condition (60%).

**Windbreak/Shelterbelt Establishment (Code 380):** The term "pollinator" was added to the wildlife planning consideration that discusses species diversity.

**Mulching (Code 484):** Significant changes were made to this standard. The "Purpose" section was revised by, (1) adding a purpose for reduction of airborne particulates; and (2) removing increased soil fertility from the "improve soil condition" purpose. Under the "General Criteria" section, (1) animal manure was removed as an acceptable mulching material; (2) added criteria to the use of manufactured mulches, and that the rate specified by the manufacturer is the "minimum amount" that is acceptable; and (3) added that the mulch material must also be free from pesticides and chemicals that may impede the planned use of the mulch. Under "Criteria for Soil Moisture" removed the criteria requiring the mulch be applied prior to soil moisture loss. Under the "Criteria for Erosion Control" removed the criteria that the mulch cover shall not exceed 80 percent for wood products and 90 percent for gravel/inorganic mulches. Under "Criteria to Establish Vegetative Cover" the minimum cover was changed from 50 percent to 70 percent, and under "Criteria for Soil Condition" all the criteria for animal manure and fertility were removed.

**Forage and Biomass Planting (Code 512):** The name was changed from Pasture and Hay Planting. Production of feedstock for biofuel production was added as a purpose. The practice remains applicable to all lands where appropriate, but does not include establishment of annually planted food, fiber or oilseed crops. Additional considerations have been incorporated. Plans and Specifications now identify specific elements that are to be addressed in the plan.

**Herbaceous Wind Barriers (Code 603):** This revision adds considerations for: Beneficial insects and pollinators; and sequestering of carbon, native plant materials invasive species, and micro-environment for plant growth. Also, this revision moves “food and cover for wildlife” from the “Purpose” section to “Considerations”; adds “tolerance to soil deposition” as a criterion under “Vegetation”; expands “Conditions where Practice Applies” to include lands where forages are grown, adds requirements in “Plans and Specifications”; and updates barrier criteria to include the most current technology and references.



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Enclosures