United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

Riparian Herbaceous Cover

Virginia Conservation Practice Job Sheet *390*

Definition
Grasses, grass-like plants and forbs that are tolerant of intermittent flooding or saturated soils and that are established or managed in areas adjacent to watercourses or water bodies in the transitional zone between terrestrial and aquatic habitats.

Criteria
Minimum buffer width is the larger of 35 feet or 1.5 times the stream width (based on the horizontal distance between bankfull elevations.) Wider buffer widths will provide greater environmental benefits.

Select perennial plants (native plant species if possible) that are adapted to site and hydrologic conditions, provide the structural and functional diversity preferred by fish and wildlife.

Livestock are to be excluded and grazing is not permitted on any part of the riparian cover.

Necessary site preparation and planting shall be done at a time and manner to ensure survival and growth of selected species. Only viable, high quality and site-adapted planting stock will be used. Site preparation shall be sufficient for establishment and growth of selected species and be done in a manner that does not compromise the intended purpose. See the *Plant Establishment Guide for Virginia.*

To improve water quality, select species with stiff stems and high stem density near the ground surface.

Select native or accepted introduced species that provide a deep, binding root mass to strengthen streambanks and improve soil health.

Plant species used will have the highest rates of biomass production for the soil and other site conditions, consistent with meeting fish and wildlife habitat requirements for the site.

If planting a pollinator mix, plant grasses, forbs and legumes to promote diversity. **A minimum of 2 grasses and 9 flowering forbs shall be planted.** The maximum seeding rate for all species will not exceed 15 lbs/acre.

The species selected shall be chosen from the *Virginia Plant Establishment Guide* (Part B) Select at least one species from each part of the growing season: early (April-June); middle (June-August); and late (August-September). This will provide habitat for insects and color for the entire growing season.

Note: This summary does not address all requirements and considerations in the VA Riparian Herbaceous Cover Conservation Practice Standard (VA-390). Consult the Conservation Practice Standard for further details.

Virginia Riparian Herbaceous Cover – Practice Certification 390

Producer _____ Farm # _____ Tract # _____

Field Office _____ Contract # _____

Buffer Width _____

Producer's Purpose

- ☐ Provide/improve food/cover for fish, wildlife, livestock
- ☐ Establish/maintain habitat corridors
- ☐ Reduce streambank erosion/improve stability
- ☐ Enhance pollinator food and nesting habitat
- ☐ Dissipate stream energy and trap sediment
- ☐ Improve/maintain water quality
- ☐ Increase water storage on floodplains
- ☐ Increase carbon storage
- ☐ Restore, improve or maintain desired plants
- ☐ Enhance streambank protection

Practice Specifications

Site Preparation

Conventional seedbed preparation, herbicide application or both may be used to control competition prior to planting.

Several steps are required to get successful undesirable competition control when using herbicide especially on fescue stands. The first step in killing fescue is to mow the area in late summer for a fall herbicide burn down. If possible, after mowing and prior to herbicide application, remove the cut vegetation by prescribed burn to provide a better seed bed and allow for better herbicide contact with vegetation.

If needed, a second herbicide application should be planned. This application should occur after the remaining vegetation has re-grown to a 4 – 6 inch height. All herbicide applications shall be made when vegetation is actively growing. Table 3 provides herbicide treatment options.

A second herbicide application is required for dense fescue or orchard grass stands and other areas where competition may not be controlled by one herbicide application.

Field Number	Species Selected	Seeding Date/ Acres Planted	Planting method	Planting rate/depth

Operation and Maintenance
Monitoring and controlling weeds is very critical in the first and second years. Prescribed Burning (338) about every three years, in early spring, can prevent shrub invasion.

First Year
Observation of the growth of weed competition is essential. When undesirable vegetation reaches 12-18" tall, mow to no less than 6" high to prevent weeds from going to seed. Most native plants will grow deeper root systems than tops in the first year, and mowing 6-8" high will not hurt them.

Second Year
Mow once, close to the ground, in early spring. Postponing mowing until early spring provides winter cover for wildlife.

Wildflowers may also be mowed for rebloom in summer when drought/heat stress causes significant loss of color. This shall be done when seeds have matured at a minimum of 3 weeks following bloom. Mowing high (four to six inches) and light fertilization will initiate rebloom of several species in three to four weeks.

Periodic disturbances such as prescribed burning, mowing, grazing, herbicide use and selective removal of trees shall occur about every 5 years at a minimum.

Additional instructions:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Planner Certification

The Riparian Herbaceous Cover practice planned in this job sheet fulfills minimum requirements of Virginia NRCS Conservation Practice Standard 390.

_____	_____	_____
Signature	Title	Date

Certification of Practice Completion

The Riparian Herbaceous Cover practice planned in this job sheet has been completed and maintained according to Virginia NRCS specifications (indicate in Practice Specifications any changes to the planned activities and acreage).

_____	_____	_____
Signature	Title	Date

If needed, an aerial view or a side view of the practice can be shown below. Other relevant information, complementary practices and measures, and additional specifications may be included.

Scale 1"= _____ ft. (NA indicates sketch not to scale: grid size=1/2" by 1/2")

Additional Specifications and Notes:

"USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer"

This table contains several options for controlling competing, non-desirable vegetation during plant establishment. If two burn downs are planned, records should indicate that the herbicide was applied to the field twice. Switchgrass is not tolerant of imazapic. All herbicides shall be applied and used according to label recommendations and may slightly differ from that listed below.

Option	Current Condition	Timing	Method
1 Single Burn Down	Grassland Or Cropland	Spring	(**Use option 2 when pasture grass is the predominant cover**.) 1. Remove excess vegetation in fall or winter. 2. Apply tank mixture after vegetation has grown 4 to 6 inches. Tank Mixture: per acre in April – June Apply a glyphosate/imazapic mixture at a rate of 16-32 oz/acre ("Journey" is pre-mixed; follow label) If imazapic alone is available (Plateau), it can be applied instead of the glyphosate/imazapic mixture at a rate of 4-12 oz per acre. Follow all label instructions.
2 Two Burn Downs	Grassland	Fall And Spring	1. Remove excess vegetation in late summer (Aug./Sept.). 2. Apply tank mixture after vegetation has actively grown to 4 to 6 inches. Tank Mixture: per acre in Sept./Oct. 1 to 2 quarts glyphosate based product. Follow all label instructions. AND 3. Apply tank mixture just prior to planting and after remaining vegetation grows 4 to 6 inches Tank Mixture: per acre in April-June Apply a glyphosate/imazapic mixture at a rate of 16-32 oz/acre ("Journey" is pre-mixed; follow label) If imazapic alone is available (Plateau), it can be applied instead of the glyphosate/imazapic mixture at a rate of 4-12 oz per acre. Follow all label instructions.
3 Two Burn Downs	Grassland	Spring And Spring	1. Remove excess vegetation in fall or winter 2. Apply tank mixture after vegetation has actively grown 4 to 6 inches. Tank mixture: per acre in April 1 to 2 quarts glyphosate based product. IF green-up occurs two to four weeks after initial spraying: 3. Apply tank mixture just prior to planting and after remaining vegetation grows at least 4 to 6 inches. Tank mixture: per acre in April-June Apply a glyphosate/imazapic mixture at a rate of 16-32 oz/acre ("Journey" is pre-mixed; follow label) If imazapic alone is available (Plateau), it can be applied instead of the glyphosate/imazapic mixture at a rate of 4-12 oz per acre. Follow all label instructions.

*NRCS does not require specific herbicides by trade name and are listed only as a reference. Recommendations on specific herbicide use, application rates and timing should come from an extension agent or similarly certified agent.