



**VIRGINIA TECHNICAL GUIDE
NOTICE 450-15-434**

October 19, 2015

Subject: VIRGINIA FIELD OFFICE TECHNICAL GUIDE-SECTION IV – Conservation Practice Standards

Purpose: To transmit new and/or revised Virginia Conservation Practice Standards, associated Job Sheets, Statement of Works and Technical Notes. Customer Service Toolkit practice narratives have also been updated along with the Conservation Practice Physical Effects (CPPE).

Effective Date: October 1, 2015

Filing Instructions: The new and/or revised Conservation Practice Standards and associated documents can be accessed electronically in Section IV of the Virginia Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG) at the following link: <http://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov/treemenuFS.aspx>. If you maintain hard copies, replace the old standards and associated documents with the updated standards and associated document in Section IV of the FOTG.

In order for the new Toolkit narrative to be uploaded, you will need to reload domain data in Toolkit. Once you open the toolkit application, under “File” click on “Reload Domain Data.” This may take several minutes while the domain data is reloading. Click “ok” when the domain data refresh is complete. You will then need to restart Toolkit.

Explanation of Changes: The following are revised Ecological Science Division (ESD) Conservation Practice Standards along with revised Job Sheets and Statement of Works (SOW).

High Tunnel (Code 325) – This new Virginia conservation practice standard with a 5-year lifespan replaces the Seasonal High Tunnel for Crops (Code 798) interim standard. Because the Interim Conservation Practice Standard has been used so widely (10,000 structures with financial assistance amounting to about 20 million dollars), States recommended conversion of this interim standard to a new National Conservation Practice Standard. “High Tunnel System” (Code 325) applies to “kits” that can be purchased from a number of suppliers. Improving plant health and vigor has been identified as the purpose of this standard. The Conservation practice describes “an enclosed polyethylene, plastic, or fabric covered structure used to cover and protect crops from sun, wind, excessive rainfall, or cold to extend the growing season in an environmentally safe manner.”

Conservation Cover (Code 327) – Managing pests was not appropriate as the purpose of this standard and was deleted. Added “beneficial organism habitat” to the pollinator purpose of the practice. Added one new reference: National Agronomy Technical Note 9, Preventing or Mitigating Potential Negative Impacts of Pesticides on Pollinators Using IPM and Other Conservation Practices.

Conservation Crop Rotation (Code 328) – Some changes in purposes required by the new National 328. No substantive changes to required criteria, although Considerations section has been updated to emphasize options for assessing crop rotation performance. 328 Job sheet has been updated with worksheet for planning rotation in calendar form and assessing crop rotation performance, including evaluation of crop diversity using species counts. Note associated updates to Plant Establishment Guide, below.

Contour Buffer Strips (Code 332) – No substantive changes from previous versions of VA-332.

Cover Crops (Code 340) – Some changes in purposes required by the new National 328. No substantive changes to required criteria. Note associated updates to Technical Notes and Plant Establishment Guide, below.

Riparian Forest Buffer (Code 391) – Added additional criteria to the standard when using natural regeneration as a method of establishment.

Tree and Shrub Establishment (Code 612) - Added additional criteria to the standard when using natural regeneration as a method of establishment.

The following Job Sheets were updated to clarify requirements in meeting the Conservation Practice Standard:

- Brush Management (Code 314)
- Herbaceous Weed Control (Code 315)
- Restoration & Management of Rare & Declining Habitats (Code 643)
- Upland Wildlife Habitat Management (Code 645)
- Early Succession Habitat Management (Code 647)

The following Technical Notes were updated:

Virginia Technical Note #3 Forestry – Changes were made to the technical note to add additional guidance on natural regeneration as well as new and revised tree establishment methods.

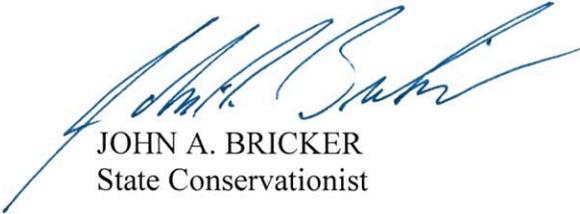
Virginia Technical Note #10 Agronomy VA NRCS Cover Crop Planning Recommendations (VA-340) – This is a new technical note with guidance on cover crop selection and establishment (seeding rates, dates, etc.) for use with Conservation Practice Standard VA-340.

The following changes were made to the Virginia Plant Establishment Guide (PEG):

- Section E.a. contains updated guidelines for establishment of perennials in rotation for use with Conservation Practice Standard VA-328.
- Section E.b. contains selected tables from and references to the new cover crop technical note referenced above, for use with Conservation Practice Standard VA-340.

All CPPE values for Virginia have been updated for FY16 and a new RMS planning tools has been loaded to Section V under CPPE that assists the planner by identifying conservation practices that have a substantial positive effect on decreasing resource problems and lists potential negative effects of those practices.

Contact: If you have questions, please contact Chad Wentz, State Resource Conservationist at 804-287-1668 or at Chad.Wentz@va.usda.gov.



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