CRP Required Management Practice: Conservation Cover Maintenance

Landowner: _____ Tract: _____

CONSERVATION COVER MAINTENANCE REQUIREMENTS

This job sheet provides guidance for management of Conservation Cover that has been certified as established and is now being maintained. Maintaining the desired cover will protect wildlife habitat from invasive species. Maintenance of established cover requires periodic spot treatments to control undesirable weeds and woody plants.

CONTROL OF UNDESIRABLE WEEDS AND WOODY PLANTS

The amount of maintenance needed for your CRP planted site will depend on a number of different factors including prior management of the field and the concentration of weed seed sources on adjacent land. Some fields will require a great deal of effort each year. The condition of the cover should be evaluated periodically. Specific efforts should be made to control three perennial species listed as noxious in Wisconsin; Canada thistle, field bindweed, and leafy spurge. It is important to control invasive/noxious plants before they go to seed.

Primary Nesting Season

To help prevent injury to nesting and fledgling birds, avoid disturbance of cover during the primary nesting season which is defined as **May 15th to August 1st** in Wisconsin. Certain weeds may be treated during the primary nesting season if approval is granted by FSA.

Protect Winter Cover

Winter cover is important to wildlife habitat. Performing yearly maintenance that includes mowing or burning an entire field shall not be done unless unique circumstances exist and approval from NRCS has been granted in writing.

State and Local Weeds Laws

To prevent the spread of undesirable plants, the state of Wisconsin has established several laws that require the controlling of and/or the restriction of movement of all listed noxious, invasive, and nuisance species. The Noxious Weed Law requires landowners to treat, control, or eradicate noxious weed plants from maturing to the bloom stage. Local governments have the authority to designate new noxious, invasive, and nuisance plants and enforce specific laws within their boundaries. As a private landowner you are required to comply with all laws that regulate specific undesirable species. Contact your local government for information regarding local laws or ordinances that may apply to your property.

WEED CONTROL STRATEGIES

Weed control options and strategies will vary depending on the type of planting (introduced or native) and the type of weeds or woody species present in the stand. Fields should be assessed early in the growing season to identify emerging weed problems. Multiple evaluations of the fields are highly recommended to determine which weed species are present and if control will be necessary.

Mechanical Control

Mowing can be utilized to prevent weeds from producing viable seed and to reduce competition between weeds and the Conservation Cover. Mowing is effective for controlling annual and biennial weeds. For perennial weeds, a combination of mowing and herbicide treatment is often needed for effective control. Use a mower that provides uniform distribution of mowed plant material across the field surface to reduce the chance of smothering plants. Mow before weed seeds develop. The cutting height necessary to

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control weeds will vary based on the type of weeds present and the type of CRP stand. For native grasses/forbs, a minimum cutting height of 7" is required. Introduced grasses/legumes can tolerate a lower cutting height of 4-6". If seeds have already developed, avoid mowing to limit the spread of weed seeds. Mowing plants after the seed matures can result in rapid spreading of the weed problem.

Woody species can be controlled by mechanical methods using a mower, shredder, shear, etc. Most brush mowers can handle seedlings and saplings less than 3" diameter; however this will vary depending on manufacturer and design of the mower. Shears, grubbers, and brush saws can be used to control larger species. Methods to control woody species will vary in effectiveness depending on the species you are trying to control. Oaks, maples, black cherry, honey locust, and boxelder will usually re-sprout from a cut stump. Ash, hickory, sycamore, alder, willow, and elm will re-sprout when cut as young saplings or small trees. To limit re- sprouting, consider cutting in late summer through early fall before the leaves begin to change color. Treating a freshly cut tree stump or sapling with an approved chemical following label directions can produce a successful kill.

Herbicides

Herbicides can provide effective control of many weeds in a timely and cost-effective manner. If a field contains a mixture of desirable grasses and forbs/legumes, spraying the entire field may not be feasible without damaging desirable plants. In these situations, consider spot spraying areas with the heaviest infestation of weeds. Spray targeted weeds with herbicides at the appropriate time and application rate recommended by an industry professional. Be sure to follow all label instructions when using herbicides.

Using herbicides to control woody species is often more effective and requires less labor than mechanical means if the infestation is over a large area. For large woody species, cut any brush over 6 feet tall and treat the regrowth with herbicide. Common herbicide application methods can include foliar applications, basal sprays, cut-stump treatments, and hack-n-squirt. Fall treatment of woody deciduous species is more effective as plants pull the herbicide down into the roots along with energy reserves. Treat plants just prior to color change. Refer to the references section for more information on treatment methods.

Prescribed Burning

Prescribed burning can be an effective maintenance strategy for conservation cover types that are dominated by native warm-season plants. Prescribed burning can effectively reduce accumulations of dead plant material, stimulate growth of native warm season plant species, and suppress both weeds and introduced cool season species. Some sites are not suitable for prescribed burning due to the proximity of land uses that could be impacted by the burn. Trees and shrubs require a hotter burn to successfully kill. Follow all guidelines stipulated in the NRCS approved burn plan.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Clean equipment prior to moving out of fields with known noxious weeds or invasive plant species to avoid spreading seed.

Do not use heavy equipment that will cause damage to desirable vegetation or cause soil compaction when soils are wet.

Manual weed control methods such as hand-pulling, digging, or smothering may be feasible for small populations or in areas where chemicals or mechanical equipment cannot be used. Properly bag and dispose of plants that have already gone to seed to prevent future spread.

Contact with plants such as wild parsnip, stinging nettle, and poison ivy can cause skin irritation, burns, or blisters. Wear protective clothing such as long sleeves, long pants, and gloves when handling.

When using herbicides, be aware of current weather conditions and surrounding vegetation. Do not spray when drift is likely to occur and affect surrounding non-targeted plants. Notify bee keepers near site and follow all label directions. When feasible, if noxious or invasive plants have gone to seed, consider hand-clipping and bagging seed heads prior to spraying herbicide.

Grazing or haying a field once every 3 years may be a management option. You MUST be granted prior approval by FSA.

REFERENCES WITH ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The following websites provide additional information regarding plant identification and control methods for weeds and woody species. Your local NRCS office can also provide additional assistance with identification and suggestions for control.

UW Extension, Weed Identification and Management: http://weedid.wisc.edu/index.php

UW Extension, The Learning Store: Herbicide Effectiveness on Invasive Plants in Wisconsin: http://learningstore.uwex.edu/Herbicide-Effectiveness-on-Invasive-Plants-in- Wisconsin2013--P1376.aspx

UW Madison Weed Science, Conservation Reserve Program (Publication): http://fyi.uwex.edu/weedsci/

UW Stevens Point Freckman Herbarium: http://wisplants.uwsp.edu/VascularPlants.html

Midwest Invasive Plant Network: http://mipn.org/control.html

USDA NRCS Plants Database: http://plants.usda.gov/

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) Invasive Species Control: http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/Invasives/control.html

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) Herbicides for Forest Management: http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/ForestHealth/Herbicides.html

PLANTS CONSIDERED UNDESIRABLE / AGGRESSIVE WITHIN A CRP SITE

Common Name	Scientific Name
Chinese Lespedeza[1]	lespedeza sericea
Crown Vetch	coronilla varia
Giant Hogweed[1]	heracleum mantegazzianum
Hill Mustard[1]	bunias orientalis
Japanese Knotweed[1]	polygonum cuspidatum
Poison Hemlock[1]	conium maculatum
Teasel: Cutleaf & Common	dipsacus laciniatus & fullonum
Wild Chervil[1]	anthriscus sylvestris
Field Bindweed	convolvulus arvensis
Garlic Mustard	alliaria petiolata
Knapweeds	centaurea sp.
Purple Loosestrife[2]	lythrum salicaria
Reed Grass, Common	phragmites australis
Spurge: Leafy and Cypress	euphorbia esula & cyparissias
Thistle: Canada & Marsh	cirsium arvense & palustre
Thistle: Musk & Plumeless	carduus nutans & acanthoides
Wild Parsnip	pastinaca sativa

[1] Early detection required

[2] Poorly, somewhat poorly drained soils

Undesirable/aggressive plants and woody vegetation can spread quickly. A control strategy shall be developed using this job sheet and immediately implemented when the undesirable/aggressive plants listed above and/or undesirable woody vegetation are present within the Conservation Cover.

UNDESIRABLE / AGGRESSIVE PLANT SPECIES SITE EVALUATION WORKSHEET

Date of Evaluation: Conservation Cover Type:

Evaluator Name:

Field No.:		
Identified Undesirable Aggressive Plant Species (Common Name)	**Percent of Weed Leaf Area in the Canopy Cover**	**Weed Control Strategy**

Field No.:		
Identified Undesirable Aggressive Plant Species (Common Name)	**Percent of Weed Leaf Area in the Canopy Cover**	**Weed Control Strategy**

Field No.:		
Identified Undesirable Aggressive Plant Species (Common Name)	**Percent of Weed Leaf Area in the Canopy Cover**	**Weed Control Strategy**

Provide a map documenting the location of undesirable/aggressive plant patches in each field

CONSERVATION COVER MAINTENANCE PLAN

Field Number(s)	Acres	Targeted Plant to Suppress	Time-frame Treatment Will Occur	Control Method Selected	Other Identified Concerns

Notes: