CREP Site Maintenance:
How to ensure maximum success of tree and shrub plantings

To the Landowner:

Deciding to participate in a program like CREP is a big decision which requires great effort on your part to implement. With so much time and money invested in a project like creating healthy riparian areas, it makes sense that you would want to do everything necessary to ensure that your tree/shrub planting is a success. This handout is meant as a guide to you about what you will need to do to maximize the success of your CREP project. Keep in mind that you will need to monitor your CREP site to judge when maintenance is needed – there is **no** general timeline for maintenance because each site is different. Hopefully this guide will help you remember what is needed in your CREP site. Congratulations on your decision!

1. **Tree/Shrub Shelters**

Tree/shrub shelters are important components of a successful tree/shrub planting because they help to prevent heavy deer browsing. Exposed seedlings often are eaten before they have the chance to grow to a safe height. However, fallen shelters are a **major** cause of mortality in CREP plantings. It is extremely important to **keep shelters upright**. The following should be done as soon as fallen shelters are noticed:

a. Right fallen tubes immediately
b. replace broken stakes
c. drive uplifted stakes into the ground as far as possible
d. monitor often

2. **Bird/Bee Nets**

Bird/bee nets are plastic nets placed over the tops of tree shelters to prevent birds from building nests and bees from building hives inside the tubes.

Once the tree starts to emerge from the top of the shelter, **these must be removed.** If left on, these will cause the tree to grow in a coil shape inside of the net. This coil shape could prevent normal growth of the tree.

3. Noxious Weeds and Invasive Plants

(Thistle)

(Multiflora rose)

(Autumn olive)

Noxious weeds or invasive plants like the examples above can hinder the growth of planted trees and the establishment of native riparian species. They are fast growing and are able to out-compete desirable species. Mowing and/or herbicide applications are required when the presence of noxious weeds or invasive plants has an adverse impact on the intent of the practice. Representatives from NRCS and FSA are able to make this determination. (**Note:** removal of invasive species should not occur during the primary ground nesting period of **March 15 – July 15**)

4. Competing Vegetation

Competing vegetation like grasses (not necessarily noxious weeds) can slow the growth or even kill planted seedlings. These plants use important nutrients, water, and sunlight that the planted trees need to survive.

The areas around the planted trees and shrubs can be spot mowed or spot sprayed with an herbicide (carefully applied to miss the tree/shrub) to remove competing vegetation. Trees and shrubs should be monitored to determine if spot control is necessary. Always follow herbicide label instructions. (**Note:** neither spot mowing nor chemical treatment should occur during the primary ground nesting period of **March 15 – July 15**)

5. Fences

Fences are a very important component of creating a healthy riparian zone. They prevent cattle and other livestock from grazing down the desired vegetation such as native shrubs and planted trees. A single cow can do considerable damage to a CREP site if the fence fails.

Fences should be inspected regularly, especially after storm events, for damaged or down areas. Broken areas should be fixed immediately, making sure to remove any of the broken fence and hardware material which could harm or be ingested by livestock. Fence rows should also be kept free from heavy vegetation.

Remember, there is **no** set timeline for doing CREP site maintenance. It is up to you to monitor your site periodically and perform the necessary activities to make your CREP planting the most successful it can be.