

CRP Management

February 2022

CRP Management

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) policy requires participants to perform management activities that maintain or enhance the quality of conservation cover for wildlife. Management practices are designed to reset the clock vegetatively, recreating the first couple growing seasons of patchy structure and an abundance of annual plants which are critical to wildlife production. These short term set-backs simulate the natural disturbances grasslands need to remain productive for wildlife while maintaining soil and water quality benefits.

Management (formerly called Mid-contract management or MCM) activities must be conducted prior to the end of year six for contracts with a 10 year length and before the end of year nine for contracts with a 15 year length. Land that was accepted into CRP with existing cover requires an initial management activity in addition to a second management activity halfway through the contract.

According to CRP policy, management practices that are not listed for specific fields shall not be used without NRCS or FSA approval.

Haying or Grazing

Haying and grazing activities require FSA approval and a 25% reduction in that year's annual payment.

- Grazing is acceptable as a stand alone activity provided that it is accomplished in a "high-intensity, short-duration" manner. As a general rule of thumb, the stocking rate should be at least twice the "normal" rate and of a duration less than one month.

- Haying as a stand alone activity requires a minimum level of diversity be present. Fields must be split by up to 75% and treated in separate years. In some cases, haying may be the most feasible method to encourage stand diversity. Managed haying of the entire field may be used prior to another management activity to reduce plant material.

Tillage

Disking or tilling the soil breaks up thick grass stands to allow wildflowers and legumes to become established, as well as providing some bare ground to benefit wildlife species.



The initial seed mixture used to establish CRP cover can impact the options available for MCM halfway through the contract.



The use of haying as a stand-alone activity is acceptable provided the existing stand is diverse and has early successional habitat qualities. Larger fields can only be hayed in a rotation with a maximum of 75% hayed in any given year.

INTERESTING FACT

Pheasant hens with broods prefer areas with high forb content such as interseeded CRP.

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Disking is beneficial to break up old sod bound grasses promoting plant diversity as it allows for seed germination of the seed bank.



Establishing green firebreaks not only creates great habitat but can help if you decide to conduct a prescribed fire for MCM.



A CRP warm-season grass stand responds well to prescribed fire by removing the litter buildup and increasing the diversity.

- Two to four passes are recommended on old grass fields to open the stand up for forb and annual plant establishment.
- The intensity of disking determines the amount of benefit you achieve.
- Soil disturbance is not recommended on sites with a history of noxious weeds.

Chemical Herbaceous Vegetation Control

Selective and properly timed use of herbicide can control unwanted vegetation, whether that is grass, broadleaf weeds or brush. This allows more desirable plant species to establish.

- Spray prior to May 1st or after July 15th to avoid the nesting season.
- Always follow label recommendations.

Prescribed Burning

Prescribed burning reduces litter and provides bare soil for the germination of desirable plants. It may help control unwanted weeds and brush.

- Work with your local office to prepare a prescribed burn plan.
- Leaving a portion of the acres unburned increases structural diversity of the stand and provides suitable habitat for wildlife species.

Interseeding Forbs and Legumes

It may be necessary to plant species that are missing from the stand and are not likely to establish naturally. These species will improve the diversity of the stand and improve its value for wildlife. Specifications for interseeding shall be obtained prior to seeding. Management practices are restricted to the time periods listed for individual practices and shall not be conducted between May 1 and July 15 to protect nesting birds and young wildlife.

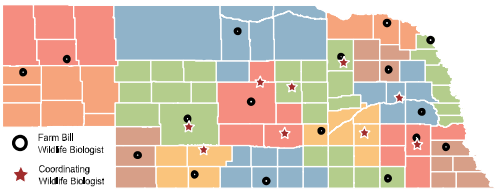
Interseeding is optional if the below conditions are met:

- Existing stand of vegetation contains a diversity of plants throughout the stand.
- Broadleaf plants represent a substantial component of the stand relative to grass cover.
- Aggressive sod-forming grasses comprise a relatively small portion of the overall stand composition.



A diversity of cover provides nesting, brood-rearing, and winter cover for a variety of wildlife species.

FOR MORE INFORMATION



Through a partnership with Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever, Nebraska Game & Parks Commission and the Natural Resources Conservation Service, wildlife biologist are available to help provide wildlife habitat guidance, technical assistance on the available conservation programs and design seeding mixtures.

For further information visit NebraskaPF.com

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