



Conservation Practice Overview

October 2020

Prescribed Burning (Code 338)

Prescribed burning is applying a planned fire to a predetermined area of land.

Practice Information

Prescribed burning can be applied for several purposes. For the plant community, prescribed burning is used to manage undesirable vegetation and reduce plant pressure caused by pests, pathogens, and diseases. For safety and protection of property, prescribed burning is used to reduce the various risks associated with wildfire. For wildlife, prescribed burning is used to improve terrestrial habitat for wildlife and invertebrates (pollinators), and it improves plant and seed production, quantity, and/or quality. For livestock, prescribed burning is used to improve the livestock-forage balance by enhancing plant productivity and the distribution of grazing and browsing animals. Prescribed burning also improves habitat for soil organisms, thereby enhancing soil health.



Application of this highly specialized practice requires intensive training and sufficient support personnel and equipment. A safe, successful burn must be timed for proper humidity, wind conditions, air temperature, and fuel conditions (ignitable vegetation). Safety precautions are planned before the burn and monitored during the burn. Be aware of your state's smoke management program and use the specific tools your state has implemented to address smoke. Be mindful of the potential air quality impacts that burning might have on downwind communities.

All burn plans must address the following: location and description of the burn area, resource management objectives, preburn vegetation cover, preburn preparation required, weather conditions, equipment checklist, personnel needs and assignments, safety requirements, firing sequence and ignition method, smoke management plans, notification checklist, approval signatures, and postburn evaluation criteria.

Common Associated Practices

NRCS Conservation Practice Standard (CPS) Prescribed Burning (Code 338) is commonly applied with other practices such as NRCS CPSs Fire Break (Code 394), Prescribed Grazing (Code 528), Forest Stand Improvement (Code 666), Forest Trails and Landings (Code 655), Range Planting (Code 550), Forage and Biomass Planting (Code 512), Pest Management Conservation System (Code 595), and other associated harvesting, planting, and seeding practices.

For further information, contact your local NRCS field office.