

**NRCS Arkansas, Louisiana and Mississippi Decision Memo  
for Planting Cottonwoods on WRP Easements**

**November 12, 2012**

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**Purpose:**

The purpose of this document is to record the agreement between the NRCS leadership in Arkansas, Louisiana and Mississippi regarding the planting of Eastern Cottonwood trees on Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) Easements.

**Background:**

In an effort to ensure technical recommendations and WRP program policies are being delivered consistently in the Lower Mississippi River Valley, the State Conservationist of Arkansas, Louisiana and Mississippi facilitated a multi-state review of the tree and shrub establishment practices and program opportunities in the region. This led to the development of common specifications and interpretation to ensure that conservation projects planned in similar landscapes and conditions were receiving similar recommendations, guidance and specifications. Agreements were reached relative to planting density, planting mixes, planting success, cultural practices, planting methods, seedling quality and cottonwood/hardwood mixes.

The revised technical specifications were reviewed, commented and concurred by the State Technical Committees of each state and posted on the Electronic Field Office Technical Guide under Conservation Practice (612) Tree and Shrub Establishment.

On October 3, 2012, the State Conservationists and representatives from their Ecological Sciences, Soils and Conservation Program staffs participated in a field tour of multiple cottonwood and hardwood planted sites under a variety of conditions. Discussions were held about the field observations, the revised standard and program policy. A follow-up video teleconference was held on October 29<sup>th</sup>.

**Agreement:**

We agree:

- 1) Research indicates in situations where adapted, cottonwood interplanting can speed vegetative structure development, accelerating and enhancing early successional migratory bird habitat.
- 2) To allow cottonwood/hardwood interplanting on WRP easement acres utilizing either the Bottomland Hardwood Restoration for Wildlife Habitat or the Eastern Cottonwood for Carbon Sequestration/Trainer Tree Considerations specifications for Tree and Shrub Establishment (612) and Tree and Shrub Site Preparation (490) as follows:

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Final Draft for Review with State Technical Committees (11/12/2012)

**Bottomland Hardwood Restoration for Wildlife Habitat –**

- NRCS determines the soils and the site are native habitats for cottonwoods.
- The specifications, including plant density and species diversity, are met.

**Eastern Cottonwood for Carbon Sequestration/Trainer/Nurse Crop Considerations -**

- The inclusion of cottonwood interplanting is requested by the program participant.
- NRCS determines the soils and the site suitable for cottonwood interplanting.
- A Compatible Use Authorization is approved and agreed to by the landowner for the planting and establishment of the activity in conformance with the Tree and Shrub Establishment (612) and Tree and Shrub Site Preparation (490) standards and specifications.
- The Compatible Use Authorization is for the activities and time period associated with site preparation, planting, and establishment, typically no more than three years. Compatible Use Authorizations may be issued in future years to address specific needs on a case by case basis and consistent with policy.
- NRCS cost of restoration will not exceed the payment schedule for the 453 seedlings per acre for site preparation and tree and shrub establishment.

Effective January 1, 2013.

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Michael Sullivan  
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Arkansas

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