

Soil Quality Enhancement Activity – SQL10 – Crop management system where crop land acres were recently converted from CRP grass/legume cover or similar perennial vegetation



Enhancement Description

Implement a prescriptive crop management system on crop land acres that have been recently converted from CRP grass/legume conservation cover or similar perennial vegetated cover to a rotation of annually planted crops. Note: this enhancement is limited to acres where the conversion event took place not more than 2 years prior (not including hayland).

Land Use Applicability

Cropland (excluding Hayland)

Benefits

CRP grass/legume covered acres or acres with similar perennial vegetated cover that have been recently converted to annually planted crop systems have the potential to lose some or all of the soil health improvements generated from the years of CRP conservation cover. Depending on the new management system being used, the recalcitrant carbon pool in the system could be stable or declining, especially if a form of full width or deep tillage is being used in the new management system. In order to prevent further degradation of the accumulated carbon pool, there is a necessity to implement a crop management system to stabilize or increase these sites as carbon sinks. Utilizing a crop management system on working lands that integrates residue management systems with high residue cover crops will create systems with net carbon inputs and greater conservation benefits than lands that are absent of some degree of residue management.

Conditions Where Enhancement Applies

This enhancement only applies to crop land use acres (excluding hayland) that have been converted from CRP grass/legume conservation cover or acres with similar perennial vegetated cover to a rotation of annually planted crops. Note: this enhancement is limited to acres where the conversion event took place not more than 2 years prior.

Criteria

Develop a crop rotation on the acres where this enhancement applies that implements each of the following components:

1. Sites where burning of any plant materials have occurred during the last year of the CRP contract or since the termination of the CRP contract, are NOT eligible for this enhancement.
2. For each crop rotation, the average annual Soil Tillage Intensity Rating (STIR) as determined by RUSLE2 must be ≤ 10 ,
3. All residues must be uniformly distributed over the entire field,



4. No full-width tillage is permitted regardless of the depth of the tillage operation,
5. Field(s) must have a soil loss at or below the one-half soil tolerance (0.5T) level as determined by approved tools for wind and/or water erosion for the crop rotation, and
6. Between each crop in the rotation, except double cropped situations, seed a high residue cover crop or mixture of high residue cover crops. Each cover crop or mixture shall meet the following requirements:
 - a. Seed a cover crop or cover crop mixture at a rate and within a planting date range as determined or agreed to by the NRCS State Agronomist.
 - b. Cereal grain cover crops or mixtures shall be top dressed with nitrogen at rates determined or agreed to by the NRCS State Agronomist.
 - c. The cover crop or mixture shall reach a maturity level (i.e., growth stage) to ensure 100% soil coverage in the row middles for 3 months of the growing season. For example, cereal rye shall reach the soft dough stage before termination. The NRCS State Agronomist can determine a specified maturity level or desired residue quantity (dry matter basis) for the selected cover crop cultivar.
 - d. Termination of all cover crops shall be accomplished by chemical methods, non-chemical methods (such as flail mowing or roller crimper), or a combination of both.

Adoption Requirements

The enhancement is considered adopted when all the criteria above has been fully implemented.

Documentation Requirements

Documentation for each field where this enhancement is applied:

1. Planned crop rotation showing cover crops that will be used after low residue crops,
2. Planting method used for each crop in the rotation (no-till, strip till, direct seeding),
3. List of all other potential ground disturbing farming operations,
4. Method of cover crop termination, e.g. chemical, flail mowing, roller crimper, or combination,
5. Dates for farming operations,
6. Map showing fields and acreage, and
7. Photographs of planted crops.

References

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Renard, K.G., G.R. Foster, G.A. Weesies, D.K. McCool, and D.C. Yoder, coordinators. 1997. Predicting soil erosion by water: A guide to conservation planning with the Revised Universal Soil Loss Equation (RUSLE). US Department of Agriculture, Agriculture Handbook No. 703.

Shaffer, M.J., and W.E. Larson (ed.). 1987. Tillage and surface-residue sensitive potential evaporation submodel. *In* NTRM, a soil-crop simulation model for nitrogen, tillage and crop residue management. USDA Conserv. Res. Rep. 34-1. USDA-ARS.

Skidmore, E.L. and N.P. Woodruff. 1968. Wind erosion forces in the United States and their use in predicting soil loss. USDA Agriculture Handbook No. 346.

Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE). 2010. *Managing Cover Crops Profitably*. 3rd ed. Handbook #9. College Park, MD.

USDA-NRCS. 2011. *National Agronomy Manual*. 190-V. 4th ed.

SOIL QUALITY ENHANCEMENT ACTIVITY

SQL11 – OR Cover cropping in orchards, vineyards, and other woody perennial horticultural crops

This enhancement requires growing perennial or annual cover crop mixtures of grass, legumes, native flowering plants, and /or other forbs year round to provide soil cover, organic matter, nutrients, weed suppression, beneficial insect habitat, and other conservation benefits in orchard, vineyards, or other perennial horticultural crops. Once plants, cover crops are replanted annually or maintained year after years.

This enhancement has additional requirements related to the number of species included in the mixture, the specific establishment of the cover crop, percentage coverage, cover crop purpose, and cover crop termination. See **Criteria** for a full description.

Approved cover crops and cover crop mixes include:

- *Using Cover Crops in Oregon, EM8704, OSU Extension, 1998* (distributed previously to all field offices)
- *Managing Cover Crops Profitably, 3rd Edition, USDA-SARE 2007* (available on the State Office shared drive)
- *The Oregon and Washington Seeding Guide*, available at: http://www.or.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/ecs/plants/general_info.html
- Plant Materials Technical Note #13, *Plants for Pollinators in Oregon*, March 2008, available at: <http://www.or.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/ecs/plants/plants-technotes.html>

This list is not comprehensive. Other species may be practical and feasible for your location. Contact the NRCS State Agronomist for further information.