

CRP Mid-Contract Management Options

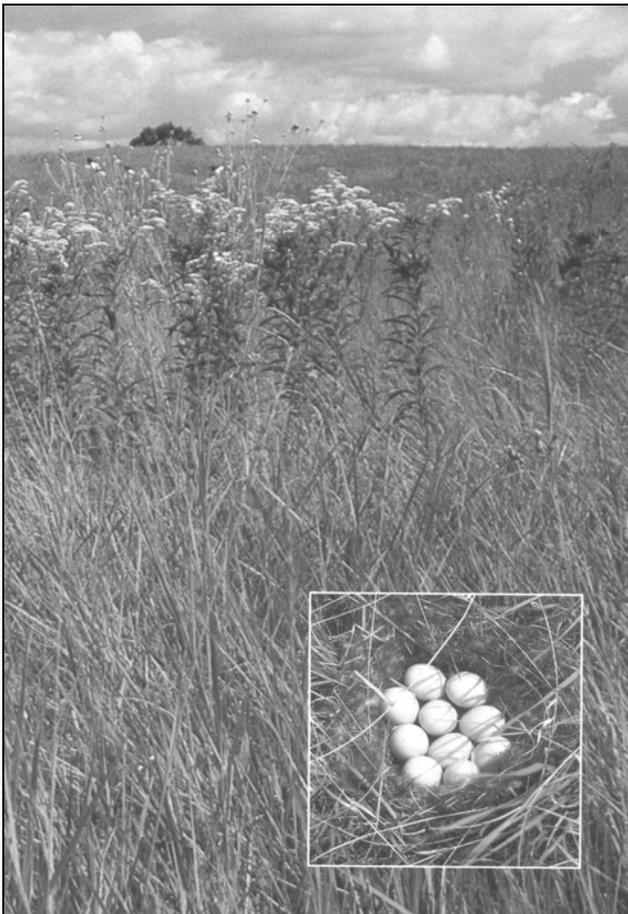
Idaho – May 2009

Conservation Program Fact Sheet

PURPOSE

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) policy requires enrolled participants, starting with Signup 26, to do some type of “disturbance” to certain CRP practices during the life of the contract to benefit wildlife. This job sheet gives a brief description of the eight available options.

The purpose of mid-contract management activities is to enhance the wildlife habitat value of the enrolled acres by increasing plant health, vigor, and improving diversity.



Normally, mid-contract management activities are conducted between the 4th and 6th year of the contract. However, on land with existing cover, disturbance activities can begin as soon as technically feasible.

Mid-Contract Management Practices

The following items apply to all eight of the mid-contract management activities listed below.

1. Management Practices will not be performed from **April 1 through August 1**, the primary nesting period for grassland bird species. See Paragraph 239 in 2- CRP.
2. Grassland fields must be established for a minimum of three years before starting the activity.
3. The following environmentally sensitive areas should be avoided.
 - Concentrated flow areas
 - Critical areas
 - Within the first 20 feet of a practice that borders a water resource to avoid water quality resource concerns
 - Areas where gully erosion is likely
4. The County Committee may only approve one management practice/acre to be applied during the entire CRP period. Requests for additional management practices on the same acreage will require FSA State Committee approval. If additional practices are necessary to address resource concerns it is recommended that plans be submitted.

Integrated Wildlife Management (IWM):

Use this IWM to improve the diversity of vegetation on CRP lands, encourage the establishment and growth of native and introduced species, and improve the quality and quantity of vegetation for wildlife needs (food, cover, etc.), especially during critical periods. For use on CRP fields dominated by grass species providing little to no benefits for wildlife, or have infestations of undesirable noxious or invasive weeds that decrease diversity and reduce habitat quality. An integrated management approach will help to improve diversity, increase species, and improve overall quality for wildlife. Implementation of practices associated with IWM may occur during the Primary Nesting Season if specifically recommended and approved by IDFG and the COC.

Light disking:
(Do not use on stands with shrubs)

Use on stands where there is excessive residue accumulation, or stands are root bound. Disks shall be set so that they do not turn over sod or excessively cut roots. The primary purpose of disking is to breakup residue and place it on the soil surface to increase the rate of breakdown and to slice the root mass of the grasses to reinvigorate its growth.

Light chiseling:

Use on stands where there is excessive residue accumulation, or stands are root bound. Chisels or field cultivators with points (do not use sweeps) may be used. Spacing of the shanks must be such that shrub roots and crowns are not severely disturbed (spacing of 24" to 30" has been effective). The points should penetrate the soil 3" to 5" to disturb the root system but not uproot the plants. The speed of travel should be such that depth control is maintained and the desirable woody species are more likely to be pushed out of the way than be uprooted. The primary purpose of chiseling (field cultivating) is to breakup residue and get it down on the soil surface to increase the rate of breakdown and to disturb the root mass of the grasses to reinvigorate its growth.

Harrowing (spring tooth or heavy harrow)
(Do not use on stands with shrubs):

Use on grass stands where there is excessive residue accumulation. The harrow is primarily to knock down excess residues exposing the grass crowns to sunlight and placing the residues in contact with the soil surface to speed deterioration of the residues.

Tilling, Preparing a Seedbed, and Seeding in strips:

Use on stands where an increase in species diversity is desired. This requires preparing a seedbed and seeding/planting in strips that are at least as wide as or wider than the available tillage and planting equipment, for example if the tillage equipment is 12' wide and the drill is 12' wide the strips may be in increments of 12' width. This is not inter-seeding using equipment that scalps a narrow area and then

plants a single row into the scalped area (experience over the past few years with inter-seeding into well established stands has not been successful). The seedbed should be prepared as it would be for a full field operation with a firm, weed free seedbed. On sloping fields this practice should be applied cross-slope or on contour. *Other management practices may be used on the strips that are not tilled.* The primary purpose of strip till and seed is to introduce diversity into existing stands for wildlife habitat and feed.

Prescribed Burn
(Do not use on stands with shrubs):

Use on stands with excess residue. The primary purpose of prescribed burning is to remove excessive residue and stimulate growth and vigor of desirable perennial species. Prescribed burning requires that a burning prescription be developed in accordance with Idaho NRCS Standard Prescribed Burning (338). Producers must work with appropriate agencies to acquire the burning permit before the practice can be started.

Mow and remove residue
(Do not use on stands with shrubs):

Use on stands with excess residue. Mow and remove residue includes mowing or swathing and removing the residue by baling, buck rake, and disposing of the residue off-site. Removed residues must be destroyed; no commercial use may be made of the residue. The primary purpose of mowing and removing residue is to reduce excessive residue to allow sun light to the crowns of the desired perennials.

Mowing (rotary)
(Do not use on stands with shrubs):

Use on stands with excess residue. The mower height shall be high enough (generally 3" to 4" inches) to provide protection to the plant crowns while still providing exposure to sunlight. The primary purpose of rotary mowing is to break residue into small pieces allowing it to come in contact with the soil speeding deterioration and allow sun light to the crowns of the desired perennials.

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