



## CONSERVATION RESERVE PROGRAM TAKE-OUT CONSIDERATIONS – EASTERN WASHINGTON STATE

### CRP TAKE-OUT CONSIDERATIONS – EASTERN WASHINGTON STATE

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**Converting CRP to annual cropland involves a series of evaluations and decisions. A little planning now will save you headaches in the future. CRP take-out is an excellent opportunity to begin no-till seeding.**

- Fields that have been in CRP for a long time will have improved soil organic matter and better tilth. Care should be taken to prevent loss of the organic matter, which can happen with tillage.
- Cultivation is not a prerequisite for returning CRP to annual cropland.
- Taking out CRP is an excellent opportunity to adopt practices such as grass buffers strips, strip cropping, or managing different soil types in a field. Consult with your local **Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)** field office for information on these and other conservation practices.
- Leave marginal soils and difficult to farm areas in grass. Inputs are expensive and yields may be minimal at best. Many times farming marginal soils can cost more than leaving them in perennial grass cover.
- Economic profit from the first crop following CRP take-out can be low. Nutrient management is a critical factor in following crop success.
- Undercutter tillage combined with herbicides may be more effective than herbicides alone in killing CRP grasses, and increasing yield of the first crop following take-out, but will negatively affect soil structure and soil organic matter.
- Knowing what grasses and weeds are in your CRP fields will help you develop effective take-out strategies.
- Be aware of potential green-bridge disease problems when seeding a wheat crop in CRP fields containing wheat grasses.
- It's important to conduct soil tests (NPK, EC, OM, pH) in order to apply the necessary nutrients.
- Deep banding of fertilizer below seed depth and below or near the seed row can reduce the impacts of root diseases and increase yield potential.

**USDA Farm Program considerations** (consult local Farm Service Agency Office for guidance)

- Will keeping areas in grass as conservation buffers benefit your standing in future USDA Farm Programs?
- Take note of highly erodible soils in CRP and ensure that conversions of these soils will not jeopardize compliance with the USDA Farm Program requirements?

*For questions concerning CRP take-out consult with your land grant university, local extension, or USDA-NRCS office.*



**No-till/ Minimum till (Recommended)**

- Fields Returning CRP grass to production with direct-seed management maintained soil quality and the microbial community structure originally found in CRP.
- *Sprayers* are an excellent tool for taking out CRP. Areas with heavy cover will impede coverage so mowing or harrowing may be needed for these areas. Care must be taken to not be overly aggressive when *harrowing* or risk dislodging the grass tussocks.
- It’s important that you use a drill that can cut through the sod, or plant crowns, placing the seed at the proper depth with good seed to soil contact. Avoid using drills that pull up the sod or dislodge bunchgrass crowns. Direct seed drills are best suited for this purpose. **Untilled CRP will likely impede seed placement with most conventional drills.**
- To improve herbicide take-up by CRP grasses **it’s very important to fertilize** (fall application best) and wait for response (6 inches of spring growth) before applying herbicide. Always follow herbicide label when applying herbicides.
- Fall application of herbicide is ineffective in killing perennial CRP grasses, even if regrowth is present.
- Consider planting a non-grass crop following CRP take-out to help deal with problem grass weeds. *Consult with local extension agent or crop advisor for crops appropriate for this purpose.*

**Method 1 - Plant a legume Spring Crop<sup>4</sup> or Cover Crop**

**Appropriate for:**

- Continuous (Annual) Crop Zone (16 inches and above annual precipitation)
- Continuous (Annual) Crop to Summer Fallow Transition Zone (12 – 16 inches precipitation), only if adequate moisture is available in the fall.

**Begin CRP Take-out Fall year 1 (or following spring) - Plant Spring Crop - Seed Fall year 2 (or spring planting option)**  
*(Note – Soil moisture loss may be considerable under this scenario)*

----- 1st Year -----				----- 2 <sup>nd</sup> Year ----	
Fall (begin site prep)		Spring	Summer	Fall	
<b>Rotary mow or harrow</b> to begin site prep. ( <i>Unless your drill does not do well with flat residue.</i> ) <b>Fertilize late fall</b> to promote grass growth in spring.  May want to <b>apply herbicide<sup>1</sup></b> if fall moisture has caused <u>winter annuals</u> such as cheatgrass or ventenata (aka wiregrass) to germinate. Also, this may be a good time to apply herbicide <sup>1</sup> to perennial weeds, such as Canada thistle and toadflax.	Winter	<b>Begin fallow period - apply herbicide<sup>1</sup></b> to actively growing grasses (Grasses should have approximately 6 inches of new growth.)	<b>Plant a legume</b> such as spring peas or a <b>legume cover crop</b> <u>if you have high soil water content</u> . Use a disc/cross slot type drill. Avoid drills that will pull up root crowns which can interfere with seeding <sup>3</sup> . <b>Planting legumes will allow the use of grass selective herbicides<sup>1</sup>.</b>	<b>Harvest spring crop</b>  or <b>Terminate cover crop (late spring).</b>	<b>If adequate moisture is present and cheatgrass isn’t a problem<sup>2</sup></b> <b>Plant a winter crop<sup>3</sup></b>
		or <b>May want to plant a spring grain.</b>	or <b>Wait until Spring, apply herbicide<sup>1</sup>, if necessary, and plant a spring crop.<sup>3</sup></b>		

- 1. IMPORTANT - Always follow herbicide label** when using herbicides. **Consult with a Licensed Pesticide Applicator** for information on appropriate herbicides and rates for this purpose.
2. Competition from annuals, such as cheatgrass, ventenata and jointed goatgrass, may be very high in the following winter wheat crop under this scenario. It’s usually best to wait until spring, make an herbicide application to control the weeds and then plant a spring crop.
3. It’s important that you use a drill that can cut through the sod, or plant crowns, placing the seed at the proper depth with good seed to soil contact. Avoid using drills that pull up the sod or dislodge bunchgrass crowns. Direct seed drills are best suited for this purpose. Untilled CRP will likely impede seed placement with most conventional drills.
4. Select a tall legume, or other spring crop, that stands above the CRP grass. This will make it easier to harvest with the combine. Canola may also be a good choice although it doesn’t fix nitrogen.

**Method 2 - Summer Chem-Fallow**

Appropriate for:

- **Continuous (Annual) Crop to Summer Fallow Transition Zone** (12 – 16 inches precipitation)
- **Summer Fallow Zone** (7 – 12 inches annual precipitation)

**Begin CRP Take-out Fall year 1 (or following spring) - Summer Fallow - Seed Fall year 2 (other options included)**

----- 1st Year -----			----- 2 <sup>nd</sup> Year -----
Fall (begin site prep)	Winter	Spring	Summer
<p><b>Rotary mow or harrow</b> to begin site prep. (<i>Unless your drill does not do well with flat residue.</i>)</p> <p><b>Fertilize late fall</b> to promote grass growth in spring.</p> <p>May want to <b>apply herbicide<sup>1</sup></b> if fall moisture has caused <u>winter annuals</u> such as cheatgrass or ventenata (aka wiregrass) to germinate. Also, this may be a good time to apply herbicide<sup>1</sup> to perennial weeds, such as Canada thistle and toadflax.</p>	Winter	<p><b>Begin fallow period</b></p> <p><b>Apply herbicide<sup>1</sup></b> to actively growing grasses (Grasses should have approximately 6 inches of new growth.)</p> <p>Fallow period - a <u>minimum of two</u> herbicide applications<sup>1</sup> will be needed during the fallow period.</p>	<p><b>Chem Fallow</b></p> <p><b>Apply herbicides<sup>1</sup></b> as needed to kill grasses and prevent weeds from making seed.</p> <p>Monitor grass growth throughout the summer. A mid-summer rain event can rejuvenate apparently dead grass often requiring an additional herbicide application<sup>1</sup>.</p>
		<p>If adequate moisture is present <b>Plant a winter crop<sup>2</sup></b> (use an appropriate drill<sup>3</sup>)</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>or</b></p> <p>If winter annual weeds, e.g. cheatgrass, ventenata (aka wiregrass) are a problem wait until spring and plant a spring crop<sup>3</sup></p>	
		<p><b>Spring</b> Apply herbicide<sup>1</sup>, if necessary, and <b>plant a spring crop<sup>3</sup></b>.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>or</b></p> <p>If perennial weeds are an issue, <b>Chem Fallow another year and plant<sup>3</sup> a winter crop in the fall.</b></p>	

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**REDUCED TILLAGE METHOD – Same as outlined in tables above but in addition to herbicide treatments add undercutter treatment/s as initial tillage during the first spring.**

**CONVENTIONAL TILLAGE (Generally not recommended when taking out CRP because of the negative effects on soil quality)**

- The disc, in particular, should be used with caution in low rainfall wind erosive areas that have light textured soils. If the disc is used minimize the depth of operation. **Undercutters are preferable** as they leave more surface residue than discs and other implements.
- Initial tillage should start in the spring not fall. Fall discing, compared to spring discing, can reduced overwinter water storage by about 2 inches compared to the undisturbed grass cover of the spring take-out treatments.
- Conventional tillage, including undercutters, will help set the moisture line but may also begin creating a tillage pan.
- Bunchgrass and rhizomatous grass have roots and crowns that can be problematic during site preparation for seeding.
- Tillage can bring up large clumps from bunchgrasses which can interfere with addition site preparation and seeding operations. If this happens roll the field with a roller/packer in the fall to improve root crown soil contact and decomposition.
- When using tillage to control rhizomatous species allow adequate time for the rhizomes to fully desiccate.

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