



CONSERVATION ENHANCEMENT ACTIVITY

E338B

CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

Short-interval burns to promote a healthy herbaceous plant community

Conservation Practice 338: Prescribed Burning

APPLICABLE LAND USE: Forest

RESOURCE CONCERN: Animals

ENHANCEMENT LIFE SPAN: 1 Year

Enhancement Description:

The controlled use of fire is applied in a forest to restore fire-adapted plants and forage while improving wildlife habitat, wildlife food supply, and reducing the risk of damage from intense, severe wildfires. The ideal interval between prescribed burns is not often achieved. To improve the effectiveness of prescribed burning, the frequency of prescribed burning is increased appropriately, for a specified time period, to help restore ecological conditions in forests and woodlands. Short return interval prescribed burning is used to regenerate desirable tree species, improve the condition of fire-adapted plants and native herbaceous vegetation, improve wildlife food supply and forage quantity and quality, create wildlife habitat (snags and den/cavity trees), limit encroachment of competing vegetation including non-native species, and reduce the future risk of damage from intense, severe wildfires.

Criteria:

- States will apply general criteria from the NRCS National Conservation Practice Standard Prescribed Burning (Code 338) as listed below, and additional criteria as required by the NRCS State Office.
- Update the Prescribed Burning Plan (Conservation Activity Plan 112), or other Prescribed Burn prescription, in consultation with NRCS personnel to address restoration needs for fire-adapted vegetative communities and forages on the property.

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- Assess the need for pre-treatment of vegetation and fuels, and for application of complementary NRCS Conservation Practice Standards such as Fuel Break (Code 383), Firebreak (Code 394), and Woody Residue Treatment (Code 384).
- Apply to sites where prescribed burning has previously been implemented at longer intervals than recommended to maintain the desired plant community, and where burn frequency must be increased to achieve the objectives listed in the enhancement description.
- The prescribed burning frequency will be increased (i.e., the burn interval will be reduced) from the previous regimen to an interval appropriate for the target plant community.
- Assess the existing fuel load using appropriate tools and methods for the geographic area.
- If invasive plants are present, utilize methods and timing that will prevent or control their spread.
- A written burn plan must be **modified or edited**, and all necessary approvals secured prior to conducting a prescribed burn. The plan will include the following components at a minimum:
 - The objectives of the burn and the expected post-burn conditions.
 - Maps, images and/or descriptions of the proposed burn area and any associated or adjacent smoke sensitive areas.
 - Inventory of available fuels.
 - Required weather and fuel conditions under which the burn will be conducted.
 - Firing sequence and methods.
 - List of equipment and personnel needed and job assignments.
 - Any pre-burn preparation needed to safely and effectively conduct the prescribed burn.
 - List of appropriate authorities, agencies, departments, individuals, and facilities to be contacted and necessary signatures of approval.
 - Checklist for a post-burn evaluation.

Burning criteria

- Follow all components of the burn plan.
- A current fire weather forecast is required prior to conducting a prescribed burn. Collect weather parameters and other data that affect fire behavior for the day of the burn and monitor the appropriate weather parameters during the burn. Weather conditions outside those prescribed in the written plan will result in postponement or cessation of the burn.



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Grazing criteria

- If grazing is used in combination with prescribed burning to manage understory vegetation, a grazing plan must be in place and be used to guide the frequency and duration of grazing periods.
- **MT: Defer livestock grazing post burning for two growing seasons (until the fall of the second year).**



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Documentation and Implementation Requirements:

Participant will:

- Prior to implementation, identify sites where at least one application of prescribed burning was implemented at longer burn intervals (i.e., insufficient frequency) than recommended for the target plant community by an existing prescribed burn plan or other habitat management plan. (NRCS will provide technical assistance, as needed)
- Prior to implementation, identify and document those sites in need of restoration of fire-adapted vegetative communities and forages where increased burn frequency will achieve the objectives listed in the enhancement description. (NRCS will provide technical assistance, as needed)
 - If grazing is used in combination with prescribed burning to manage understory vegetation, develop or update a grazing plan prior to implementation to guide the frequency and duration of grazing periods in accordance with the objectives of the enhancement description. Provide a copy to NRCS.
- Prior to implementation, assess the existing fuel load using appropriate tools and methods for the geographic area. Determine the need for pre-treatment of the vegetation and fuels to facilitate a desired fire intensity to achieve the enhancement objectives. Use complimentary practices as needed, such as NRCS Conservation Practice Standards Fuel Break (Code 383), Firebreak (Code 394) and Woody Residue Treatment (Code 384) to achieve appropriate conditions. (NRCS will provide technical assistance, as needed.)
- Prior to implementation, acquire a written burn plan for the enrolled land use acres that meets the enhancement criteria and any additional state NRCS requirements. Provide to NRCS for approval.
- Prior to implementation of a prescribed burn, acquire all necessary approvals and permits (local, state, federal as applicable).
- During implementation, and prior to ignition of each prescribed burn, acquire a current fire weather forecast and ensure all weather conditions are within those prescribed in the written burn plan. If conditions are not within prescription, postpone burn.
- During implementation, and prior to ignition of any prescribed burn, notify NRCS to confirm NRCS verification for any planned changes will meet NRCS or State required enhancement criteria.
- During implementation, install and maintain erosion control measures as needed for the site. (NRCS will provide technical assistance, as needed.)

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- After implementation of each prescribed burn, conduct a post-burn evaluation as required within the burn plan and provide to NRCS.

NRCS will:

- Prior to Implementation, as needed, provide technical assistance in determining sites for enhancement implementation that meet specified criteria.
- Prior to implementation, as needed, provide explanation and technical assistance in interpreting the following NRCS Conservation Practice Standards as they relate to implementing this enhancement:
 - Prescribed Burning (Code 338)
 - Fuel Break (Code 383)
 - Firebreak (Code 394)
 - Woody Residue Treatment (Code 384)
 - Additional Conservation Practice Standards for erosion control, as needed for the site.
- Prior to implementation, review and certify the prescribed burn plan meets the enhancement criteria and any additional state NRCS requirements.
- (If livestock are used) Prior to implementation, review the prescribed grazing plan to ensure objectives of the enhancement will be met when used in combination with prescribed burning.
- During implementation, evaluate any planned changes to verify they meet the enhancement criteria.
- After implementation of each prescribed burn, review the post burn evaluation provided by the participant. Discuss any issues that may have occurred, and provide assistance as needed in adjusting plans and procedures to improve future prescribed burns.



NRCS Documentation Review:

I have reviewed all required participant documentation and have determined the participant has implemented the enhancement and met all criteria and requirements.

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Participant Name _____ Contract Number _____

Total Amount Applied _____ Fiscal Year Completed _____

NRCS Technical Adequacy Signature

Date

