Farm Service Agency State Technical Committee Outline
September 21, 2016
Reference: Additional Practices for Mid-Contract Management

1) Purpose: To discuss additions that need to be made to the list of available mid-contract management choices for producers participating in CRP.
    - Authorizations for these new practices are found in notice CRP-805 (handout)

2) What is Mid-Contract Management?
    - MCM is a management practice that is applied to every CRP contract acre at least once during the contact period to assure plant diversity and wildlife benefits while ensuring protection of the soil and water resources.

3) The current practices approved for mid-Contract management are:
    - Light Disking
    - Interseeding
    - Prescribed Burning
    - Chiseling
    - Harrowing
    - Managed haying
    - Routine grazing
    - Windbreak/Shelterbelt Renovation

4) Clayton Schmidt, NRCS and I have met to discuss the needed practices and both FSA and NRCS are in agreement that incorporating these new practices into the available list of options for CRP participants will greatly assist producers.
    - **Strip Spraying** of herbicides could be used where vegetation has become to think to benefit the target species on wildlife buffers. See expanded definition in notice CRP-805.
    - **Strip Mowing** in arid areas (less than 25" average annual precipitation) could be used on a case by case basis only with strict parameters as shown in the notice. This practice could be used if approved in areas where there is excess residue and the option to hay or graze is not available. See expanded definition in notice CRP-805.
    - **Spraying for Wildlife – Tree and Shrubs** for Wildlife and Riparian buffers could be used when vegetative cover beneath tree and shrub establishments have become too thick to provide wildlife benefits. See expanded definition in notice CRP-805.

5) Because MCM was not required on CRP contracts until 2003, many continuous CRP contracts with 15 year terms did not have MCM planned in. Consequently, Riparian Buffers and Wildlife Buffers have been growing with no treatment for a long period of time. These practices are always eligible for re-enrollment when they expire and all re-enrollments now require MCM to be planned in.

6) Does the group have any concerns about FSA adding these 3 CRP mid-contract management tools to the list of available practices for producers to use when planning new contracts?

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Farm Service Agency
Washington, DC 20250

Notice CRP-805

For: State and County Offices

2016 State Office Review of Required CRP Management Activities

Approved by: Deputy Administrator, Farm Programs

1 Overview

A Background

2-CRP, paragraph 428 provides that beginning with CRP signup 26 (2003) all CRP participants must perform at least one management activity as part of their approved conservation plan. This activity must be planned to ensure plant diversity and wildlife benefits while ensuring protection of the soil and water resources.

State management activity teams developed specific management requirements and recommendations for activities that were developed and then reviewed by the State Technical Committee. STC took action based on these recommendations.

Since 2003, CRP incorporated additional practices, initiatives, and other policy changes. These changes necessitate periodic reviews of approved management activities to ensure required management activity is being conducted consistent with CRP policy.

7 CFR 1410.22 states "For general signup and continuous signup contracts except grasslands, mid-contract management must be conducted to implement management activities, such as disking and prescribed burning according to an approved conservation plan, as part of the CRP contractual obligation on all contracts entered into under general signup and continuous signup, as specified in 7 CFR 1410.30".

Therefore, no waivers for any required management on any practice may be authorized beginning with FY 2017. This includes waivers previously approved by the National office for certain States and practices.

Disposal Date	Distribution
November 1, 2016	State Offices; State Offices relay to County Offices, and NRCS Offices

1 Overview (Continued)

B Purpose

This notice instructs State Offices to:

- review all current approved management activities for all practices to determine if those activities should be modified
- develop management activities for any practice that does not have an approved management activity, including those practices previously provided an exemption and provide a summary to the National Office
- develop new management activities for any practice, as applicable.

2 Policy Clarification

A Development and Review of Management Activities

State Offices shall follow the provisions of 2-CRP, paragraph 428 and this notice, when developing management activities for CRP practices.

Each State shall complete a review of existing approved management activities and modify as needed to meet current practice and initiative needs. All STC approved management activities must be submitted to the National Office according to paragraph 3.

Note: Management activities are never authorized during the primary nesting season.

B Authorized Activities

Activities that may be authorized include, but are not limited to, the following:

- inter-seeding
- light disking
- tree thinning or pruning
- prescribed burning
- strip-spraying
- managed harvesting/haying/grazing as noted in subparagraph C.

Note: See Exhibit 1 for additional examples of authorized activities.

2 Policy Clarification (Continued)

C Managed Harvesting, Haying, and Grazing as Management Activities

Activities such as managed harvesting or routine grazing may only be used to meet required management activities if it is authorized for the practice and conducted only as allowed under 2-CRP, Part 19. Cost share is not authorized for these activities and payment reductions apply according to 2-CRP, paragraph 666.

If a natural disaster results in authorization of emergency haying or grazing under 2-CRP, paragraphs 691 through 696, the activity may be used to fulfill the required management activity. However, it should not be among the list of activities provided to the participant during conservation plan development.

D Activities Not Authorized

Activities that are generally considered routine maintenance necessary for the practice to function at the planned minimum specifications shall not be considered eligible for any approved management activities.

Activities that are not authorized include, but are not limited to, the following:

- extending the PNS
- installing flags for fence markers for wildlife
- repairing fences
- installing or removing tree tubes/shelters/protectors
- installing wildlife watering facilities
- continuing monitoring or management
- applying fertilizer, herbicide or pesticide
- installing access roads
- controlling weeds on a spot basis
- mowing, clipping, swathing unless authorized within managed harvesting/haying authority found in 2-CRP, Part 19.

Exception: Strip mowing of practices in "arid areas" with less than 25" in average annual precipitation may be authorized when no other alternative is available on a case by case basis. This determination shall be made by COC, with concurrence of State Office representative.

3 Action

A State Office Action

State Offices shall:

- follow the provisions of 2-CRP, paragraph 428 and this notice and provide a summary report of STC approved management activities to the National Office by COB, July 29, 2016.

- see Exhibit 2 for instructions to submit the summary report and supporting documentation using CEPD SharePoint site at **https://sharepoint.fsa.usda.net/states/cepd/crp/default.aspx.**

B National Office Action

The National Office shall complete a review of submitted STC management plans and provide a memo of approval or disapproval of the submitted activities.

C Contact

If there are questions about the review of required management activities, contact Beverly Preston by either of the following:

- e-mail to **beverly.preston@wdc.fsa.usda.gov**
- telephone at 202-720-9563.

Sample Management Activities

Inter-seeding
CRP cover, without disturbance, will change through natural plant succession to a less diverse mix and eventually grasses and even woody vegetation will become predominant. Activities such as light disking, burning, or grass specific herbicide application followed by inter-seeding of annual forbs and legumes will result in improved plant diversity and wildlife habitat.
Light Disking
Shallow or light disking of well-established CRP stands may be necessary to increase open ground and encourage a diverse plant community. Preferred methods may include disking one-third of field or rotating areas in strips across portions of fields. This sets back thick grasses to allow annuals, wildflowers, and legumes to thrive and provides open ground for wildlife.
Tree Thinning and/or Pruning
Older tree plantings can become overtopped and/or overcrowded and ultimately reduce tree growth and wildlife benefits. Thinning can remove less desirable trees to enable other trees to prosper. It also enhances wildlife habitat by removing undesirable woody vegetation, diseased trees, and creating open areas for development of herbaceous plant cover.
Prescribed Burn
Prescribed burning can be beneficial in improvement of plant diversity. When properly applied, it creates open areas for wildlife movement by reducing plant litter; encourages germination and growth of forbs and legumes; and suppresses woody plants and retards growth of nonnative plants. It also improves forest health and productivity.
Strip Spray
Strip spraying of herbicides is an effective management tool that can be utilized where vegetation has become too thick to benefit the target species. The goal is generally to suppress approximately 50% of the perennial grasses within the treatment area. This can enhance wildlife habitat by creating open ground networks and encouraging a diverse forb/legume community. Forbs/legumes/pollinator species may be inter-seeded following the herbicide application, if appropriate for site. The application of herbicide in this instance is not for normal maintenance or weed control required by the approved conservation plan.

Sample Management Activities (Continued)

Managed Harvesting/Haying/Grazing
Disturbance of established cover through managed harvesting or haying/grazing may encourage plant diversity for wildlife. However, it is only permitted as allowed by 2-CRP, Part 19 and the acres must have a 25% payment reduction assessed on the annual rental payments. When applicable, this may be conducted in conjunction with spraying, disking, or inter-seeding options.
Dormant Inter-seedings – Grassed Waterways
CP8A, Grassed Waterways, must have a required management activity conducted and caution must be used to ensure disturbance of critical flow areas does not have a negative impact on the practice function. A dense stand of vegetation is needed for the waterway to function and not erode, but the additions of legumes results in plant diversity and can provide nitrogen to help sustain vegetation. One recommendation is to broadcast seed during the dormant season (seed may be drilled, but not in bottom portion). If cover is too dense for successful seed to soil contact, mowing or prescribed burning can be done on the side slopes and any additional seeded widths.
Strip Mowing – Arid Areas
In areas determined arid (less than 25" annual average rainfall) mowing may be utilized as an approved management activity on a case by case basis. Applicable counties must be designated by COC with State Office representative concurrence. This activity shall be used on stands with excess residue and without shrub species. In stands with shrubs, mowing may be used only in areas without the presence of shrubs. If shrubs are destroyed by mowing, participants may be required to replant without cost sharing. Mowing should generally be done after grasses have gone to seed and shall not be conducted during the primary nesting season unless approved in advance as a spot treatment. Mowing must be completed early enough in fall to allow enough regrowth to provide winter and spring cover for wildlife. It is recommended that mower height be set 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 sunlight to the crowns of the desired perennials. Mowing/swathing with residue removal may be approved only if the amount of residue would damage the stand if left in place. If removed, the material must be destroyed; no commercial use may be made of the residue. A paid for measurement service must be obtained by the producer to allow FSA to witness destruction of the material.
Spraying for Wildlife – Tree and Shrubs
Vegetative cover beneath tree and shrub establishments can become too thick to provide wildlife benefits. Open areas and bare ground created by herbicide application can form early successional habitat and benefit wildlife species. Continued vegetative control around established trees can greatly increase tree growth and survival to provide future shelter and habitat for forest dwelling wildlife species by reducing/controlling aggressive sod forming grasses.

2016 Management Activity Review – State Office Report Submissions

Step	Action
1	Go to CEPD SharePoint site at **https://sharepoint.fsa.usda.net/states/cepd/crp/default.aspx**.
2	Select "2016 MCM Review" from the list items.
3	Select "Add new item".
4	Enter the State Office contact for questions about submissions.
5	Select the applicable State abbreviation from the drop down menu.
6	Click the radio button "Select the Management Activity" from the drop down menu; if activity differs from listed, click the radio button to specify activity not listed.
7	Select each CRP practice for which this management activity may be used.
8	Provide a brief narration of the purpose of the activity.
9	Provide a brief description of the activity that will be planned.
10	As required by 2-CRP, paragraph 428 enter the frequency of the activity.
11	Enter the time period for completion of the activity as required by 2-CRP, paragraph 428.
12	(Optional) Select "Attach File" and attach supporting documentation for the activity such as STC minutes, NRCS job sheet, etc.
13	Select "Save".
14	Repeat steps 3 through 13 for each management activity used in the State. **Note:** Since management activities are required for all practices, each practice must be attached to a management activity. If there is a CRP practice for which a State has no enrollment, complete a SharePoint submission and select "Unauthorized Practice for State/No Enrollment" as the "Management Activity Name" field and select the applicable practice(s) for the State. For example, Indiana has not been authorized for a CP36, CP37, or CP41. The State Office will select "Unauthorized Practice for State/No Enrollment" as the management activity and select those practices from the bulleted list.