



United States Department of Agriculture

CRP Practice CP29

Marginal Pastureland Wildlife Habitat Buffer

Natural Resources Conservation Service - Indiana - March 2016 (ver. 1.1)

Marginal Pastureland Wildlife Habitat Buffer Program Job Sheet



Photo courtesy of MI USDA NRCS

WHAT IS CRP MARGINAL PASTURELAND WILDLIFE HABITAT BUFFER?

A Marginal Pastureland Wildlife Habitat Buffer is a band of **native** grasses, wildflowers, and/or shrubs used to limit sediment, nutrients, pesticides, and other contaminants from entering water bodies. In addition, Marginal Pastureland Wildlife Habitat Buffers can provide valuable winter cover, nest sites, nectar and pollen for pollinating insects, and food for wildlife.

Marginal Pastureland Wildlife Habitat Buffers are located on herbaceous (i.e. non-woody) areas immediately adjacent and parallel to perennial or seasonal streams, lakes, ponds, and /or sinkholes.

WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES

On fields that meet eligibility requirements for the Conservation Reserve program (CRP) as determined by the Farm Service Agency (FSA).

CRP POLICY

For CRP Marginal Pastureland Wildlife Habitat Buffers:

- The site must meet all marginal pastureland eligibility requirements. Cropland, forestland, and woodland are not eligible for marginal pastureland.
- The site must be **immediately adjacent and parallel to** perennial or seasonal streams,

sinkholes and karst areas, or any permanent water body, such as a lake or pond, which provides at least a seasonal flow of surface water from the water body off the farm. Water bodies that do not provide a permanent water cover throughout the year in all years are not eligible.

- Marginal Pastureland Wildlife Habitat Buffers will be managed for (if already existing), or planted to, native warm season grasses, forbs and legumes.
 - a) If the existing vegetation for the site is non-native grasses, the site must be converted to native grasses.
 - b) Native grasses include the warm season grasses such as Big &/or Little Bluestem, Indiangrass, Switchgrass, Broomsedge, etc. as well as cool season grasses such as Canada &/or Virginia Wildrye, etc.
 - c) If the natural vegetation of the site is primarily trees, the area should be enrolled as CP22 Riparian Buffer.
- The minimum width of the Marginal Pastureland Wildlife Habitat Buffer depends upon the slope of the field, the soil type, and the pollutants contained in the runoff. The minimum width is 20 feet. The maximum average width is 120 feet
- Marginal Pastureland Wildlife Habitat Buffers must begin at the top of the stream bank, or edge of the water body. If the site already contains existing vegetation that is not eligible for CP29, these acres will be included in the calculation of maximum width and included in the CRP Plan, but will not be eligible for payments.
- Establishment of the Marginal Pastureland Wildlife Habitat Buffer should result in a substantial reduction of pollutants reaching the adjacent stream or water body.
- CRP Marginal Pastureland Wildlife Habitat Buffers will be installed according to the NRCS Riparian Herbaceous Buffer Standard (390) in the local eFOTG. Site-specific requirements are listed on the attached Specifications Sheet.

BUFFER PLANTING/ESTABLISHMENT

If existing vegetation will sufficiently address the resource concern and will be native grasses and forbs, no planting will be required.

If planting is needed, establish the vegetation according to the attached plan/design sheet. Any changes to these specifications should be approved by NRCS.

All construction and seeding must be completed within 12 months of contract approval to remain in compliance. If circumstances beyond the landowner's control prohibit completion within the first 12 months, the local FSA County Committee may approve an extension to the next construction and planting season.

Site Preparation: It is very important to plant the vegetation into a weed-free seedbed. Weed control efforts should begin prior to planting, and may require multiple applications in both the fall and spring prior to planting. Use herbicides or tillage to eliminate competing vegetation. If necessary for erosion control, seed a temporary cover. Eliminate the temporary vegetation at planting time with tillage or herbicides.

Contact your local Purdue University Extension Agent for specific herbicides to use. **Apply all herbicides according to the label.**

Lime and Fertilizer (Native Grasses): Lime and fertilizer should not be applied to native grasses at establishment unless a current soil test shows phosphorus (P) and potassium (K) are in the deficient range or the pH is 6.1 or less. Do not apply any nitrogen (N) during establishment to minimize weed competition.

SEEDING DATES

Selected species will be planted within the dates in the specification sheet that will be provided for the site.

Seed preparation: Be careful not to blend seed of varying size, shape and weight as this can make calibration of equipment and seeding uniformity difficult.

No-Till seeding: Use a no-till drill to reduce the risk of erosion and possible loss of seedlings. Ensure the drill is designed to native grasses. Your local Soil and Water Conservation Districts may be able to assist in locating equipment. Set the drill to provide an ideal planting depth of no

more than ¼ inch unless otherwise directed. Seeding native grasses deeper than ¼ inch will lead to potential failure. Soils that are too wet or too dry can also cause improper seed placement.

Conventional Seeding: Use a drill with seven (7) inch or less row spacing or a culti-packer seeder, designed for native grass seed. The seedbed should be worked to a minimum depth of three (3) inches and firmed before seeding. Grass seed should be drilled uniformly and seeded no more than ¼ inch deep.

Broadcast Seeding: Seed may be broadcast if completed in a uniform manner. Pre-mixing the seed with 200 lbs. per acre of pelletized lime and utilizing an airflow applicator is also effective. Seedbeds should be worked to a minimum depth of three (3) inches and firmed before seeding. The seedbed should be culti-packed before and after seeding. It is acceptable to see up to ⅓ of the seed on the soil surface. Wind speed should be 15 m.p.h. or less when broadcasting.

Weed Control During Establishment Period: Mow, burn, or apply herbicides as needed to control unwanted vegetation until a **Final** Status Review is issued, or for a maximum of three (3) years after planting. Mow when competing weeds are taller than the planted vegetation, and at a height above the planted vegetation.

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

Noxious weeds and other undesirable plants, insects, and pests shall be controlled, including such maintenance as necessary to avoid detrimental effects to the surrounding land.

After the Final Status Review or three (3) years (whichever comes first), maintain the planting according to your CRP conservation plan. Maintenance activities are allowed only on a spot basis and only if necessary to maintain stand health, maintain stand diversity, or control pests that will damage the CRP cover or adjacent lands. Burning must be in accordance with a prescribed burn plan. MOWING and other maintenance activities are not authorized between April 1 to August 1 to protect ground-nesting wildlife (i.e. - the Primary Nesting and Brood-Rearing season). If maintenance activities are needed during these times, the FSA County Committee **must** approve the maintenance activity **prior to** the activity occurring. Native grasses will not be mowed

lower than 12", and non-native grasses lower than four (4) inches.

Mowing for generic weed control or for cosmetic purposes is prohibited.

Exclude all acres from haying and grazing year round, unless authorized. Fences may need to be constructed and maintained to exclude livestock throughout the entire year.

The contract area cannot be used for field roads or other uses that will damage or destroy the cover.

MID-CONTRACT MANAGEMENT

Mid-Contract Management (MCM) is required on this practice. If the CRP acres are less than 5 acres, the entire acreage can be managed in a single year; otherwise, the maximum amount that can be disturbed during any one year is ½ of the contract acreage. For maximum habitat value, disturb no more than 1/3 of the contract acreage in any given year.

MCM activities will be avoided on environmentally sensitive areas including:

- a) Concentrated flow areas,
- b) Critical areas,
- c) Within the first 20 feet of a practice that borders a water resource to avoid water quality resource concerns, and
- d) Other areas where gully erosion is likely.

Environmentally sensitive areas will be marked on the plan map to ensure Mid-Contract Management activities are avoided on these areas.

Areas devoted to grass have the following options:

- Prescribed Burning
- Strip Disking
- Strip Spraying
- Inter-seeding forbs/legumes/pollinator habitat

Areas devoted to trees have the following options:

- Inner Seedling Planting (re-enrollments)
- Inter-seeding forbs/legumes/pollinator habitat
- Follow-up Weed Control
- Pruning
- Thinning (re-enrollments)

MCM activities operations will not be performed from April 1 through August 1 for contracts starting in 2008, to protect the primary nesting period for grassland bird species. It is also recommended, but is not required, to delay MCM activities until after August 15 to reduce the chance of harming fledgling birds and other young wildlife.

MCM activities operations will be performed along field contours, or across the slope, when practical.

Strips will parallel brushy or woody escape cover when feasible.

OTHER MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

For optimum wildlife habitat, plant a diversity of grasses, legumes, and wildflowers. These mixtures will provide winter and nesting cover and food for a variety of wildlife. When mowing is necessary, restrict mowing to August 1 - August 20 to allow re-growth for winter cover.

CRP MARGINAL PASTURELAND WILDLIFE HABITAT BUFFER (CP-29) SPECIFICATIONS SHEET

Landowner:				County:	
Farm:	Tract:	Field(s):	Acres:	Grasses: Firebreak:	Date:

RECOMMENDED SPECIES and SEEDING RATE (PLS #/ac = Pure Live Seed Pounds per Acre)

	NATIVE MIX (see map for location)	RATE PLS#/ac	TOTAL = (RATE X Acres)	
<input type="checkbox"/>			0.0 Lb.	<input type="checkbox"/> EXISTING VEGETATION WILL MEET CRP AND FOTG POLICIES, WITH NO NEED FOR PLANTING.
			0.0 Lb.	
	WILDFLOWERS		0.0 Lb.	

	SPECIES/ACTIVITY	RATE Lb./acre	TOTAL = (Rate X Acres)
<input type="checkbox"/> Firebreaks:			0.00 Lbs.
			0.00 Lbs.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Establish a Bare-Ground Firebreak by disking the Fall & Spring prior to Prescribed Burning Disked areas will be re-seeded after each Prescribed Burn		

NOTES:

Recommended Wildflowers include:

BEFORE PLANTING in Year:

<input type="checkbox"/> Permanent Fence:	: _____ ft = (see attached design)
<input type="checkbox"/> Water Source:	<input type="checkbox"/> Pipeline: _____ ft = (see design)
<input type="checkbox"/> Water Facilities(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Livestock Crossing: (see design)
<input type="checkbox"/> Herbicide ₁ (per label):	Dates =
<input type="checkbox"/> Herbicide ₂ (per label):	Dates =
<input type="checkbox"/> Tillage:	Dates =
<input type="checkbox"/> Temporary Seeding:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Structures, Grading, Leveling, Filling – See the attached Design Sheet.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Apply fertilizer and lime according to an approved soil test and Tri-State recommendations for “ESTABLISHING” Native or Non-Native grasses.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Other:	

PLANTING METHOD in Year:

<input type="checkbox"/> Planting Method:	
	Dates = See Seeding Dates on Page 2
(If unforeseen circumstances prohibit the planting of the grass by this date, please contact our office as soon as possible)	

POST-PLANTING MAINTENANCE for Pest Control

Mowing: BEFORE FINAL STATUS REVIEW = mow 12 inches high when the weeds are 12" taller than the planted grasses

Native Grass = AFTER FINAL STATUS REVIEW* = 12 inches MINIMUM Mowing Height*

Non-Native Grass = AFTER FINAL STATUS REVIEW* = 4 inches MINIMUM Mowing Height*

Herbicide* (per label):

Prescribed Burning*: According to an approved plan

Other:*

*NOTE: After the final Status Review has been issued, weed control and other maintenance activities will not occur between April 1 - August 1, and will occur on a "spot" basis only, unless prior approval is granted by the FSA County Committee.

NATURAL SUCCESSION AREAS

Temporary cover:

Legumes/Forbs to be inter-seeded:

Maintenance for Noxious Weeds and Woody Growth Control:

Herbicide:

Other:

Note: After the final status review has been completed, maintenance activities are allowed only on a spot basis and only with prior approval of the Farm Service Agency (FSA) County Committee.

Maintenance activities must be conducted between **August 1 - April 1** unless prior approval for

work outside these dates has been given by FSA County Committee. **Mowing is not allowed as maintenance or as a mid-contract management activity unless used as preparation for prescribed burning, strip spraying, or strip disking.**

Additional guidance:

MID-CONTRACT MANAGEMENT - STARTING IN YEAR:

see the attached Mid Contract Management Job Sheet for details

For CRP Mid-contract Management job sheets see:

<http://www.in.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/CRP/crphomepage.html>