



# NATIVE GRASS PLANTING

## Michigan CONSERVATION RESERVE ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM CREP – CP2

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

June 2014



Photo courtesy of USDA NRCS

### WHAT IS A NATIVE GRASS PLANTING?

Native grasses and wildflowers provide soil erosion protection as well as excellent habitat for a variety of wildlife, especially upland game birds and songbirds.

Native grasses were present in Michigan when Europeans arrived. Many of these grasses are associated with native prairies, barrens and savannas. Some of the more common native grasses that grow well in Michigan include warm-season grasses such as Big Bluestem, Little Bluestem, Indian grass, and Switchgrass as well as native cool season grasses such as Canada Wild Rye and Virginia Wild Rye. Common wildflowers include Black-Eyed Susan, Purple Coneflower, Coreopsis, and others.

Native grass plantings of warm-season species provide excellent nesting and winter cover for wildlife. These tall, stiff, upright grasses stand up well to snow and ice. These grasses put most of their growth on in the heat of the summer, unlike the cool-season grasses (found in most lawns) which grow best in the spring and fall.

Native grasses & shrubs will live a long time after establishment. However, like most long-lived plant species, they generally establish slowly. Therefore, it is very important to establish these grasses properly and to have patience when evaluating the results.

### ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible for this practice for the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), the land must be located in the Saginaw Bay, River Raisin Western Lake Erie, or Lake Macatawa Watersheds,

the land must have a cropping history (4 out of 6 years from 2008 - 2013), and be within 1000 feet of an eligible body of water. Further, the land must have an average Erodibility Index of 8 or greater for wind &/or water.

### CREP POLICY

For CREP, 70% of the eligible acreage will be a Native Grasses & Wildflowers mix (**Big Bluestem, Little Bluestem, Indiangrass, Switchgrass, etc.** – consult the “**Michigan CREP Eligible Wildflowers List**” for eligible wildflowers) and the other 30% will be Introduced grasses and legumes (only **timothy, orchard grass, & redtop plus Legumes** are eligible). Any other species or plantings are not eligible.

Introduced grasses and legumes and Native Grasses and Wildflowers will be established according to the Conservation Cover (327) standard in the local Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG) and they must be planted within 12 months of contract effective date of CRP-1 to remain in compliance. If circumstances beyond the landowner’s control prohibit the planting within the first 12 months, the local FSA County Committee may approve an extension to the next planting season.

### PLANTING

It is very important to plant grasses into a weed-free, firm seedbed. If the field is currently in cropland, weed control efforts should begin prior to planting. Use herbicide 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.

**If the field is currently in sod**, begin weed control efforts using broad-spectrum herbicides in the fall. Apply herbicides again after the spring green-up prior to planting (if possible, a prescribed burn prior to spring green up to remove the dead litter from the fall treatment will provide best results).

Contact your local Michigan State University (MSU) Extension Agent for specific herbicides to use. **Apply all herbicides according to the label.**

Plant the vegetation according to the attached plan/design sheet. Apply lime and fertilizer according to needs determined by a soil test and MSU recommendations.

Use a drill designed for the seed to be planted, or the seed may be broadcast or aerial seeded. For aerial or

broadcast seeding, the seedbed must be worked up and firmed with a cultipacker or similar equipment. A carrier such as potash may also be needed to spread the seed evenly. **After aerial or broadcast seeding, the site must be rolled or cultipacked to ensure proper seed to soil contact.** Regardless of the method, plant the seeds **no deeper than** 1/8" – 1/4".

Mow, burn, or apply herbicides as needed to control unwanted vegetation until a **Final** Status Review is issued. Mow when competing weeds are taller than the planted vegetation, and at a height above the planted vegetation. **Native grasses will not be mowed lower than 12", and Introduced grasses lower than 4".**

For additional information on establishment and maintenance of grasses, see the following NRCS – Michigan Conservation Sheets (available at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/efotg/> in Section IV): “Establishing Cool Season Grasses and Legumes for Conservation Cover”, “Establishing Prairie Grass Buffer Strips”, “Prescribed Burning”, &/or others.

For additional information on herbicide controls, contact your local MSU Extension Agent. **Always apply herbicides according to labeled directions.**

## 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. Some of the most common pests that need controlled on CRP acreage include Autumn Olive, Multiflora Rose, Spotted Knapweed, Quackgrass, etc.

**After** the Final Status Review, maintain the planting according to your CREP 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 CREP cover or adjacent lands. Burning must be in accordance with a prescribed burn plan. See the Conservation Information Sheet "Prescribed Burning" for further information. **MOWING** is only authorized between Aug 1<sup>st</sup> and Aug 20<sup>th</sup> to protect ground-nesting wildlife and to allow re-growth for winter cover. Other maintenance activities are only allowed between August 1 –May 1st (i.e. - outside of the Primary Nesting and Brood-Rearing season). If maintenance activities are needed at times other than these, the FSA County Committee **must** approve the maintenance activity **prior to** the activity occurring. **Mowing for generic weed control or for cosmetic purposes is prohibited.**

**Livestock must be excluded from the planting.**

## REQUIRED MANAGEMENT

All new CREP contracts must have mid-term contract management activities scheduled that are site specific

and will ensure plant diversity, wildlife habitat, and protection of soil and water resources See the Mid-Contract Management Sheet for your contract.

## 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.

To facilitate future prescribed burning, consider establishing the perimeter of the field to the Cool-Season Grasses and Legumes.

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# NATIVE GRASS PLANTING DESIGN WORKSHEET CREP CP-2

**Landowner:**

**County:**

Farm:

Tract:

Field(s):

Native Acres:

Date:

Non-Native Acres:

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

NATIVE MIX <small>(see map for location)</small>	RATE PLS#/ac	TOTAL = <small>(RATE X Acres)</small>			INTRODUCED MIX <small>(see map for location)</small>	RATE PLS#/ac	TOTAL = <small>(RATE X Acres)</small>		
<input type="checkbox"/>		0.0	Lb.		<input type="checkbox"/>		0.0	Lb.	
		0.0	Lb.			0.0	Lb.		
		0.0	Lb.			0.0	Lb.		
		0.0	Lb.			0.0	Lb.		
		0.0	Lb.			0.0	Lb.		
		0.0	Lb.			0.0	Lb.		
<b>WILDFLOWERS</b>									

**NOTES:**

Recommended Wildflowers include: - (see the "Michigan CREP Eligible Wildflower List" for additional species)

## SITE PREPARATION - BEFORE PLANTING in Year:

- Herbicide<sub>1</sub> (per label): \_\_\_\_\_ Dates = \_\_\_\_\_
- Herbicide<sub>2</sub> (per label): \_\_\_\_\_ Dates = \_\_\_\_\_
- Tillage: \_\_\_\_\_ Dates = \_\_\_\_\_
- Temporary Seeding: \_\_\_\_\_
- Structures, Grading, Leveling, Filling – **See the attached Design Sheet.**
- Apply fertilizer and lime according to an approved soil test and MSU recommendations for "ESTABLISHING" Native or Introduced grasses.**
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

## PLANTING METHOD in Year:

- Planting Method:**
- Dates | Natives = \_\_\_\_\_ | Non-Natives = \_\_\_\_\_
- (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" high when the weeds are 12" taller than the planted grasses
  - Native Grass = **AFTER FINAL STATUS REVIEW\*** = 12" MINIMUM Mowing Height\*
  - Introduced Grass = **AFTER FINAL STATUS REVIEW\*** = 4" MINIMUM Mowing Height\*
- Herbicide\* (per label): \_\_\_\_\_  Prescribed Burning\*: According to an approved plan
- Other:\*

**\*NOTE:** After the Final Status Review has been issued, weeds will be treated on a "spot" basis only, unless prior approval is granted by the County Committee. Spot treatment options include mowing between August 1 & 20 and other activities between August 1 & May 1st

**LOCATION AND LAYOUT SKETCH & ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:**

Reset Form