

Plant Enhancement Activity – PLT30 – Monitor pasture health using pasture condition scores (PCS)



Enhancement Description

Evaluate current pasture productivity and stability of the plant community and soil resources; and utilize the information for management decision making.

Land Use Applicability

Pasture

Benefits

A well-managed pasture is one whose productivity (plant and animal) is optimized while it does no harm to soil, water, and air quality. Pasture condition scoring is a systematic way to check how well a pasture is managed. By rating 10 key indicators and causative factors common to all

pastures, pasture condition can be evaluated and the primary reasons for a low condition score can be identified. The key indicators are percent desirable plants; plant cover; plant diversity; plant residue; plant vigor; percent legume; uniformity of use; livestock concentration areas; soil compaction and erosion.

Conditions Where Enhancement Applies

This enhancement applies to all pasture land use acres.

Criteria

1. A baseline pasture condition assessment will be completed with the assistance of a conservationist using the national pasture condition score card.
2. Random transects will be taken using the step-point method. Transects should be conducted within the same landscape position and forage suitability group.
3. One of the indicator factors is plant vigor. If the pasture scores less than a 4 for plant vigor, a causative factor form will be completed. One of the items that directly relates to plant vigor is fertility. Therefore, the producer will provide a current soils test.
4. Monitor the health of the pastures by conducting at least quarterly pasture condition assessments (transects).
5. Implement conservation practices which improve the PCS to the target PCS set by your state.
 - a. If the initial PCS is greater than or equal to the target PCS, then the initial PCS must be improved by at least 5 percent.

Adoption Requirements

This enhancement is considered adopted when the land use acre has received conservation activities which improved the baseline PCS to a final PCS determined by each state.



United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

2015 Ranking Period 1

Documentation Requirements

1. Baseline Pasture Condition Score Sheet
2. Final Pasture Condition Score Sheet
3. Prescribed Grazing Plan
4. Record Keeping Book which includes
5. Type, size and number of livestock
6. Number of days pasture was grazed
7. Height of forage prior to grazing
8. Height of forage after grazing
9. Pictures of livestock
10. Pictures of forage

References

Cosgrove, D., D. Undersander, and J. Cropper, 2001. Pasture Condition Score Sheet. USDA-NRCS. Grazing Lands Technology Institute. May. http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb1044243.pdf

USDA-NRCS, 2014. Guide to Pasture Condition Scoring.
<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/landuse/rangepasture/pasture/?cid=STELPRDB1045215>