

Indiana's Natural Resources Conservation Service

# WET SPRING OPTIONS FOR PRODUCERS

Options for those affected by the continual and excessive rain this spring and early summer.

June 2019



Indiana has experienced one of the wettest springs on record in terms of amount of rain and number of days of rainfall. Flooded fields and soggy soils have prevented many producers from getting crops planted and now many are outside of the prime planting window causing concerns for yields and a timely harvest.

The state is behind most states in corn planting. As of June 12th, the state's farmers had planted only 67% of acres of corn as compared to 94% last year. The 5-year average is 85%. Acres of soybeans planted is behind, with only 11% planted compared to 85% last year. The 5-year average is 63%. The first cutting of alfalfa was only at 6% compared to 42% last year. Hay harvest has been delayed in many parts of the state due to rainfall and excessive moisture in the soil. Livestock producers are seeking to purchase hay and feed from outside resources.

NRCS has provided guidance to staff on discussing issues such as prevented planting, planting green, tree planting dates, etc. with farmers. NRCS will not give specific advice nor interpret Risk Management Agency or Farm Service Agency policy for farmers. Farmers should always consult their specific crop insurance agent for decisions on how their planned actions will impact their crop insurance options.



Standard 340: Cover Crops and Grazing/Harvesting

## Up-To-Date Information

Indiana NRCS has been working to compile and distribute information to our customers and field staff to provide options for those affected by the continual and excessive rain this spring and early summer. We continue to review program and technical policy for solutions for our customers. This report provides an update of actions taken so far.

## Technical and Financial Assistance

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) will provide technical assistance to plan and design the right practice(s) to implement any of these requirements. USDA financial assistance may also be available.

[WWW.IN.NRCS.USDA.GOV](http://WWW.IN.NRCS.USDA.GOV)

To assist producers, Indiana NRCS has made the following decisions regarding implementation of conservation practices found in the Indiana Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG).

### Prevented Planting Cover Crops and Grazing/Harvesting Standard 340:

For 2019, because existing cover crops would have been normally terminated by this time, ALL planned purposes (to address resource concerns) are determined to have been met. Therefore, grazing and harvesting of previously-planted cover crops is permitted according to the standard with the following guidelines:

- Prior to grazing or harvesting of previously-planted cover crops, producers must consult with their crop insurance agents.

This information does not address nor guarantee crop insurance eligibility but will allow farmers to have sufficient information when it comes to making decisions about prevented plant and crop insurance. Cover crops will likely need to be grazed or harvested prior to the RMA Late Planting Period (LPP), which is 20 days past the Final Planting Date (FPD) for the planned crop. While the original intent of the cover crops has been met, harvesting/grazing will not

create new resource concerns (such as, but not limited to: erosion, compaction).

- If erosion is a concern, the grazing/harvest plan will leave sufficient residues. Do not over graze or harvest (thus reducing residual or residues to the extreme) where erosion will be an issue or where other resource concerns may occur.
- If fields are excessively wet, do not graze or harvest.
- If weed control or late season moisture management is a concern, weigh the harvest options and adjust management accordingly to keep a sufficient amount of biomass on the field.
- A grazing/harvest plan is required, use the appropriate NRCS job sheet related to prescribed grazing or forage harvest management.

Planting cover crops on all prevented plant acres will provide many benefits for improving soil health; however seed supply for several species may be in short supply due to demand and low seed production the past year.

Producers may be allowed to adjust seeding rates lower for these species to assist with

adequate availability of seed and to still meet the resource objectives.

### Cover Crops and Soybeans Standard 340:

FOTG Standard 340 currently allows up to 30% of the cover crop mix (as entered into the Indiana NRCS Seeding Calculator = Plant Canopy Coverage) to be soybeans.

#### Additional items to consider:

All customers planting soybean as a cover crop are required to consult with their crop insurance agent to ensure their cover crop plans are consistent with their specific crop insurance policy.

There may be USDA Risk Management Agency (RMA) restrictions about planting soybeans as a cover crop on 'soybean prevented plant acres.'

Be aware that fields planted to soybeans in 2018, planned for soybeans in 2020, or that had historic soybean-related issues (such as nematodes, soybean diseases, and other) may be at higher risk by planting soybeans as part of their cover crop mix.

### Wet Spring Tree Planting

With the excessive rainfall throughout Indiana it has been unfeasible to plant tree seedlings on many sites within the typical tree planting dates.

### Tree/Shrub Establishment Criteria Standard 612:

According to the Indiana FOTG Forestry Technical Note: Tree and Shrub Establishment, bare root stock may be planted until July 1 if the site is too wet for access for planting equipment during the approved planting time, making tree planting impossible.

During these extended tree planting seasons, it is essential that tree seedlings be cared for, stored, and transported according to US Forest Service and Purdue's Natural Resources and Forestry recommendations found in the publication, "Planting and Care of Fine Hardwood Seedlings - Seedling Care and Handling" (FNR-210). If long-term forecasts predict hot/dry weather, it is best to not plant seedlings until a future suitable date and to "heel them in" (see <http://extension.missouri.edu/publications/DisplayPrinterFriendlyPub.aspx?P=G5008> for suggestions), or provide supplemental irrigation.

Questions about tree planting projects should be referred to the NRCS district conservationist or Indiana Department of Natural Resources district forester.

### Planting Green

Some farmers may be faced with planting

green decisions as a last resort. Others with more cover crop experience may choose to purposefully plant green. "Planting Green" is planting commodity crops directly into living cover crops (whether they are actively growing or in the early stages of termination).

Research is underway on the best methods to minimize risks associated with planting green, and additional information has been learned directly from farmers' experiences.

Indiana NRCS has provided guidance to field staff (Indiana Bulletin 180-19-02) along with several publications to use when farmers are seeking technical assistance, including a news Agronomy Crib Note Issue 18 "Dealing with Wet Spring Soils," which is available at <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/in/technical/ecoscience/agronomy/>.



Standard 612: Tree/Shrub Establishment

## Recommended Resources

- Delayed Corn and Soybean Planting Decisions Webinar, Purdue's Center for Commercial Agriculture <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OYLbjfCtk8g&feature=youtu.be>.
- Purdue Pest and Crop Newsletter (which also includes a link to our Prevented Planting Indiana Bulletin – below) - [https://extension.entm.purdue.edu/newsletters/pestandcrop/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2019/05/PestandCrop\\_2019-9.pdf](https://extension.entm.purdue.edu/newsletters/pestandcrop/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2019/05/PestandCrop_2019-9.pdf)
- Purdue Cover Crops for Prevented Planting Acres [https://www.edustore.purdue.edu/item.asp?Item\\_Number=AY-355-W](https://www.edustore.purdue.edu/item.asp?Item_Number=AY-355-W)
- The Ohio State University (with Purdue) herbicide recommendations for cover crops that can be shared with farmers <https://www.morningagclips.com/managing-big-wet-cover-crops/>
- Purdue herbicide recommendations for late burndowns (including cover crops) hat can be shared with farmers <https://extension.entm.purdue.edu/newsletters/pestandcrop/article/late-burndowns-and-cleanup-of-failed-burndowns/>
- USDA NRCS Agronomy Crib Note Issue Eighteen - Dealing with Wet Spring Soils [https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/cmiproxy/https://ecm.nrcs.usda.gov%3a443/fncmis/resources/WEBP/ContentStream/idd\\_7092B66A-0000-C510-A61D-7236B00F2DFB/0/Agronomy+Crib+Notes+Issue+18+-+Dealing+with+Wet+Spring+Soils.pdf](https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/cmiproxy/https://ecm.nrcs.usda.gov%3a443/fncmis/resources/WEBP/ContentStream/idd_7092B66A-0000-C510-A61D-7236B00F2DFB/0/Agronomy+Crib+Notes+Issue+18+-+Dealing+with+Wet+Spring+Soils.pdf)
- Weed control on prevented planting acres <http://bulletin.ipm.illinois.edu/?p=4619>  
<https://agcrops.osu.edu/newsletter/corn-newsletter/2019-15/current-weed-issues-i-controlling-weeds-prevented-planting-areas>
- RMA Prevented Planting Insurance Provisions Flood <https://www.rma.usda.gov/en/Fact-Sheets/National-Fact-Sheets/Prevented-Planting-Insurance-Provisions-Flood>
- USDA RMA News Room: Frequently Asked Questions <https://www.rma.usda.gov/News-Room/Frequently-Asked-Questions/Flooding>