CRP Mid Contract Management

Iowa Job Sheet October 2017

Purpose

CRP Grassland Practices
Managing plant communities is beneficial to maintain and improve wildlife habitat. Under natural conditions plant communities experience disturbance from grazing, fire, storms and other events. This disturbance causes a plant community to change by setting back grasses and allowing flowering plants to grow. Biologists refer to this as an ‘Early Successional Plant Community”. Without disturbance grassland plant communities may lose some of their wildlife habitat benefits and become dominated by grasses or possibly overgrown with volunteer trees. The purpose of mid contract management (MCM) on grassland is to mimic natural plant disturbance to:

• Open up the grass stand to allow wildflowers to grow
• Provide food and shelter for grassland wildlife such as pheasants, quail, songbirds, deer, and beneficial insects
• Remove duff (dead and decaying plant material) and control woody vegetation in grassland
• Apply management techniques that will protect soil and water resources

CRP Tree Planting Practices
Managing tree plantings is important from the time the trees are planted through all stages of growth. The purpose of mid contract management (MCM) on tree plantings is to:

• Improve tree health and production
• Increase food and shelter for wildlife
• Increase woodland plant species diversity
• Apply management techniques that will protect soil and water resources

Management options
Several management activities are available for each CRP practice (CP1, CP2, etc.) so participants can select an option that best suits their operation. Work with a conservation planner to select an option that is best suited for the CRP practice, site conditions and your management objective. CRP participants may change the MCM option that was originally planned by speaking with FSA and a conservation planner before completing MCM. Implement MCM to enhance the existing cover and not as a strategy to reseed a cover type that does not meet practice standards or to manage weed infestations. Maintaining the contracted cover type and managing weeds is maintenance that must be handled by the participant outside of applying MCM. Apply MCM options following NRCS conservation practice standards.

In some cases it will be necessary to implement multiple MCM options on the same acres to achieve the desired result. Examples of applying multiple options are mowing and spraying prior to interseeding or mowing and disking fire breaks prior to burning. When mowing use a rotary or bush-hog mower to chop and evenly...
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distribute the mowed vegetation.

Eligible MCM options include: burning, spraying, disking, interseeding, grazing, haying, forest stand improvement and mowing. Refer to the MCM Options Job Sheet which provides specifics on completing MCM for the CRP practice under contract.

When and Where
MCM is a requirement of all CRP contracts. Apply MCM to every acre at least once during the contract life. Complete MCM over 3 years by applying an activity to 1/3 of the acres in each scheduled year except for the following:

- Burning may be applied to all acres in one year or a portion of the acres each year over 3 years, based on the burn plan.
- Contracts of 20 acres or less, MCM may be applied to all acres in one year.
- For CP-33, MCM is applied to all acres twice during the contract. All acres will be treated both in contract years 3 and 6.
- When grazing or haying, MCM may be applied to all acres in one year, or 1/3 of the contract acres each year for three years. Follow CRP Managed or Routine grazing or haying policy to determine eligible acres. Grazing and haying is not eligible on all CRP contract acres. If interested, speak with an FSA or NRCS field staff member to find out if grazing and haying is eligible on your CRP contract acres. Also refer to the MCM Options Job Sheet that lists eligible MCM options for the CRP practice you have contracted.
- For CRP wetland practices, MCM is required for the wetland and buffer unless the area is inundated by water during the prescribed time frame for conducting MCM activities.
- Shrub plantings that are approved on CRP acres and included in the conservation plan do not require MCM activities.

Newly established seeding will apply MCM during contract years 4, 5, 6 for a 10 year contract and years 5, 7, 9 for a 15 year contract. CRP re-enrollment that does not require changing cover type will apply MCM to the established vegetation in contract years 1, 2, 3.

If conditions are not favorable to complete MCM on the planned schedule, FSA may allow an extension, although MCM must be completed by year 7 on a 10 year contract and year 10-on a 15-year contract. In no case should management activities occur during the last 3 years of the contract.

MCM activities are planned by the contract year, which begins October 1 and ends September 30. Complete MCM activities within the planned contract year. MCM may not occur during the primary nesting season May 15 – August 1. See your conservation plan and supporting documents for details.

Cost Share
MCM application cost share assistance is available for all MCM options (other than grazing or haying). Refer to the Component Code Form for details on the amount of assistance available.

Mowing is not a stand-alone MCM activity and is not authorized for cost share. Exception: CP8A Grassed Waterways mowing is approved as a stand-alone MCM activity and is authorized for cost share.

Cost share is not authorized on firebreak acres as they are required to be maintained according to the conservation plan.

Notes: