PURPOSE
Conifer tree plantings provide wildlife habitat, aesthetic values, and protection of the soil from erosion. Although pine markets are limited in Indiana, some conifer trees can provide timber and/or wood fiber products after the CRP contract expires.

WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES
Apply this practice on fields that meet eligibility requirements for the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) as determined by the Farm Service Agency (FSA).

PLANNING
A site-specific tree planting plan will be developed in consultation with the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) District Foresters and installed according to the Tree/Shrub Establishment (612) Conservation Practice Standard in the NRCS Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG). Technical responsibility, practice certification, and any changes to these specifications are assigned to the IDNR, Division of Forestry.

When selecting tree species, consider the long-term objectives for the land, wildlife food and cover requirements, diversity of area in relation to adjacent land uses and cover types, adaptability to the soils, and moisture conditions in the field being established.

CRP POLICY
Limited to a 10 year contract. Species must be native to the general location (see Table 1). To award 50 points for National Ranking Factor N1a, tree planting must be pines/conifers/softwoods existing or planted at a rate of 750 to 850 trees per acre depending upon the site index (State-developed standards) with 10 to 20 percent openings managed to a CP4D wildlife cover. To award 10 points, Solid stand of pine/conifer/softwood (existing according to State-developed standards or planted at more than 850 trees per acre).

For Continuous CRP (CCRP), the land must be within an approved public wellhead area and minimum of 10 point mix.

Table 1. Native Indiana Pine/Softwood Species

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Species</th>
<th>Planting Locations*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bald Cypress</td>
<td>All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern White Pine</td>
<td>All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Redcedar</td>
<td>All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Hemlock</td>
<td>All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jack Pine</td>
<td>North</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern White Cedar</td>
<td>North</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red Pine</td>
<td>Central, North</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virginia Pine</td>
<td>Central, South</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*See page 3 for Indiana division boundaries

All planting must be completed within 12 months of the effective date of the contract 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 planting season.

WEED CONTROL
It is important to plant tree seedlings into a weed free area to help ensure survival and maximum growth of the trees. Use herbicides, fall tillage, or temporary cover to eliminate competing vegetation as recommended in a site specific plan. Weed control efforts should begin prior to planting and may require multiple applications in both the fall and the spring prior to planting and during tree planting. Cost share for weed control is available as part of the tree establishment expenses. Mowing is usually not recommended after the establishment period (3 years) for weed control because it
encourages grass competition and mowing equipment can damage tree seedlings. However in some explicit instances it may be recommended in a site specific plan.

For information on herbicide controls, contact a local consultant or Purdue Extension Specialist. Always apply herbicides according to labeled directions.

If necessary for weed suppression or erosion control, seed a temporary cover such as native Elymus species (Wildrye) adapted to the site.

WEED CONTROL DURING ESTABLISHMENT
Control competing vegetation as needed until a Final Status Review is issued or three (3) years (whichever comes first). Mow, burn, or apply herbicides as needed to control unwanted vegetation for up to 3 years after planting. Mow when competing weeds are taller than the planted vegetation, and at a height above the planted vegetation. Use selective herbicides and/or spot spraying to protect the desired species. Refer to Purdue Extension – Weed Control Guide WS-16 for herbicide timing and treatment.

Cost share is authorized with prior approval from FSA for an additional weed control application within 24 months after planting.

PLANTING
Bare rooted stock (seedlings) will not be planted when the soil is frozen or excessively dry and will be planted with the root collars approximately at or slightly below the ground line. It is important that tree species are randomly planted throughout the site and not planted with like species unless otherwise indicated in the planting plan.

Bare rooted stock will be planted in the spring after the ground thaws, but no later than June 1.

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE
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 to control pests that will damage the CRP cover or adjacent lands. MOWING and other maintenance activities are not authorized between April 1 and 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, and it may only be on a spot basis.

After the establishment period, mowing for generic weed control or for cosmetic purposes is prohibited.

Exclude all acres from haying and grazing year round, unless authorized. Fence 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.

Check survivability of planted species after 3 years to insure that the desired stocking rate for the site is present, usually 70% survival of the planted rate unless otherwise stated in the plan. Additional planting will be completed if it is determined that additional natural regeneration will not be sufficient to colonize the site within an acceptable time frame (usually 5 years).

MID-CONTRACT MANAGEMENT
Mid-Contract Management (MCM) is not required on this practice. However, the IDNR District Forester may recommend or require management activities to maintain the function of the buffer and health of the trees/grasses.

Activities will be avoided on environmentally sensitive areas. These areas will be marked on the plan map to ensure management activities are avoided on these areas.

Management will not be performed from April 1 through August 1, to protect the primary nesting period for grassland bird species. It is also recommended, but is not required, to delay activities until after August 15 to reduce the chance of harming fledgling birds and other young wildlife.
CUTOMARY FOREST ACTIVITIES
Activities consistent with customary forestry practices such as pruning, thinning, or timber stand improvement, may be performed as management practices to enhance the health and vigor of the CP3. Incentive payments may be authorized for these practices if available and approved by FSA prior to the activity commencing.