


MEMORANDUM
2023-015

DATE: June 13, 2023

TO: All Soil and Water Conservation Districts

FROM: Jim Plassmeyer, Director 
Soil and Water Conservation Program

SUBJECT: Request for Comments on Draft Policies on Native Warm Season Forage Conversion Practice

During the Soil and Water Districts Commission meeting on June 7, 2023, the commission directed program staff to make available for 30 days the draft DSP 3.6 Native Warm Season Forage policy to receive comments from all districts. During the comment period, staff will collect comments and questions on the draft policy and seek any feedback that districts may have on this policy in general. Please consolidate all district comments to one board letter and submit no later than July 21, 2023 to soil&waterconservationprogram@swcd.mo.gov.

Following are questions or comments that were mentioned during the Practices Committee discussion:

1. The limit of 20% of grazable acres is suggested by University of Missouri Extension to fit most operations in the state of Missouri.
2. The practice is designed to provide forage for livestock grazing during summer months when cool season grasses are not productive with a secondary benefit of soil health and water quality. To maintain the stand, residual heights should be maintained at a 6" to 8" height. If haying of the practice is allowed, can the minimum heights be maintained to sustain the stand during its maintenance life?
3. What use, if any, of a stand could be allowed by policy in the establishment year?
4. The allowable grazable acres in the practice would not be required to be contiguous in the system. Those eligible acres are counted per grazing system not per landowner.
5. The chemical application for the termination of the CSG is included in the grouped seeding component.
6. Should forbs or legumes be included in the grouped seeding component?
7. Grazing school would be required to be eligible for this practice.

If you have any questions, please contact your district coordinator. Thank you.

Attachment



DSP 3.6 Native Warm Season Forage

Purpose

1. Provide or increase forage supply during periods when cool season grasses are not productive.
2. Reduce soil erosion
3. Improve water quality
4. Improve soil health
5. Increase drought resiliency for pastureland in a grazing system.

Applicability

Applies to pastureland where permanent vegetative cover is established and can be enhanced through the use of a planned grazing system with Native Warm Season Forage (NWSF). The system operator must follow an approved grazing system plan. The system operator must attend an approved grazing school provided by University of Missouri, in conjunction with NRCS, prior to the district's submittal of a contract for review. When selecting sites land type and slope susceptible to erosion must be taken into consideration to not induce soil loss during the conversion and establishment period. If excessive amount of erosion is expected alternative practices should be considered.

The site selection and management practices as outlined in University of Missouri publication M169 "A Guide to the Common Forages and Weeds of Pastures" <https://extension.missouri.edu/publications/m169> can be used as guide in selecting fields.

Erosion Requirements

Practice has no erosion requirements.

Specifications

The completed practice must meet the NRCS Standards and Specifications for Pasture and Hay Planting (512), and Prescribed Grazing (528) contained in the Field Office Technical Guide.

Policies

1. Only 20% of open grazable acres per grazing system are eligible for conversion into NWSF with this practice. Any grazable acres already established in NWSF for the grazing system need to be included in the 20% when determining eligibility.
2. Planned use of the newly established stand should be avoided during the establishment year.
3. Residual stand heights must be maintained at a minimum of 6" to 8" of height during the maintenance life of the practice.
4. Care should be used to verify that only labeled pesticides are used on these plantings.
5. Technical staff are required to make annual visits to the site in 3 of the first 5 years of establishment to verify the practice is being maintained.
6. Harvesting of seed is not allowed during the maintenance life of the practice.
7. Farm must currently have a grazing system in place that meets the NRCS 528 specification to qualify for this practice.

8. Only the use of Native Warm Season Forage is eligible for this practice.
9. Contract is eligible for payment after seeding has been completed.
10. Conversion of the qualifying site must not have begun before the contract is board approved.
11. Preparation of a seedbed may not consist of plowing, disking, or conventional working of ground. Establishment shall be only by standard no-till practices or by broadcasting seed during the winter dormant period.

2. ***Cost-share is authorized for:***

- a. Native Warm Season Grass Seed. Permanent vegetative cover based on the Native Warm Season Grass Pasture Seeding component.
- b. Lime. Assistance is limited to the minimum requirements to establish adequate cover to control erosion. Limestone shall be applied in accordance with minimum needs based on establishment recommendations, as determined by a soil test. For those test results that have an effective neutralizing material (ENM) requirement of less than 600 pounds per acre, the cooperator has the option to apply the requirement.
- c. Fertilizer. Nutrient requirements shall be based on the minimum requirements for establishment of the selected Native Warm Season Grass/forage. Fertilizer application according to a soil test may be waived if the individual nutrient requirement is less than 25 pounds per acre and the total application amount is less than 50 pounds per acre.
- d. Reseeding, under the conditions listed in Section V, subsection F.
- e. One-time payment of \$75 for attending an approved grazing school, when the cooperator receives payment on any grazing system contract. The incentive payment will be included in the total cost-share dollars received and included in the practice per acre maximums.

3. ***Cost-share is not authorized for:***

- a. Cool Season Grass establishment
- b. Land established in permanent vegetation that is under a maintenance agreement for a seeding practice on the same acres.
- c. Cropland
- d. Conversion from woodland to pasture. Cost-share cannot be provided for dozing or cutting of trees. If an area has been cleared, the cooperator must establish permanent vegetative cover at their own expense.
- e. Clearing of rocks or other obstructions from the area to be seeded.
- f. Nutrient application based on crop production goals rather than establishment recommendations.

Maximum State Cost-Share

1. Assistance is limited to 75% of the state average cost or as directed by the Commission.
2. Utilize the Practice Limits Detail report in MoSWIMS to ensure compliance with applicable maximums.

Map Requirements

1. A Mapping Tool link must be saved in the Notes section of the contract prior to contract approval. Practice polygons, lines, and/or points for the practice must be drawn on the map. All associated report attributes must be completed for the contract being submitted, including contract number, status of the practice (existing, installed, or planned), and fiscal year.
2. All planned and existing items that pertain to the contract should be included on the map. This includes: farm boundary, fence (both perimeter and interior), pipeline, watering facilities, seed application, lime application, power sources if installing electric fence, and water source(s) (wells, springs, streams, and/or ponds).
 - a. All existing water sources must be labeled as adequate or inadequate
3. A map and associated report from the Mapping Tool showing the completed practice must be attached as the document type of “MAP” in MoSWIMS prior to contract payment submission.
 - a. In addition to the above installed and existing items, all maps must contain the following information:
 - 1) Cooperator Name
 - 2) Field numbers must be clearly labeled
 - 3) Section, Township, Range or coordinates
 - b. Before creating the Mapping Tool report, the transparency of any shaded polygons should be adjusted, if necessary, to adequately view the land cover beneath them.
 - c. All planned features associated with the contract payment should be changed to “installed” prior to creating the Mapping Tool report.
 - d. Additional maps may be added under “SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION”

Technical Responsibilities

Technical staff has the responsibility for determining the need for the practice, for design of the practice based upon the minimum extent necessary, and to certify that the completed practice meets NRCS standards and specifications within commission policy.

Acres Served

Acres seeded to Native Warm Season Forage

Extent Installed

Acres seeded to Native Warm Season Forage

Maintenance Life

10 years.