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NATURAL RESOURCES


Eric R. Greitens, Governor

Carol S. Comer, Director

MEMORANDUM 2018-005

DATE: October 10, 2017

TO: All Soil and Water Conservation Districts

FROM:  Colleen Meredith, Director
Soil and Water Conservation Program

SUBJECT: Variance and Checklist for N340 Cover Crop Practice

The Soil and Water Districts Commission approved a statewide variance to the N340 Cover Crop Practice for Fiscal Year 2018 during their August 16, 2017, meeting. The variance is to the no-till requirement for the establishment of cover crops in fields that were flooded. The variance allows tillage only for the areas of fields that were flooded and have silt deposits, debris, or flood scouring that needs to be incorporated or smoothed out. The remaining portions of the field must still comply with the no-till policy requirement. Photographs documenting the acreage requiring tillage need to be attached to the contracts in the Missouri Soil and Water Information Management System (MoSWIMS).

While implementing the cover crop practice over the last two years, there has been a learning curve for district staff and landowners. Throughout the two years, there have been numerous requests brought to the commission for variances to the commission's policies. To help reduce the number of variance requests, the Commission asked that a checklist be developed for the cover crop practice and used to eliminate mistakes made while implementing cover crops. The checklist is attached as well as available on the Intranet at <https://mosoilandwater.land/internal/forms-pubs>.

Districts should use the checklist as a tool to make sure all steps and policies are being followed for the cover crop practice. For those contracts already underway, the checklist can be used to verify that all necessary documentation is in place. Should district requests or landowner appeals for the N340 Cover Crop practice be brought before the Commission in the future, there will be an expectation that the checklist was used for planning throughout payment of the contract. Thank you.

CM:jpd

Attachment



Recycled paper

DNR-SWCP N340 Cover Crop Practice Checklist – Landowner/Operator

LANDOWNER: _____

OPERATOR: _____

FARM: _____ FIELD(s): _____ CONTRACT: _____

For each step, please check mark after completion. After all steps are complete, please sign the bottom of the form acknowledging that the practice has been completed according to all policies, standards, and specifications.

Cooperator acknowledges they will not receive cost-share payments for fields planted prior to board approval of cost-share contract. Initial here: _____

PLANNING PHASE

	Discuss with staff the fields and species of cover crops to be planted
	Landowner or Operator Authorization form signed Policy: The contract must contain the name of the legal landowner. If an operator is participating, the landowner must complete an "Operator Authorization" form.
	ACH/EFT vendor form filled out by bank and submitted to Office of Administration NOTE: The name and address on the ACH/EFT form must match the cost-share contract information
	Conservation plan signed Policy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contracted acres must currently be in a minimum of a 2 species production crop rotation. • Cooperators must adopt cover crops in compliance with the Cover Crop (340) standard as part of this practice.
	AGRON340 seeding sheet received **Ensure seeding dates are followed** Policy: All cover crop seedings must be planned with a minimum of 25% cool-season annual grass, small grain component or warm season grass. (Caution should be taken when selecting Annual Ryegrass for a cover crops mix.)
	Map showing correct fields to be planted has been received
	Use soil ring to take soil sample(s) if required Submit sample(s) to SHAC along with payment and DNR-SWCP Cover Crop Cost-Share Soil Health Information form (Attachment A) REQUIRED: YES NO If yes, list field(s): _____ Policy: A soil sample for the Initial Standard Soil Health Package test through the Missouri Soil Health Assessment Center (SHAC) must be taken on each field prior to seeding cover crops. The initial sample will need to be taken only for the first state cost-share contract on the field. The number of samples per field will be determined by the sampling requirements provided by SHAC. Website: http://cafnr.missouri.edu/soil-health/
	Cost-share contract signed by Cooperator, Technician, and SWCD Board Member

IMPLEMENTATION PHASE

	<p>Cover crops planted by no-till or broadcast only—<i>NO incorporation allowed</i></p> <p><i>Policy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cover crops must be no-tilled or broadcast seeded with either ground equipment or aerial. • Cover crops may be grazed once the forages have reached a minimum height of 6–8 inches with enough biomass produced to justify grazing. However, grazing should not occur if it will damage the forages so that their effectiveness as a cover crop would be impacted. Grazing will need to stop once the forages have been grazed down to 4 inches. • Spring planted cover crops must have been planted at least 60 days prior to being terminated.
	<p>Cover crops terminated (in spring)</p> <p><i>Policy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cover crops will be terminated as late as practical to maximize plant biomass production and nutrient uptake. Landowners need to take into consideration timing for next crop and crop insurance requirements. • Cover crops will not be harvested for grain, seed or hayed • Tillage cannot be used to terminate the cover crops. • N595 Pest Management practice may be utilized to terminate the cover crops. The pest management plan must be developed to address the termination of the cover crop and all pest issues that may occur during the next production crop growing season.
	<p>Production crops planted by no-till or broadcast—<i>NO incorporation allowed</i></p> <p><i>Notify staff as soon as all fields on the contract have been completed</i></p> <p><i>Policy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Production crop following the cover crops must be planted using a no-till system on the contracted acres. No-till is defined as per standard 329 for Residue and Tillage Management No-Till. • Payment can be issued after no-till planting of the production crops into the (terminated) cover crops or after May 25 if the production crop has not yet been planted.

PAYMENT PHASE

	<p>Field review performed by SWCD and/or NRCS Staff</p>
	<p>AGRON340 Certification Worksheet completed</p>
	<p>Provide necessary receipts to SWCD office by May 25</p> <p><i>BULK SEED:</i> _____ <i>SOIL TEST (if required):</i> _____</p> <p><i>Policy:</i> The landowner needs to make payment for their soil sample(s) prior to receiving their cost-share payment. Submitting samples and appropriate payment is a requirement of the cover crop practice and must be done to receive the cost-share payment.</p>
	<p>Contract payment signed by Cooperator, Technician, and SWCD Board Member</p>

I acknowledge that I have completed this practice and followed all policies, standards, and specifications:

Cooperator: _____ Date: _____

SWCD Representative: _____ Date: _____