

CRP Factsheet - Early Land Preparation

Participant Responsibilities/Actions



The participant is required to:

- request approval for CRP Early Land Preparation from your county FSA office before destroying CRP cover;
- obtain an approved conservation plan for the destruction of the cover from NRCS when the method of destruction could cause adverse environmental effects, as determined by the NRCS;
- obtain an approved conservation plan for conservation compliance (Highly Erodible Land), if an existing HEL plan or system is not in place; **and**
- not hay or graze CRP acreage, unless it is hayed or grazed after August 1 under the managed use provisions (for Early Land Preparation for fall-seeding) or FSA witnesses the destruction of the hay.

Land Ineligible for Early Land Preparation

The following land is ineligible:

- CP5-Field Windbreak
- CP5A-Field Windbreak, Non-easement
- CP8A-Grass Waterways, Non-easement
- CP9-Shallow Water Areas for Wildlife
- CP13-Filter Strips Grass(C) or Trees (D)
- CP16A-Shelterbelt Establishment
- CP21-Filter Strips
- CP22-Riparian Buffer/Riparian Forest
- CP23-Wetland Restoration
- CP27-Farmable Wetlands
- CP28-Farmable Wetland Buffer
- CP29-Marginal Pastureland Wildlife
- CP30-Wetland Habitat Buffer
- CP37-Duck Nesting Habitat
- any CRP practice with a useful life easement (i.e., CREP contracts CP16A, CP4D)
- acreage located within the average width (120 foot maximum) of a stream or other permanent water body to ensure continued habitat for wildlife
- acreage considered a wetland, as indicated on the county wetland inventory
- acreage required to serve as a wetland buffer as noted in the FOTG
- acreage located within an EPA wellhead protection area
- acreage subject to frequent flooding (i.e., within the 100-year floodplain)

Preparation for Spring-Seeded Crops

After August 1, in the final year of the CRP contract, destruction of CRP cover on contract acres may be completed by one or more herbicide applications. When necessary to improve effectiveness of herbicide applications, clipping or mowing, raking, removal and destruction of plant materials is permitted. The landowner is responsible for obtaining all permits and clearances, as required by law, for burning baled/stacked plant materials and agrees to contact the FSA county office to verify destruction of removed CRP cover. Destruction of the CRP cover by any other means is not permitted. Any additional seedbed preparation activities for spring seeding are not permitted before CRP contract expiration (October 1).

Participants shall use approved herbicides as directed by the product label or NDSU-EXT guidelines to kill existing vegetation. Participants are encouraged to consult with their NDSU-EXT County Agent or local agronomy professional to ensure proper rate, timing, and application.

Preparation for Fall-Seeded Crops

CRP cover may be destroyed beginning July 1 without a payment reduction. CRP cover on acreage west of the 100th meridian (approximately a line that follows US Highway 83) may be destroyed as early as May 1 with a prorated payment reduction to July 1.

Destruction of CRP cover on contract acres may be completed by one or more of the following methods - clipping or mowing, raking and removal of plant materials, herbicide applications, prescribed burning, and/or seedbed preparation operations to allow for the planting of a fall-seeded crop.

Haying of the vegetative cover is allowed prior to tillage or chemical application. The participant may keep the hay if a 25 percent payment reduction is applied. The participant must notify FSA of the intent to hay the acreage.

If prescribed burning is selected as an early land preparation method, the burn plan must be developed by a properly trained and certified individual in prescribed burning. The landowner is responsible for obtaining all permits and clearances, as required by law, for burning standing cover or baled/stacked plant materials.



Failure to plant the fall-seeded crop after destroying CRP cover will be considered a contract violation by the FSA.

Potential for Adverse Effects

NRCS is responsible to determine the potential for adverse environmental impacts due to the destruction of existing CRP vegetation. Effects include, but may not be limited to, excessive soil erosion-greater than 2 times T (wind, sheet and rill, ephemeral, and gullies), reduced soil quality (increased compaction, reduced infiltration, and organic matter), impacts to wildlife habitat, and water quality (sedimentation). NRCS uses appropriate erosion prediction tools to determine soil loss by wind and water.

When tillage is planned for fall-seeded crops, participants should consider the amount of residue cover needed to protect the soil from water and/or wind erosion. Consider non-inversion tillage operations such as undercutting or chisel plows with sweeps that maintain some of the residue on the surface. Tilling the soil with plows that bury residue and expose soil will have the greatest potential for adverse environmental effects.

Burning CRP acreage is not recommended, due to loss of nutrients and organic matter and to avoid impacting ineligible lands as noted above.

No-till Planting System Considerations

No-tilling or direct-seeding of a spring- or fall-seeded crop into the chemically killed CRP cover is the best method to avoid adverse environmental effects. No-till operations effectively maintain the protective plant residues needed to control erosion, and maintain soil organic matter and soil quality while providing an excellent environment for crop growth. No-till/direct-seeding will conserve energy, labor, and time costs when compared to conventional tillage which will help sustain profitability.

The recommended land preparation methods to maintain and enhance soil quality when no-tilling or direct-seeding annual crops are:

- slow down in fields with rough conditions
- use low disturbance implements (harrow, light disk, roller or aerator) to level and/or smooth rough areas
- be sure to have the drill/planter properly adjusted for conditions
- use row cleaners when necessary
- strip-till for fertilizer placement and creating the planting zone in cold soils
- select crops that provide alternative weed control options, depending on weeds present
- soil test all CRP fields and apply fertilizers according to recommendations for planned crops

Soil Quality Impacts

Long-term CRP grass/legume cover has benefited soil quality. No-till crop production will help maintain the following soil quality benefits derived from CRP:

- improved soil structure
- added biomass through growth of plants including roots Increased soil carbon levels
- improved water infiltration
- increased the soil biology and nutrient cycling

Plant legume cover crops with low C:N residues that will provide erosion protection, nitrogen fixation, and/or act as a smother crop for late season weeds.

All programs and services are offered on a non-discriminatory basis.