



CRP-Early Land Preparation Requests Guidance

Applies to CRP land where participants plan to prepare acreage for planned crop production during the final year of the CRP contract.

Conservation Reserve Program Information Sheet

June 2007

Participant Responsibilities/Actions

The participant is required to:

- Request approval from FSA for Early Land Preparation before destroying the 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.
- Not hay or graze CRP acreage unless it is hayed or grazed after August 1 under the managed use provisions 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

- Any CRP practice with a useful life easement (ie: CREP contracts CP16A, CP4D)
- Acreage located within the average width (120 foot maximum) of a stream or other permanent waterbody 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 (ie: within the 100 year floodplain)

Preparation for Spring-Seeded Crops

To prepare for a spring-seeded crop, the CRP cover may be chemically destroyed after August 1 of the final contract year. Tillage of CRP acreage must not occur before October 1.

Participants shall use approved herbicides as directed by the products 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

To prepare for a fall-seeded crop during the final contract year, 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.

Participants may use a variety of cover destruction methods in order to prepare a seedbed for a fall-seeded crop prior to the expiration of a CRP-1. Methods include:

- Application of herbicides
- Use of tillage implements (disks, chisel plow, moldboard plow, etc.)
- Or a combination of herbicide applications and tillage passes

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). Use appropriate erosion prediction tools to determine soil loss potentials.

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, maintain soil organic matter and soil quality while providing an excellent environment for crop growth.

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.

Other considerations when planning to bring CRP land back to crop production:

- No-till/direct-seeding of all annual crops to maintain and enhance your soil quality is recommended land preparation method.
 - 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
 - Slow down in fields with rough conditions
 - 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
- Burning CRP acreage is not recommended, due to loss of nutrients, organic matter and to avoid impacting ineligible lands as noted above.
- Soil quality – the long-term CRP grass/legume cover has benefited the soil quality in the following ways. No-till crop production will help maintain the following soil quality benefits derived from CRP:

+ Improved soil structure	+ Increased soil carbon levels
+ Added biomass through growth of plants including roots	+ Improved water infiltration
	+ Increased the soil biology and nutrient cycling
- No-till/direct-seeding will conserve energy, labor, and time costs when compared to conventional tillage which will help sustain profitability.
- Plant a cover crop to provide erosion protection, nitrogen fixation, or act as a smother crop for late season weeds.

For additional information contact your local USDA-NRCS office.

Helping People Help the Land

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