



FILTER STRIP

Michigan CONSERVATION RESERVE PROGRAM CREP – CP21

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

March 2011



Photo courtesy of USDA NRCS

WHAT IS A FILTER STRIP?

A filter strip is a narrow band of grasses, legumes, and forbs used to limit sediment, nutrients, pesticides, and other contaminants from entering water bodies. In addition, filter strips can provide valuable winter cover, nest sites, nectar and pollen for pollinating insects, and food for wildlife.

Filter strips are typically located on cropland immediately adjacent and parallel to streams, lakes, ponds, ditches, sinkholes, wetlands, or groundwater recharge areas.

ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible for this practice for the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), the land must be located in the Saginaw Bay, River Raisin, Western Lake Erie, or Lake Macatawa Watersheds, and the land must have a cropping history (4 out of 6 years from 2002 - 2007). Plus, there must be an existing resource concern present that can be addressed with a Filter Strip.

If wildlife habitat is the only resource concern, the site is not eligible for CREP. However, the site may be eligible for a Filter Strip through other USDA cost-share programs.

CREP POLICY

CREP Filter Strips will be installed according to the Filter Strip Standard (393) in the local Field Office

Technical Guide (FOTG).

CREP Filter Strips are only eligible on **Cropland** that is adjacent and parallel to streams, sinkholes and karst areas, wetlands, and permanent bodies of water such as lakes/ponds.

The minimum width of the filter strip depends upon the slope of the field, the soil type, and the pollutants contained in the runoff. **For the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program, Filter Strips will be a minimum of 50 feet from the edge of the eligible body of water, and a maximum of 150 feet from the edge of the eligible water body.** If the site already contains existing vegetation, these acres will be included in the calculation of maximum width and included in the CREP Plan, but will not be eligible for payments.

For CREP in Michigan, **Native Grasses & Wildflowers** (Big Bluestem, Little Bluestem, Indiangrass, Switchgrass, etc. – consult the “**Michigan CREP Eligible Wildflowers List**” for eligible wildflowers), Switchgrass, **&/or Non-Native grasses & legumes considered wildlife friendly** (timothy, redtop, orchard grass, clover, alfalfa, etc.) **will be required.**

All construction and seeding must be completed within 12 months of contract effective date of CRP-1 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 construction and planting season.

PLANTING

It is very important to plant grasses into a weed-free, firm seedbed. If the field is currently in cropland, weed control efforts should begin prior to planting. Use herbicide or tillage to eliminate competing vegetation. If necessary for erosion control, seed a temporary cover. Eliminate the temporary vegetation at planting time with tillage or herbicides.

If the field is currently in sod, begin weed control efforts using broad-spectrum herbicides in the fall. Apply herbicides again after the spring green-up prior to planting (if possible, a prescribed burn prior to spring green up to remove the dead litter from the fall treatment will provide best results).

NRCS, Michigan
March 2011

Contact your local Michigan State University (MSU) Extension Agent for specific herbicides to use. **Apply all herbicides according to the label.**

Plant the vegetation according to the attached plan/design sheet. Apply lime and fertilizer according to needs determined by a soil test and MSU recommendations.

Use a drill designed for the seed to be planted, or the seed may be broadcast or aerial seeded. For aerial or broadcast seeding, the seedbed must be worked up and firmed with a culti-packer or similar equipment. A carrier such as potash may also be needed to spread the seed evenly. **After aerial or broadcast seeding, the site must be rolled or culti-packed to ensure proper seed to soil contact.** Regardless of the method, plant the seeds **no deeper than** 1/8" – 1/4".

Mow, burn, or apply herbicides as needed to control unwanted vegetation until a **Final** Status Review is issued. Mow when competing weeds are taller than the planted vegetation, and at a height above the planted vegetation. **Native grasses will not be mowed lower than 12", and non-native grasses lower than 4".**

For additional information on establishment and maintenance of grasses, see the following NRCS – Michigan Conservation Sheets (available at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/efotg/> in Section IV): "Establishing Cool Season Grasses and Legumes for Conservation Cover", "Establishing Prairie Grass Buffer Strips", "Prescribed Burning", &/or others.

For additional information on herbicide controls, contact your local MSU Extension Agent. **Always apply herbicides according to labeled directions.**

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

Noxious weeds and other undesirable plants, insects, and pests shall be controlled, including such maintenance as necessary to avoid detrimental effects to the surrounding land. Some of the most common pests that need controlled on CRP acreage include Autumn Olive, Multiflora Rose, Spotted Knapweed, Quackgrass, etc.

After the Final Status Review, maintain the planting according to your CREP conservation plan. Maintenance activities are allowed only on a spot basis and only if necessary to maintain stand health, maintain stand diversity, or control pests that will damage the CREP cover or adjacent lands. Burning must be in accordance with a prescribed burn plan.

See the Conservation Information Sheet "Prescribed Burning" for further information. **MOWING** is only authorized between Aug 1st and Aug 20th to protect ground-nesting wildlife and to allow re-growth for winter cover. Other maintenance activities are only allowed between August 1 – May 1st (i.e. - outside of the Primary Nesting and Brood-Rearing season). If maintenance activities are needed at times other than these, the FSA County Committee **must** approve the maintenance activity **prior to** the activity occurring. **Mowing for generic weed control or for cosmetic purposes is prohibited.**

Limited use of the filter strip as a turn-row or crossing area is authorized if this activity is conducted as part of the planting, cultivating, or harvesting of a crop in an adjoining field. Do not use filter strips as a travel way, cropland headland or a lane for livestock or farm equipment.

Livestock must be excluded from the filter strip.

REQUIRED MANAGEMENT

All new CREP contracts must have mid-term contract management activities scheduled that are site specific and will ensure plant diversity, wildlife habitat, and protection of soil and water resources (See the Mid-Contract Management Sheet for the requirements of your contract).

OTHER MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

For optimum wildlife habitat, plant a diversity of grasses, legumes, and wildflowers. These mixtures will provide winter and nesting cover and food for a variety of wildlife.

DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

The filter strip will be designed to encourage water to flow in a thin sheet. When water is concentrated, it will be spread across the width of the filter strip.

Filter strips are designed to fill with sediment! To maintain the function and value of filter strips:

1. Any channels or rills must be immediately repaired.
2. Terraces, dikes, berms, trenches, or vegetative barriers can be used to treat concentrated flow areas.
3. Sediment within the filter should be removed before it accumulates to a height higher than 6 inches. Level and re-establish sheet flow. Re-seed if necessary.

