

CRP Required Management Practice Mowing Wisconsin Job Sheet 386

Landowner: _____ **Tract:** _____

CRP CONTRACT REQUIREMENTS

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) is responsible for administering the rules of the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). All questions related to CRP contract requirements, payments, or modifications should be directed to the FSA office where your contract originated.

CRP policy requires participants to do some type of “disturbance” to certain CRP practices during specific years of the contract. This job sheet describes how to implement mowing as a required management activity.

PURPOSE

Once established, grassland fields need to be managed so that the grasses do not crowd out the forbs and/or legumes over time. In the absence of disturbance, the composition of grassland communities will change over several years through normal plant succession. The vegetative structure changes as annual forbs and legumes are replaced by perennial forbs, grasses, and eventually, woody plants. Changes also occur structurally as litter accumulates and vegetation density increases. These changes may lead to a decline in diversity and reduced wildlife habitat benefits.

The purpose of required contract management activities is to enhance the wildlife habitat value of the enrolled acres by encouraging a diverse forb and legume community. Forbs and legumes in grasslands are beneficial to birds, insects such as butterflies, along with other wildlife.

MOWING

The mowing CRP required management practice increases wildlife habitat quality by inhibiting woody plant growth, reducing plant residue, increasing sunlight penetration to the ground surface, and may increase insect abundance.

NOTE:

CRP rules do not allow disturbance of cover during the primary nesting season as recorded in the CRP contract.

This rule prevents injury to nesting and fledgling birds. The dates have varied over time, but the current primary nesting season for new CRP contracts is May 15 through August 1. Spot clipping or whole field mowing may be done during the primary nesting season with prior approval from the local Farm Service Agency (FSA) County Committee.

SPECIFICATIONS

The following specifications must be met for the mowing required management practice on CRP acreage.

- Evaluate the proposed site to determine the objective of the mowing activity.
- Mow to the height necessary to destroy flowers or immature seed of weed or invasive plants species.
- Utilize a rotary mower or flail chopper. Operate equipment to ensure a uniform distribution of mowed plant material across the field surface.
- For native grasses and forbs, field(s) will be mowed once between 9/1 - 11/15 with the minimum mow height of 7 inches.
- For introduced grasses and legumes, field(s) will be mowed once between 3/15 - 5/14 OR 8/2 - 9/1 with a minimum mow height of 4 inches.
- The field(s) must be mowed one time for each year(s) specified in the job sheet. See Table 1 for scheduled dates.

CONSIDERATIONS

The following considerations shall be evaluated when developing mowing recommendations:

- If soil erosion is a concern, consider using mowing instead of other management practices that may cause excessive disturbance to the stand.
- Use discretion if soil conditions are wet to avoid compaction and damage to sod.
- Control of noxious weeds may require herbicide application in addition to mowing.
- Clean mowing equipment prior to moving out of fields with known noxious weeds or invasive plant species to avoid spreading seed.

Table 1. Scheduled Dates for Mowing

Introduced Grasses/Legumes (no Smooth Bromegrass)		
Mow field(s) one time from: March 15 to May 14 or August 2 to September 1		
Field Number(s)	Acres	Year

Introduced Grasses/Legumes with Smooth Bromegrass)		
Mow field(s) one time from: August 2 to September 1		
Field Number(s)	Acres	Year

Native Grasses/Forbs		
Mow field(s) one time from: September 1 to November 15		
Field Number(s)	Acres	Year