



Restoration of Rare and Declining Habitat Program Fact Sheet



Definition: This practice is used for the restoration of prairie and sagebrush-grass steppe using native cool season grasses with wildflowers and shrubs to increase plant diversity and provide habitat for declining wildlife species. Healthy prairies and sagebrush-grass steppe habitats contain a wide variety of plant species that provide nesting cover, flowers for pollinating insects, and a good seed and insect source for wildlife food.

Prairie and sagebrush-grass steppe habitats in Idaho were largely converted to agricultural uses after European settlement, particularly in the Palouse and Snake River Plain regions.

Where Practice Applies: On fields that meet eligibility requirements as determined by the Farm Service Agency (FSA) for the Conservation Reserve program (CRP).

CRP Practice CP25

Planning Considerations: When selecting plant species, consider the long-term objectives, requirements for optimum wildlife habitat, adaptability to the climate, soils, and moisture conditions, and completion from non-native species in the field being established.

CRP Policy: If 50 points were awarded for the C25 National Ranking Factor N1a, at least five (5) native grasses, forbs, legumes and shrubs will be included in the seeding mixture. If 40 points were awarded, at least four (4) native or introduced grasses, forbs, legumes and shrubs will be included in the seeding mixture.

Selection of Species and Seeding Rates:

Species and seeding rates for native grasses, forbs, legumes and shrubs are found in Idaho Plant Materials Technical Note No. 24. Site-specific requirements will be listed in the ID-CPA-025 and/or ID-CPA-028 Specification forms.

The selected grasses, forbs, legumes and shrubs should be planted in mixes based on the Ecological Site Description(s) for the planning area. Consider requesting technical assistance from an NRCS or Idaho Dept. of Fish and Game Biologist.

Site Preparation

Successful site preparation should begin the year before seeding. Existing cover that will interfere with establishment of the selected native species must be eliminated by spraying or tilling. If spraying, work with a local agricultural consultant or University of Idaho Extension Educator to determine the best herbicide combination and apply it at the appropriate time in the fall. Follow the manufacturer's label rates and guidelines when applying herbicides. Perform weed control efforts again prior to planting.

Some common herbicides used on cropland may also impact the success of establishing wildflowers. Notify NRCS if a local agricultural consultant or University of Idaho Extension Educator recommends that plantings should be delayed to

avoid any negative impacts from residual herbicides.

Seeding: All seeding mixes must be planted within 12 months of contract approval to remain in compliance. If circumstances beyond the landowner's control prohibit the planting within the first 12 months, the local FSA County Committee may approve an extension to the next planting season.

Fertilizer application is not recommended for these plantings.

Use of a drill is recommended. The drill used should provide depth control with bands or other suitable method such that seed placement depth does not exceed recommended depths found in Plant Materials Technical Note 24 for that species or seed mixture. Drill seeding rates shall be consistent with guidance in Plant Materials Technical Note 24.

Broadcast seeding will only be used on designated seedings or special situations. Broadcast seeding rates will be 150 to 200 percent of the normal drill seeding rates. When seed is broadcast planted, where possible, seed should be covered by a roll-type packer on mineral soil seedbeds. High residue seedbeds should be lightly dragged or raked.

Seeding rates on irrigated land may be increased to 150 to 200 percent of rates specified in Plant Materials Technical Note 24.

Actual seeding rates of applied seeding mixture will be within approximately 80 to 125 percent of rate specified during the planning process in the ID-CPA-025 Seeding/Planting Plan Specification.

Seeding Dates: Accepted planting dates are:

MLRA	Spring* (before)	Fall** (before)	Dormant*** (after)
8	4/1	10/1	11/15
9	4/15	9/20	11/1
10	5/15	9/10	10/20
11	4/15	9/20	11/1
12	5/15	9/20	11/1
13	5/15	9/10	10/20
25	5/15	9/10	10/20
28A	5/1	9/20	11/1
43A	5/15	9/1	10/20
43B	5/15	9/1	10/20
43C	5/15	9/1	10/20
44	5/15	9/1	11/1
47	5/15	9/10	10/20

Seeding dates may vary from these guidelines based on local experience and conditions.

* *Complete spring plantings as early as possible.*

** *Fall seedings on irrigated land only.*

*** *Earlier dormant planting dates are ok if the measured soil temperature is below 45^o F*

Inoculate legume seed before seeding with the proper Rhizobia bacteria specific for the species. Re-inoculate seed if it was pre-inoculated more than 60 days prior to seeding.

Planting Dates: Plant bare-root stock trees and shrubs in the spring after frost is out of the ground. All stock will be planted by:

MLRA	Spring (before)
8, 9, 11, 28A	May 1
10, 12, 13, 25, 44	May 15
43A, 43B, 43C, 47	June 1

Container stock may be planted in the spring as noted above and after September 15 as local soil moisture and weather conditions permit.

Seeding - Planting Protection & Weed Control:

This practice will be undertaken only where domestic grazing animals can be excluded to permit stand establishment. Temporary fencing may be required. Noxious and competitive invasive weeds should be controlled by mowing, clipping or herbicides. *Refer to Plant Materials Technical Note 12 for additional guidance with seeding establishment and Technical Note 43 for additional guidance with planting establishment.*

Operation and Maintenance: After the Final Status Review, or a maximum of three (3) years

after planting, maintain the planting according to your CRP conservation plan. Maintenance activities are allowed only if necessary to maintain stand health or diversity, or to control pests that may damage the CRP cover or adjacent lands. Noxious weeds, such as musk thistle, Russian knapweed, and Dyer's woad, must be controlled in accordance with state and local noxious weed laws. Additional information can be found in the 2008 Idaho's Noxious Weed guide: [\[www.idahoweedawareness.net\]](http://www.idahoweedawareness.net)

or visit the Idaho State Department of Agriculture's website: <http://www.agri.state.id.us/Categories/PlantsInsects/NoxiousWeeds/indexnoxweedmain.php>

Mowing for generic weed control or for cosmetic purposes is strictly prohibited.

Maintenance activities are not allowed from April 1 through August 1, to protect ground-nesting wildlife. If maintenance activities are needed at times other than these, the FSA County Committee **must** approve the maintenance activity **prior to** the activity occurring. Maintenance activities will be conducted on **a "spot" basis only**.

Exclude all acres from haying and grazing year round, unless authorized. Fences may need to be constructed and maintained to exclude livestock throughout the entire year.

The contract area cannot be used for field roads or other uses that will damage or destroy the cover.

Mid-contract Management

All new CRP 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. Management activities that will ensure these benefits include prescribed burning (according to an approved burn plan), strip disking, strip spraying, and inter-seeding of legumes. All management activities must be performed according to NRCS Standards and Specifications as found in the FOTG and CRP policy and recorded on ID-CRP, JS 20. Existing CRP contracts may voluntarily have the contract modified to add Mid Contract Management

activities and cost-share with prior approval from the local FSA office.

Prescribed Burning: **Where prescribed burning may be the Mid-contract Management option, the following apply:**

1. NRCS FOTG Standard *Prescribed Burning* (338), and *Firebreak* (394), will be followed.
2. Firebreaks will be included in this practice, and will be constructed according to the specifications stated in the burn plan.
3. See CRP Mid-Contract Management Job Sheet: *Prescribed Burning* for additional guidance.

Managed Haying and Grazing

These plantings cannot be used for managed haying or grazing.