Appendix A NRCS Policy on Prescribed Burning on Grazing Lands

NRCS supports and encourages the use of prescribed burning on rangeland, pastureland, forest land, hayland, Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) land, and wildlife land to meet specific resource management objectives. The national standard for prescribed burning is in the National Handbook of Conservation Practices.

Training, certification, and authority

NRCS encourages its employees to participate in prescribed burning training activities and workshops. Training is required to address both the principles of planning and safely executing the prescribed burn, as well as the effect that the fire will have on the plant and animal species and communities within the burn area.

Only trained and qualified personnel are authorized to provide assistance in planning or implementing prescribed burns. The extent to which an NRCS employee may provide technical assistance will be restricted by the job approval authority and/or certification level that has been attained. NRCS job approval authority criteria are required to be established in states where prescribed burning is practiced. Authority criteria are progressive in nature allowing employees to participate in more complex burns only when they are qualified to do so. Example A–1 of this appendix is job approval authority criteria.

In states where certification or licensing is required for prescribed burning authority, NRCS personnel must be certified or licensed, or both, by the designated agency to participate in prescribed burning activities.

Planning prescribed burns

Burns planned with NRCS assistance must adhere to all Federal, State, and local laws regarding outdoor burning, fire control, smoke management, and air quality. In states where designated agencies have responsibility for burning activities, NRCS will work with them and through them to fully utilize their expertise, personnel, and equipment. Where no agency has this responsibility, prescribed burns will be planned cooperatively and cleared through such groups as rural fire departments, county commissioners, law enforcement offices, adjacent landowners, U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, and state forestry, wildlife, and natural resource agencies, as applicable.

The landowner is responsible for obtaining all permits and clearances as required by law. Adherence to the Clean Air Act (42 U.S.C. 7401 - 7671q) is required for all prescribed burns.

The national and state practice standards for prescribed burning are used to guide the overall development of the detailed plan. A detailed plan for the prescribed burn must be prepared. Example A–2 of this appendix is a prescribed burn detailed plan. Required items to be addressed include, but are not limited to:

- Location of the burn
- Resource management objectives of the burn
- Pre-burn vegetative description of the area
- Prescription for weather conditions required
- Description of the burning method to be used
- Description of pre-burn preparation
- Firing sequence of area to be burned
- Job assignments and descriptions of responsibilities for all persons assisting with the burn
- Equipment and materials checklist
- Job assignments and descriptions of responsibilities for all persons assisting with the fire patrol, containment, mop-up, and suppression of the burn
- Post-burn evaluation and management

Technical application assistance

Only NRCS personnel with the required training and certification are authorized to assist with the planning and application of prescribed burns. Extent of assistance is restricted by the individual's job approval authority, certification level, or both.

For purposes of training landowners and managers and other NRCS employees, properly trained and certified NRCS personnel may participate in the following activities:

- Development of the prescribed burning plan
- Serve as fire boss
- Determine field and weather conditions for compliance with the prescription
- Serve as team leader for the implementation and completion of burn
- Direct field operations and make decisions, adjustments, and corrections necessary to ensure that the fire meets the planned objectives and that all participants are safe
- Assist with ignition of the fire

Safety must always be the first consideration in prescribed burning. The landowner or cooperator must be informed in writing that he or she may be liable for damages if the fire escapes or smoke damage occurs. If unfavorable or unstable atmospheric, fuel, or logistical situations exist, the NRCS employee must advise the fire boss or landowner to postpone the burn. If an emergency situation develops, NRCS employees are to follow the direction of the designated fire boss and act responsibly to resolve the situation.

NRCS employee liability

Employees acting in accordance with all Federal, State, and local laws and within the scope of their work accept no greater or less liability than that associated with the performance of any other assigned duty. Any questions concerning liability should be referred to the appropriate state conservationist.

State office responsibility

The NRCS state office will be responsible for providing adequate training and equipment for employees involved in prescribed burning activities. States will develop job approval authority criteria and ensure that employees act within their training and certification levels. States will ensure that only qualified NRCS employees are used for reviews and spot checks of prescribed burning activities. Job approval criteria are reviewed and concurred in by the appropriate rangeland management specialist, forage agronomist, or other designated grazing lands specialist.

Prescribed Burning
Job Classifications

Class Ia - Maintenance Burn

* Size of area: Less than 100 acres
Vegetation: non-volatile herbaceous and woody species
Terrain: 5% slope or less

Class Ib - Maintenance Burn

* Size of area: Less than 320 acres
Vegetation: non-volatile herbaceous and woody fuel
Terrain: 5% slope or less

Class Ic - Maintenance Burn

* Size of area: Less than 640 acres
Vegetation: non-volatile herbaceous
Terrain: 5% slope or less

Class II - Maintenance Burn

* Size of area: Less than 100 acres
Vegetation: Same as Class Ia plus volatile herbaceous species and live volatile woody species less than 4 feet tall.
Terrain: 8% slope or less

Class III - Maintenance Burn

* Size of area: Less than 640 acres
Vegetation: Same as Class II plus live volatile woody species greater than 4 feet tall and dead volatile woody species.
Terrain: 12% slope or less

Class IV - Maintenance Burn

* Size of area: no restrictions
Vegetation: no restrictions
Terrain: no restrictions

Class V - Reclamation Burn

*Size of Area: no restrictions
Vegetation: no restrictions
Terrain: no restrictions

* Size of Area — Contiguous acres to be burned on a single management unit during the same growing season are considered to be one prescribed burn regardless of the number of individual segments the fire is divided into. Total acres for any prescribed burn can't exceed the Size of Area limits for the appropriate job classification.

SEPARATE PRESCRIBED BURNING PLANS MUST BE DEVELOPED FOR EACH IDENTIFIABLE PRESCRIBED BURN.

To have job approval authority, an employee must have completed a formal NRCS prescribed burning training course including participation in a field training burn and supervised participation in at least three prescribed burns at which NRCS provided technical assistance. The individual must demonstrate good judgment, knowledge, and skills in prescribed burning.

The following are the requirements for the job approval authority:

Class I — Individual must have properly planned at least three Class I burns which have been approved and must have demonstrated good judgment, knowledge, and skills for Class I burns.

Class II — Individual must have Class I approval authority, must have properly planned at least three Class II burns which have been approved and must have demonstrated good judgment, knowledge, and skills for Class II burns.

Class III — Individual must have Class II approval authority, must have properly planned at least three Class III burns which have been approved and must have demonstrated good judgment, knowledge, and skills for Class III burns.

Class IV — Individual must have Class II approval authority, must have properly planned at least three Class IV burns which have been approved and must have demonstrated good judgment, knowledge, and skills for Class IV burns.

Any NRCS employee who violates NRCS Prescribed Burning Policy will have their job approval authority revoked immediately.

Job approval authority may be granted to employees who have documented evidence of previous training or experience that equals or exceeds NRCS prescribed burning training requirements. NRCS occasionally hires an employee with extensive training, experience, and education in prescribed burning while in college, at another agency, etc.

Prescribed burn management plans are valid only for the area planned and for the burning season planned. If the landowner decides to change the location of the burn or is unable to burn during the prescribed time frame, a new plan must be prepared prior to conducting the burn.

Prescribed Burn
(Planning)

* Landowner/Operator: _____ Date: _____
Address: _____ Phone: _____
Acres to burn _____ Planned date of burn: _____
Location (county): _____ T _____ R _____ S _____ Field # _____

A. Description of burn area: Land use : _____

1. Present plant cover

a. Woody plants

Species	**Height (ft)**	**Basal diam in.**	**% Canopy**
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

b. Herbaceous plants: Amounts in tons/acre

Species	**Cured**	**Green**
Cool-season grass	_____	_____
Warm-season grass	_____	_____
Forbs	_____	_____

2. Slope _____ % Aspect _____ Soil type _____

B. **Objective and timing of burn:**

Stimulate WS grass (1-3" WSG)
Distribute grazing (1-3" WSG)
Stimulate CS grass (1-3" CSG)
Remove litter (1-3" C&WSG)

Control woody plants (full leaf)
Reduce CS grass (1-3" WSG)
Improve wildlife habitat (1-3" WSG)
Stimulate forbs (Before forb Growth)
Reduce wildfire hazard (1-3" WSG)

Reason(s) for burning:

_____
_____

C. Acceptable conditions for prescribed burns:

Relative Hum. (%)	**Wind speed in miles/hour** 4	6	8	10	12	14	16	C – 60% to 90%
25-34	C-S	C-S	C-S	C	XXXXX	XXXXX	XXXXX	cloud cover or
35-39	C-S	C-S	C-S	C-S	C	XXXXX	XXXXX	before 10:00 a.m.
40-44	C-S	C-S	C-S	C-S	C-S	C	XXXXX	after 3:00 p.m.
45-59	C-S	C-S	C-S	C-S	C-S	C-S	C	
60-69	S	C-S	C-S	C-S	C-S	C-S	C-S	S – 0% to 59%
70-79	XXXXX	S	C-S	C-S	C-S	C-S	C-S	cloud cover or from
80-89	XXXXX	XXXXX	S	C-S	C-S	C-S	C-S	10:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m.

1. Comments: (firing method, starting time, wind direction, soil surface moisture condition, etc.) _____
_____
_____

2. Ignition plan and/or firing sequence (see plan map).

* Parties igniting a prescribed burn may be liable for damages resulting from the fire and control cost, should fire escape the designated area.

D. Preparation of area for burning:
   1. Firebreak construction:
      a. Firebreak widths will be equal to or greater than two times the height of adjacent vegetation.
      b. Plowed, disked and burned firebreaks, being essentially devoid of fuel, provide least danger of fire escape.
      c. Close mowed and cool-season grass firebreaks have fuel available that can provide an avenue for fire escape. Smoke, from green growth, reduces visibility, inhibiting burn monitoring.
      d. High mowed fire intensity reduction lines (" - 12" stubble), will be installed if fine fuel exceeds 1.5 ton/acre. Line with will be at least 10 feet @ 1.5-3 T/A and 20 feet @ >3 T/A.
      e.

Kind of fireline	Width feet	Length feet	Date to apply
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

      f. Existing firebreaks, streams, roads, tilled fields, etc. (Show on plan map). Describe

      g. Potential hazards are present within the burn area: _____ yes _____ no
      e.g.: power lines, snags, structures, etc. (Show on plan map). If yes, explain precautions:

E. Adjacent areas (Outside of burn area)
   1. Special precaution areas: e.g. Leaf litter, dry grass, roads, structures, smoke dispersion, _____etc. (Show on plan map). Precautions needed:_____
   _____
   _____
   2. Backup or secondary firebreak locations: (Identify) _____
   _____
   _____

F. Equipment/personnel needs:
   1. Safety equipment*:* _____
   _____
   2. Tools/equipment needed for burn: ( ) rakes ( ) swatter ( ) drip ( ) torches, ( ) backpack pump, ( ) other:_____
   3. Personnel needed for burn:_____
   _____
   _____

G. Special considerations:
   1. Precautions to prevent fire escape:
   2. Suppression plan if fire escapes:_____
   _____
   _____
   3. Patrol and mop-up plan: _____
   _____
   _____

Prescribed Burn Plan Map

(use aerial photos if scale is appropriate)

(Identify land use in adjacent fields)

Legend

Approximate Scale: _____ inches = mile

B-B-B-B-B-	Burned firebreak	W	Water source
P-D-P-D-P-	Plowed / Disked Firebreak	(A, B, etc.)	Firing crews
C-S-C-S-C-	Cool-season Grass Firebreak	(1, 2, etc.)	Firing sequence
CM-CM-CM-	Close Mowed firebreak	(A1) ->->->	Firing direction
-HM-HM-HM-	High Mowed intensity reduction	——WIND——	Wind Direction

Other legends or information: _____

_____

_____

Plan prepared by: _____ Date: _____

Plan checked by: _____ Date: _____

I, _____, have requested the preparation of this prescribed burn plan; my signature establishes my acceptance of full liability resulting from the implementation of this plan.

Landowner/Operator: _____ Date: _____

_____

_____

_____ (signature)

Prescribed Burn Application

* Landowner/Operator: _____ Date _____

Acres to burn: _____ Date burn applied: _____

Location: County: _____ T _____ R _____ S _____ Field # _____

A. Preburn checklist: (day of burn)

1. Weather forecast favorable yes _____ no _____
2. Necessary firebreaks constructed yes _____ no _____
3. Potential hazards accounted for yes _____ no _____
4. Special precaution areas noted yes _____ no _____
5. Backup/secondary firebreak locations noted yes _____ no _____
6. Safety equipment adequate yes _____ no _____
7. Tools/equipment onsite yes _____ no _____
8. Personnel needed available yes _____ no _____
9. Special considerations reviewed with crew yes _____ no _____
10. Actual weather at burn: Temp. _____ Humidity _____ Wind-Speed _____
    Cloud cover _____ % Fronts or changes expected? yes _____ no _____
11. Appropriate neighbors informed yes _____ no _____
12. Notification of units of government made: yes _____ no _____
    Local fire department (phone) _____ USFS (phone) _____
    Sheriff (phone) _____ MDC (phone) _____
13. Necessary permits obtained yes _____ no _____
14. Test burn performed as expected yes _____ no _____

Explanation of no response _____

_____

Checked by: _____ Date: _____

B. Post-burn evaluation (day of burn):

1. Burning method used:
2. Start of test burn Beginning Time _____ a.m.( ) p.m. ( )
   Mop-up completed Ending Time _____ a.m. ( ) p.m. ( )
3. Observed change in weather conditions during the burn: _____

   _____
4. Fire behavior: (check one)
   a. Spotting one ( ) few ( ) many ( )
   b. Difficult to control yes ( ) no ( )
   c. Convection column yes ( ) no ( )
   d. Fire whirls yes ( ) no ( )
5. Objective of burn met _____

   _____
6. Post-burn management plan (additional treatment needs): _____

   _____
7. Future burn needed: yes ( ) no ( ) estimate when _____
8. Other comments: _____

   _____

Checked by: _____ Date _____

* Parties igniting a prescribed burn may be liable for damages resulting from the fire and control cost, should fire escape the designated area.

C. Followup evaluation (60-90 days after burn)

1. Objectives of burn met: _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

2. Post-burn management plan (additional treatment needs): _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

3. Future burn needed: yes ( ) no ( ) if yes, when?_____
   for what purpose? _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

4. Other comments: _____
   _____
   _____
   _____