



U.S. Department of Agriculture
Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program CP2
Establishment of Permanent Native Grasses and Wildflowers
(Version 1.2 April 2022)

WHAT IS ESTABLISHMENT OF PERMANENT NATIVE GRASSES AND WILDFLOWERS?

Native grasses, wildflowers, and shrubs enhance environmental benefits by providing soil erosion protection and habitat for a variety of wildlife.

Native grasses were present in Michigan when Europeans arrived. Many of these grasses are associated with native prairies, barrens and savannas. Some of the more common native grasses that grow well in Michigan include warm-season grasses such as big bluestem, little bluestem, Indian grass, and switchgrass as well as native cool season grasses such as Canada wild rye and Virginia wild rye. Common wildflowers include black-eyed Susan, purple coneflower, coreopsis, and others.

Native grass plantings of warm-season species provide excellent nesting and winter cover for wildlife. These tall, stiff, upright grasses stand up well to snow and ice. These grasses put most of their growth on in the heat of the summer, unlike the cool-season grasses (found in most lawns) which grow best in the spring and fall.

Native grasses & shrubs will live a long time after establishment. However, like most long-lived plant species, they generally establish slowly. Therefore, it is very important to establish these grasses properly and to have patience when evaluating the results.

CREP POLICY

Introduced grasses and legumes and native grasses and wildflowers will be established on cropland immediately adjacent to an eligible waterbody, as determined by USDA, and not exceed a maximum average width of 1,000 feet from the edge of the eligible waterbody, except that the average maximum width may exceed 1,000 feet from the edge of the eligible waterbody only when such additional width is required to address the water quality concern of the waterbody in accordance with the NRCS FOTG.

For CREP, the cover must be devoted to a cover comprised of a mixed stand consisting of a minimum of nine species of vegetation, as follows: at least three native grass species, and at least six native forb species, all of which must be beneficial to wildlife in the area. In addition, and as an option, the cover may also include one native shrub species, if requested by the producer, and if the conservation planner determines that the shrub species is beneficial to wildlife in the area. Trees and other woody vegetation are not authorized as part of the cover for practice CP2.

Introduced grasses and legumes and native grasses and wildflowers will be established according to the Conservation Cover (327) standard in the local Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG) and they must be planted within 12 months of contract effective date of CREP-1 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.

INSTALLATION

It is very important to plant introduced grasses & legumes 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 cover 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.

Contact your local Michigan State University (MSU) extension agent for specific herbicide recommendations. Apply all herbicides according to the label.

Plant grasses and legumes according to the attached plan/design sheet and apply lime and fertilizer according to needs determined by a soil test and MSU recommendations for the grasses. Fertilizer requirements shall be based on the intended crop of conservation cover. The amount of lime to be used shall be based on a buffer pH (lime requirement) test. The soil test for commercial fertilizer shall be from an approved laboratory accredited with The North American Proficiency Testing Program when a MSU laboratory is not used.

If available use a specialized no-till drill that is able to handle the grass seeds. Plant the seeds no deeper than 1/8 inch.

If a no-till grass drill is not available, the seed may be broadcast or aerial seeded. In either case, the seedbed must be worked up and firmed with a cultipacker or similar equipment. A carrier such as potash may also be needed in order to spread the seed evenly. After seeding, the site must be rolled or cultipacked to ensure proper seed to soil contact. Plant the seeds no deeper than 1/8 inch.

For grasses, mow, or apply herbicides as needed to control unwanted vegetation until the practice is established. 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" to ensure plant health.

For additional information on establishment and maintenance, see NRCS – Michigan Conservation Sheets (available at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/efotg/> in Section IV).

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

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 CREP acreage include autumn olive, multi-flora rose, spotted knapweed, quackgrass, canada thistle, etc.

After practice establishment, 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. 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 (herbicides, burning, etc.) 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.

MANAGEMENT

CREP contracts must have 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 benefit introduced grass and legume plantings include disking, grass-specific herbicide applications, and inter-seeding legumes. All management activities must be performed according to NRCS Standards and Specifications and CREP policy.

HAYING AND GRAZING

The seeded area must not be harvested or grazed by domestic livestock for the life of contract. However, CREP contracts may be approved for limited haying or grazing as a site-specific management activity or if authorized as an emergency by the Secretary of Agriculture. Any haying and grazing activities must be included in the conservation plan and approved by the FSA County Committee prior to harvesting the forage. Haying and grazing must be performed according to NRCS Standards and Specifications and CREP policy.

Establishment of Native Grass and Wildflowers Specification Sheet CP2

Landowner:	County:	Date:
Farm:	Tract:	Field(s):
		Acres: 0.00
WARM SEASON GRASS CREP MIX: Species and Seeding Rate		
Species	Rate PLS	Total (rate x acres)
	lbs/ac	0.0 lbs
	lbs/ac	0.0 lbs
	lbs/ac	0.0 lbs
	lbs/ac	0.0 lbs
Wildflowers	lbs/ac	0.0 lbs
Shrubs	Total Number	
Site Prep in Year:		
<input type="checkbox"/> Herbicide		Date:
<input type="checkbox"/> Herbicide		Date:
<input type="checkbox"/> Tillage		Date:
<input type="checkbox"/> Temporary cover		Date:
<input type="checkbox"/> Lime and fertilizer		Date:
<input type="checkbox"/> Other:		Date:
Planting Method in Year:		
Planting method:		Date:
Maintenance:		
Mowing: Before practice establishment = mow when weeds are taller than the planted grasses.		
Mowing: After practice establishment = minimum height 12" for native grass. *		
NOTE: After practice establishment, mowing will be conducted between August 1 & 20, and weeds will be treated on a "spot" basis only, with prior approval granted by the FSA County Committee		
Management:		
<input type="checkbox"/> Prescribed burn		Date:
<input type="checkbox"/> Disking		Date:
<input type="checkbox"/> Strip spraying (grass specific herbicide)		Date:
<input type="checkbox"/> Inter-seeding wildflowers		Date:
NOTE: After practice establishment, other management activities will be conducted between August 1 & May 1, and weeds will be treated on a "spot" basis only, with prior approval granted by the FSA County Committee.		

Additional Information:

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or familial status, or protected genetic information. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternate means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotope, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD). To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326W, Whitten Building, 14th and Independence Avenue SW, Washington, DC, 20250-9410, or call (202) 720-5964 (voice and TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.