

Conservation Cover

Definition/Purpose

A Conservation Cover practice means to establish and maintain a conservation cover of grass, legumes, or other approved plantings on fields previously with no groundcover established, to reduce soil erosion and improve water quality. Other benefits may include reduced offsite sedimentation and pollution from dissolved and sediment-attached substances. Eligible land includes that planted to Christmas Trees, orchards, ornamentals, vineyards and other cropland needing protective cover.

Policies

1. For Christmas tree plantation seeding, while 100% of the land will be sown in conservation cover, the participant will be paid at 2/3 rate assuming 1/3 of cover will be managed Christmas tree row.
2. For all other crops, the participant will be paid at 100% of the eligible acreage seeded and maintained for the contract period.
3. All NRCS standards and NC Agriculture Cost Share Program policies relative to vegetation are to be followed.
4. This practice must not be used to convert idle farmland that has grown up in native vegetation and that does not exhibit a water quality concern, nor to convert cropland.
5. BMP soil and phosphorus impacts are required on the contract. Include the planted acreage as well. Refer to the Minimum NCACSP Effects Requirements table later in this section for the correct methods of calculation.
6. The minimum life of the BMP is six (6) years.
7. An operator will not be considered in violation due to vegetative cover loss underneath the mature trees.
8. Leaf litter from under harvested Christmas trees is considered an adequate groundcover up to 6 months after harvest season.
9. Covered destroyed during harvesting of ornamentals or any other crop must be re-established at the producer's expense within 30 days after harvest. If the time of vegetative re-establishment is outside the recommended planting season for the preferred cover, a seasonal cover as listed in the specifications will be used in the interim.
10. When determining the acreage for which payments can be made for this incentive, only the acreage actually planted shall be considered. The area occupied by farm roads, best management practices, ditches, structures, etc. shall not be included in planted acreage.
11. An operator may only receive cost share for this practice once on the same acreage.

Standards

Plant species recommended for the respective region must be used for the vegetative cover. The seeding rate and nutrient requirements as listed in the FOTG, Section IV under Pasture and Hay Planting (Code 512), or as recommended by N.C. State University will be used.