

Approved Forest Management Checklist

Preamble: This Forest Management Checklist is incorporated as part of the North Carolina Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) and is to be used to identify the components of the Forest Management Plan that is required for each CREP 30-year and Permanent conservation easement that allows timber management and harvesting.

The objective of this checklist is to provide guidance to landowners for managing their lands enrolled in CREP and to inform them of these conditions at the time of enrollment and any other times during the term of the conservation easement.

Land that is enrolled in CREP will be converted from agriculture use to forest use. This checklist will allow for needed flexibility for the landowners now and for the future and allow for changing technology in forestry management.

The CREP easement area will be divided into management zones. Lands enrolled in a CP3, CP3A, CP22, CP31 practice under the State Incentive provisions of this CREP shall include a Minimal Impact Zone (MIZ). A MIZ will be the first 50-feet of the easement area immediately adjacent to the qualifying water body and the remainder of the easement area being the Forest Management Zone.

A MIZ will incur more restrictive management objectives, as this zone is the most important for protecting water quality. This zone will be designated as a no-cut zone, where cutting of trees in this zone can only be done under the conditions met in Section I. of this checklist.

Timber management activities will be less restrictive in Forest Management Zone of the easement area, as the landowner does retain the right to manage and harvest timber in this zone. The activities of Forest Management Zone will be described in Section II of this checklist.

Section I. Minimal Impact Zone (MIZ) – Each CREP easement area will include a MIZ, which will be the first 50-feet of the CREP easement area that is immediately adjacent to the qualifying water body as identified in the current version of the 2 CRP Manual.

1. The current 2 CRP Manual identifies this zone as to include any enrolled lands that are within 50 feet of the edge (top of bank) of a stream, pond, ditch, river, estuary or lake.
2. In cases where there is an existing forested buffer located adjacent to the qualifying water body, and it is not enrolled in CREP, the MIZ shall begin at that portion of the CREP conservation easement area located closest to the qualifying water body. If the landowner enrolls the existing buffer under the State portion of CREP, the MIZ will begin immediately adjacent to the qualifying water body.

3. The landowner shall file a copy of any prescribed burning plan, or changes to any existing forest management plan at the local DFR office.
4. Specific restrictions and management requirements will be applied to this zone and are identified below:
 - a. Fertilizer application within the MIZ is allowed to establish or reestablish the forested buffer. Fertilizer, when applied, shall be applied in accordance with soil test recommendations.
 - b. Harvest of individual or groups of dead or infected trees, or trees that endanger structures or human life and safety, is allowed.
 - c. Pesticide application necessary to control forest pests (including exotic and pest plants) and disease infestation is allowed. A N. C. Division of Forest Resources (DFR) Forest Pesticide Application Plan shall be approved by a registered forester and filed as part of the Forest Management Plan.
 - d. Removal of fallen trees impeding stream flow is allowed, consistent with applicable regulations.
 - e. There shall be no burning, cutting, removal, grazing or destruction of trees, shrubs, grasses or other vegetation (collectively “vegetation”) within the MIZ, except for:
 - i. Practice establishment,
 - ii. Non-native, invasive or noxious vegetation,
 - iii. Dead, insect infested or diseased vegetation,
 - iv. Burning in accordance with the established Conservation and/or Forest Management Plan,
 - a) Any removal necessary for protecting rare and endangered species,
 - b) Any removal necessary for the construction and maintenance of one crossing for vehicular access to the remainder of the property, and
 - d) All removal necessary for practice establishment.
 - e) No logging decks or mill sites shall be located within the MIZ.

Section II. Forest Management Zone – The remainder of the CREP easement area outside the MIZ is the Forest Management Zone. Specific restrictions and management requirements will be applied to this zone and are identified below. The landowner shall file a copy of the Conservation and/or Forest Management Plan, or any changes to any existing forest management plan, during the term of the easement, at the local DFR office.

- A. Ephemeral Streams – No soil disturbing activities shall be allowed within 10-feet of any ephemeral streams in this zone, except for:
 1. Practice establishment,
 2. Removal of non-native, invasive or noxious vegetation,

3. Removal of trees impeding the flow of a water body,
4. Burning in accordance with the established Conservation and/or Forest Management Plan under an approved prescribed burning plan included in the Forest Management Plan,
5. Any activities necessary for protecting rare and endangered species, and
6. Any activities necessary for the construction and maintenance of one crossing for vehicular access to the remainder of the property.

B. Forest Management Planning

1. A forest management plan approved by a registered forester shall be incorporated as part of the CREP-STATE Contract and must be provided to the N. C. Division of Soil and Water Conservation (DSWC), the local Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), DFR and landowner, prior to disbursement of state incentive payment. The plan should be reviewed by the landowner at least once every 5 years and be updated as necessary.

C. Harvesting

1. A written pre-harvest plan must be approved by a registered forester and provided to the local DFR and SWCD offices at least 30 days prior to expected harvest date. The harvesting plan shall address protection of the CREP easement area. A registered forester or trained DFR technician shall inspect harvest operations for compliance with all applicable regulations. A registered forester will provide a post-harvest compliance form to the landowner and SWCD office.
2. Single tree or group selection methods shall be used as harvesting methods. After canopy closure, thinning shall be allowed to an average of up to 25 square feet of basal area below the basal area recommended in the USDA Forest Service thinning guide. Subsequent thinning should be considered in order to maintain the tree stand in a productive early successional wildlife habitat condition.
3. Forest Management Plans shall be used during the term of this CREP Conservation easement to regenerate subsequent stand of trees by enhancing the natural regeneration processes, including ecological succession, while maintaining water quality benefits. Forest management may include more intensive harvesting methods to remedy adverse stand conditions created by natural or human induced catastrophes. Forestry activities, including harvesting, must be carried out in accordance with all existing Federal, State, and local laws, rules, regulations and guidelines, and should be limited to a time of the year when the water table is low enough so that rutting and compaction will

not occur to such extent that normal hydrology is interrupted or soil structure is significantly changed.

- a. In cases where the existing stand is destroyed by a natural disaster, the site could be cleared using more extensive harvesting methods, as long as all water quality measures are followed. A copy of the Forest Management Plan shall be kept on file in the office of the local DRF and SWCD office.
 - b. Unauthorized removal or damage to trees within the Forest Management Zone shall constitute noncompliance of the conservation easement. It is the responsibility of the landowner to protect and uphold the purposes of the Conservation Easement. Violations of the conditions and terms of the conservation easement will trigger conservation easement enforcement activities by the State in accordance with the terms and conditions of the conservation easement.
 - c. There shall be no clear cutting or seed tree harvesting, unless provided for in the Forest Management Plan to develop specific stand types or wildlife management areas as appropriate to the site.
4. Harvesting in jurisdictional wetlands shall be carried out in accordance with all applicable Federal, State and local laws, rules, regulations and guidelines, and should be limited to a time of the year when the water table is low enough so that rutting and compaction will not occur to such extent that normal hydrology is interrupted or soil structure changed.
 5. Harvest of individual dead or infected trees, or trees that endanger structures or human life and safety, is allowed.
 6. Timber felling shall be directed away from streams, including ephemeral streams and the Minimal Impact Zone.

D. Pesticide Application

Pesticide application necessary to control forest pests (including invasive, exotic and other pest plants) and disease infestations is allowed. A DFR Forest Pesticide Application Plan shall be approved by a registered forester and filed as part of the Forest Management Plan.

E. Prescribed Burning

Prescribed burning should only be used to achieve the goals and guiding principles of the conservation easement and described in the Forest Management Plan. A prescribed burning plan must be written by a

certified burner and filed as an addendum to the Forest Management Plan and provided to the landowner, DFR and SWCD offices. A certified burner must be on site during any prescribed burning activity.

F. Equipment Use

Only equipment used for harvesting or performing other management activities that are consistent with the terms and conditions of the easement is allowed.

G. Logging Decks and Mill Sites

Logging decks or mill sites are allowed only to the extent necessary to harvest efficiently and to maintain the terms and conditions of the conservation easement. These facilities may be located no closer than 200 feet of any CREP qualifying water body and must be identified in the pre-harvest plan.

H. Fertilizer Application

Fertilizer application is allowed when establishing or reestablishing a forest stand. Fertilizer, if applied, shall be applied in accordance with soil test recommendations.

I. Sediment and Erosion Control

1. No permanent stream crossings shall be created for timber harvesting purposes. Temporary bridgemat crossings may be used and shall meet requirements of 15A NCAC 11.0230, and be described in the Forest Management Plan. Temporary crossings may only be used if existing crossings are inadequate for efficient harvesting operations.
2. Sediment control (groundcover or other) BMPs shall be implemented within 10 days after the start of land-disturbing activities, including, but not limited to harvest roads, trails, etc., unless impractical due to weather conditions. The current FPG law requires that access roads and skid trails shall be constructed to minimize erosion and sediment. The trails shall be installed so that there is sufficient ground cover to prevent visible sediment from entering intermittent and perennial streams or water bodies.
3. Stabilization and re-vegetation of entire disturbed areas, including, but not limited to skid trails, decks, temporary roads, with native species must take place within 30 days after the activity ceases. 15A NCAC 11.0203 and .0209 regulate these activities. Seasonal planting requirements should be considered for establishing native species when determining plant species to be used for stabilization

and re-vegetation in order to ensure success of the planting.