

Part 518 – Conservation Security Program

518.155 Technical Reference Document

B. Technical Criteria for Silvopasture Eligibility

The intent of the following criteria is to match and further clarify technical provisions in the Silvopasture Establishment (381) national conservation practice standard, May 2006, to determine land eligibility for the Conservation Security Program. As described in these criteria, the term silvopasture is a condition of multiple plant types on the same area. An area of applied silvopasture may be classified under different land use designations. For example, silvopasture with an areal canopy cover of leaves and branches of trees 25 percent or greater would indicate a "forest land" designation while cover less than 25 percent would indicate "pastureland" or "rangeland." (Source: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/land/nri02/glossary.html>).

For land to be eligible as silvopasture, the following criteria must be met:

- Site-adapted trees or shrubs must be uniform in distribution over the area (random or in a row arrangement), i.e., woody plants are not just scattered individuals or clumps of trees in a grassland area.
- Woody plant species are suited in quantity and quality for wood products and are managed to have a canopy that maintains the understory forage species. Wood products may include such marketable items as lumber, poles, firewood, pulp, resin and sap, nuts, foliage, berries, and cuttings for conservation or commercial propagation. Forage species may include one or more species in the grass, grass-like, forb, or woody plant types (including understory trees).
- Existing and future management is or will be covered under Forest Stand Improvement-666 specifications but an age for intermediate or regeneration harvesting need not be specified. Client documentation is required to verify the area's trees or shrubs have been treated to improve wood products AND increase understory forage quantity and quality within a reasonably recent time period, e.g., 10 years. In most cases, established overstory woody plants will range from 5-10 percent to 40-50 percent canopy cover (vertical-projection, crown-perimeter method). Newly planted or naturally regenerated woody plants that will become the overstory necessarily have an initial lower canopy cover percentage, e.g., less than 5 percent. As an example for an established silvopasture, 10 pine trees per acre each with 220 square feet of crown (birds-eye view) would equal about 5 percent ground cover; 100 of these pine trees per acre would equal about 50 percent cover.
- Key native or planted forage species must be adapted to the site, more or less uniform in distribution over the area, and be suited in quantity and palatability to the annual grazing or browsing of animals identified in the Prescribed Grazing-528 specifications being applied.
- Grazing or browsing animals consistently utilize the area during prescribed periods in prescribed numbers, i.e., animal use is not just incidental or ephemeral or consist of a stocking rate below the site's potential stocking rate.

Except for a short period of time for tree or shrub regeneration (e.g., 5 years), elimination of any component above removes the area from a silvopasture designation until such time as the component is reapplied or reinstated.

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