



Natural Resources Conservation Service
P.O. Box 2890
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NATIONAL HANDBOOK OF CONSERVATION PRACTICES
450 – NHCP
NOTICE 174

November 1, 2022

Purpose. This notice transmits revised national Conservation Practice Standards (CPSs), along with an updated index for insertion into the National Handbook of Conservation Practices (NHCP). Notes are included to highlight key changes made to each CPS. States have until October 1, 2023, to adopt these changes into the State editions of these standards.

Effective Date. This notice is effective November 1, 2022.

Explanation of Changes. New and revised national CPSs are as follows:

Aquatic Organism Passage (Code 396): Revisions were made to improve clarity and readability. This revised standard makes clear the differences between the role of this biological practice standard for the ecological requirements versus engineering practice standards and manuals for the structural design elements. For clarity, general content in the Criteria section was re-organized into sub-sections that list application criteria for specific barrier situations. The revised standard also includes in the Criteria section a requirement to evaluate native species above the barrier if passage was not historically present and clarifies the appropriate use of screen under this practice standard. In the Considerations section, post-construction opportunities to enhance wildlife and pollinator habitat were added. Minor revisions were made throughout to improve readability. References were updated based on literature review.

Deep Tillage (Code 324): This standard was edited for clarity. Wording was added to sections under Additional Criteria to provide active voice. Several paragraphs in the Considerations section were deleted and edited for better explanation.

Early Successional Habitat Development-Mgt (Code 647): This standard has been reviewed and is being renewed with no changes except a couple minor wording changes.

Firebreak (Code 394): The firebreak definition was revised to distinguish this practice from Fuel Break (383). Language was revised throughout the document to improve clarity. Considerations were organized into similar considerations. References were updated by adding relevant publications.

Forest Stand Improvement (Code 666): The Definition, Purpose, Criteria, Considerations, and Operation and Maintenance sections were refined to add clarity. The purposes were revised to align with resource concerns. Criteria and considerations were reorganized and revised to match the updated purposes and links to enhancements. General criteria information was incorporated

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into the Plans and Specifications section. Considerations for visual quality were integrated into the General Considerations section. New consideration for the use of biomass for bioenergy, renewable energy production, or biochar was added to the General Considerations section. Minimum requirements were added to the Plans and Specifications section. References were revised.

Fuel Break (Code 383): Language was added to better distinguish Fuel Break (383) from Firebreak (394). Purpose, Criteria, and Considerations sections were further refined. Conservation practice references were updated with relevant publications.

Riparian Herbaceous Cover (Code 390): This standard has been reviewed and is being renewed with no changes except a couple minor wording changes.

Soil Carbon Amendment (Code 336): This is a new standard that supports the application of biochar, compost, and other State-approved carbon amendments (e.g., harvested aquatic plant biomass, bagasse, distillation residue) to increase soil carbon sequestration and improve soil health on all land uses. The soil carbon amendment practice plan was developed based on the evaluation and monitoring of soil properties, amendment characterization, and short- and long-term conservation objectives.

Upland Wildlife Habitat Management (Code 645): This standard has been reviewed and is being renewed with no changes except a couple minor wording changes.

Wetland Enhancement (Code 659): This standard has been reviewed and is being renewed with no changes except a couple minor wording changes.

Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management (Code 644): This standard has been reviewed and is being renewed with no changes except a couple minor wording changes.

Filing Instructions. If a hardcopy of the NHCP is maintained, replace the Contents section (pages i through vi dated November 2022) with the revised pages found at <http://directives.sc.egov.usda.gov/viewerFS.aspx?hid=22299>

Replace the prior existing practice standards and archive, as appropriate, with the practice standards contained in this notice.

This notice and each of the conservation practice standards included with this notice can be accessed electronically through the NRCS website at http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detailfull/national/technical/cp/ncps/?cid=nrcs143_026849

Federal Register Notice

NRCS published a notice to solicit public comments about how to improve specific agency conservation practice standards in the *Federal Register* on March 9, 2021, and January 19, 2022, for a 30-day comment period. Comments from the public were accepted during the comment period.

Guidance to the States and the Pacific Islands and Caribbean Areas for complying with the provisions of the 1996 Farm Bill that require advertising for public comment prior to revising NRCS State-level technical guides can be found in Title 450, General Manual, Part 401, Subpart B, Section 401.19.

/s/

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