

PASTURE MANAGEMENT (CODE 512)

DESCRIPTION

A practice which establishes native or introduced forage species suitable for pasture establishment or pasture renovation of continuous grazing systems to implement livestock management under an intensive grazing system.

PURPOSE

The practice is intended to address one or more of the following:

- a. Reduce soil erosion,
- b. Improve soil and water quality,
- c. Manage livestock production using a prescribed, intensive or rotational grazing system, and/or
- d. Additional benefits such as the improvement or maintenance of livestock nutrition and/or health may result from implementing this practice but is not a consideration for eligibility.

CONDITION

This practice may be applied on all lands suitable to the establishment of annual, biennial, or perennial species for forage under an intensive grazing management system.

POLICIES

1. NRCS Standards and Specifications for Forage and Biomass Planting (Code 512) shall be followed when applying this practice. (Hayland establishment is not eligible for MACS, *however periodic cuttings incidental to forage management are allowed.*)
2. Vegetative cover shall be selected to accomplish the intended purpose of the practice, conditions of the site, and the objectives of the land user. All commercial seed purchased must be tested, properly labeled, certified and meet all requirements in accordance with MD Seed Law and regulations.
3. Refer to species and varieties included in the NRCS 512 standard when determining mixes, planting times, seeding rates, etc. Pre-mixed seed varieties are not eligible if they contain inappropriate species or ratios of species. Planting date ranges in NRCS 512 standard's plant hardiness *must* be adhered to in order to qualify for payment. *Applicants are encouraged to plant in the late summer period to ensure planting success.* NRCS plant hardiness planting date ranges may require adjustment to reflect local conditions, especially near the boundaries of the zones.

4. Plans and specifications for establishment of vegetative cover shall be prepared in accordance with the Considerations, Criteria, and Operation and Maintenance described in NRCS 512 standard. Plans and specifications shall contain sufficient detail concerning site preparation *prior to* planting and establishment to ensure successful installation of the practice. This may include soil amendments to adjust pH levels for species selected, planting a “nurse crop,” reducing competition from other undesirable vegetation that may be present before planting, controlling noxious weeds and allowing enough time to complete site preparations.
5. Livestock shall be excluded as necessary to establish the vegetative cover on the pastures to meet its intended purpose. Minimize concentrated livestock areas to enhance nutrient distribution and improve or maintain adequate ground cover and plant density to maintain or improve filtering capacity of the vegetation. In addition, cost share is authorized for the establishment of one or all of the following:
 - a. Permanent fencing (code 382) for purpose of livestock exclusion in order to protect water quality and stream banks from damage.
 - b. Riparian herbaceous cover (code 390) to remove sediment, nutrients, pesticides and other pollutants in surface runoff and reduce excess nutrients and other chemicals in shallow subsurface flow to prevent or abate pollution of the waters of the State.
 - c. Stream Crossing (code 578) to control bank and streambed erosion, reduce sediment and enhance water quality by controlling livestock intrusion in waters of the State or to provide a controlled crossing for livestock which may allow access for farm equipment between areas for pasture maintenance.
 - d. Watering Facility (code 614) to provide watering facilities which will bring about the desired protection of vegetative cover to prevent erosion and pollutants from nutrients, sediment and animal wastes from reaching the waters of the state.
 - e. Spring Development (code 574) to improve or increase the quantity of water for livestock in order to achieve erosion control and/or water quality benefits.
 - f. Water well (code 642) to improve or increase the quantity of water for livestock in order to achieve erosion control and/or water quality benefits.
 - g. HUA (code 561) or sacrifice lot for managing animals when grazing restrictions are necessary to protect forage quality/survival.
6. Cost-share eligibility is determined as follows:
 - a. Cost-eligibility will be based on the number of animal units that regularly use, occupy or are intended to use the area being addressed.
 - i. If ***fifteen (15) or more*** animal units (AU) are present- cost-share will be based on the applicable flat rates and project limits.

- ii. Operations with **one (1) to less than fifteen (15)** animal units (AU) may be eligible based on the animal unit pro-rated cost-effectiveness formula. (SECTION III, *Water Quality Project Application Instructions*, #44B).
 - iii. Operations that do not have animals but expect to have them within six months must submit a Certification of Imminent Start-up or Expansion of a Livestock Operation. (SECTION III, #19)
7. If the applicant is certain to increase his or her animal capacity within the next six months, **and** if the applicant documents that fact in writing to the Department's satisfaction, cost-share may be approved based on the total of new animal capacity on the farm. The SCD must document the animal capacity increase on the Certificate of Imminent Start-up or Expansion of a Livestock Operation form (SECTION III, # 19) and submit this form with the MACS Water Quality Project form. The department will not process the MACS Claim for Payment until the SCD certifies in writing that the expansion has occurred **and** that the additional or new animals have been placed on the farm.
8. The applicant and the Nutrient Management Plan must be in compliance with Maryland's Nutrient Management regulations (COMAR 15.20.08) at the time of Application. No Applications will be approved without a Nutrient Management Plan Certification Form submitted with the Application (SECTION III, #30).
9. This practice is eligible for cost-share provided it is part of a rotational grazing system in which **50% or more of the livestock forage coming from pasture grazing during the growing season**. A Grazing Management Plan meeting NRCS standards and specifications for Prescribed Grazing (528) must be included with the application. This also includes a summary of the animal unit (AU) calculation; and map labeling pastures, all existing practices and/or proposed practices; and a cover sheet of the grazing plan should be signed by the Operator and District Conservationist or planner with Job Approval Authority (JAA).

The pasture will be subject to an On-Farm Status Review every 2 years during the life maintenance to monitor pasture condition. A Pasture Condition Score (PCS) of less than 30 is considered unsatisfactory and must be addressed by the applicant.

10. **Maintenance & Renovation:**

- a. Proper management of forage seedlings is essential to the establishment and longevity of the pasture planting and continued productivity of an intensive grazing system. Management practices, including mowing, grazing, and herbicide treatment, may be necessary to reduce competition from established forage species and/or undesirable competitive species.
- b. This practice must be properly maintained for a minimum of ten (10) years. The applicant agrees to provide all equipment, labor, materials needed to meet this requirement.

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- c. Periodically inspect the pasture and restore or repair as needed to maintain the intended purpose from inverse impacts such as erosion, weed, disease or pest infestations, livestock or fire damage, flooding or pesticide use on adjacent lands.
- d. Pasture plantings should be managed according to the Maryland Conservation practice standard for Prescribed Grazing (Code 528).
- e. Manage kind of animal, animal number, grazing distribution, length of grazing and/or browsing periods and timing of use to provide grazed plants sufficient recovery time to meet planned objectives. The recovery period of non-grazing can be provided for the entire year or during the growing season of key plants. Deferment (non-grazing period less than one year) and/or rest (non-grazing period equal or greater than one year) will be planned for critical periods of plant needs.
- f. An approved NRCS grazing management plan (Code 528) must be filed *at the time of application*, updated throughout the life of contract as needed and followed as part of this agreement.
- g. Existing continuous use pasture may be eligible for cost share assistance at a rate of 50% if the SCD verifies the need exists to address existing or potential water quality concerns, such as soil erosion and runoff, or if the pasture does not meet a minimum of 60% year-round cover.
 - i. Pasture renovation applications **must** include an approved management intensive grazing plan.
 - ii. When an applicant intends to implement pasture renovations in phases, multiple projects may be eligible if a plan for accomplishing this is documented in an approved SCWQP or grazing plan and submitted with the initial application.
- h. Introduction of desirable species into an existing pasture requiring renovation to meet objectives of an intensive grazing system can be accomplished using conventional till, reduced tillage or no-till methods. The type of seeding equipment and site preparation required are dependent on the species in the stand and the species to be introduced.

11. Cost sharing **is not authorized** for:

- a. Planting intended for hayland production, however, incidental hay cuttings may be taken in the context of managing forage production.
- b. Pasture establishment or renovation for use in a continuous grazing system or if not part of conversion or transition to a management intensive grazing system.
- c. Plantings which will be established on critically eroding areas which usually cannot be stabilized by ordinary conservation treatment and management. Critical Area Planting (Code 342).

- d. Plantings primarily intended for wildlife habitat, where livestock grazing and/or mechanical harvesting are a secondary consideration. For wildlife habitat plantings, refer to the conservation practice standard for Conservation Cover (Code 327).
- e. Plantings on field edges or in riparian buffers, for which other standards are applicable. Refer to the conservation practice standards for Field Border (Code 386) and Filter Strip (Code 393).
- f. Perimeter fencing unless for primary purpose of livestock exclusion from surface water in order to protect water quality and stream banks from damage (code 382).

COST-SHARE RATE

The State cost-share payment will not exceed 87.5% of the total eligible cost, not to exceed \$150,000 per project.

ATTACHMENTS

Applicant(s) with an outstanding Unsatisfactory On-Farm Status Review of BMP Maintenance and Use of previous project(s) may be ineligible for MACS Cost-Share funding. When a previous project expires with an outstanding unsatisfactory status, the applicant is ineligible for any future MACS funding.

The following items are needed:

1. A copy of a recorded deed(s) for the parcel(s) where the BMP is located. If the current, appropriate deed is already on file in the MACS Office, then record both the agreement number of the file where the deed is kept and the liber/folio numbers in the General Comments section of the application.
2. A copy of the Real Property Data Search page from the Maryland Department of Assessments and Taxation's website (www.dat.maryland.gov) indicating the Maryland Property View Account ID Number and owner information.
3. An aerial photograph indicating the property lines as well as all existing and proposed BMPs. For sediment control practices, indicate the drainage area and the direction of flow.
4. A plan view sketch graphically demonstrating the layout and details of the proposed BMP. The sketch should also distinguish buffer widths.
5. The Extended Buffer Worksheet, if applicable (SECTION III, #14).
6. Nutrient Management Plan Certification Form shall be submitted with the Application (SECTION III, #30).
7. An approved and complete Grazing Management Plan when applying for pasture planting as part of a rotational grazing system.