INTRODUCED GRASS PLANTING

CONSERVATION RESERVE ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM CREP-CP1

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Oct. 2000

WHAT IS AN INTRODUCED GRASS PLANTING?

The purpose of an introduced grass planting is to establish a vegetative cover of introduced grasses and legumes that will enhance the landscape. Introduced grasses were brought to Michigan when Europeans arrived. Many of these grasses are used for hay in Europe and are considered "old world" plants. These grasses include timothy, orchardgrass, smooth bromegrass and redtop.

Introduced grass plantings provide excellent nesting and brood-rearing cover, and forage for wildlife. These mid-height, stiff, upright grasses grow well along with legumes such as clover and alfalfa to provide good areas for insect production and pollinating insect foraging areas. They put most of their growth on in the coolness of spring and fall. They provide excellent early and late season forage for grazers such as rabbits, deer and geese. However, they do not stand up to snow and ice and consequently provide fair to poor wintering habitat.

Introduced grasses will live for 10-30 years after they are established. They generally grow fairly quickly and are usually easy to establish. However, it is important to establish these grasses properly.

ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible for this practice with the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program, the land must be within the approved watershed, have a cropping history (two out of the last five years), must have an Erodibility Index (EI) of 8 or greater for wind and/or water erosion; and be within 1000 feet of permanent water such as a lake, stream or river.

PLANTING

It is important to plant cool season grasses into a weed-free, firm seedbed.

If possible, begin weed control efforts the summer before the planned spring planting. Use a herbicide or tillage to eliminate competing vegetation. If necessary for erosion control, seed a temporary cover of oats in late August. Oats will die with freezing temperatures. Again, eliminate competing vegetation at planting time with tillage or herbicides.

Plant during the period of April 15th to June 1st. Most no-till and conventional drills are able to plant cool-season grass mixtures since they are commonly used for hay or pasture plantings. Apply lime and fertilizer according to the needs determined by a soil test.

Cool-season grasses prefer a firm seedbed to ensure good soil to seed contact. That is one reason why some of the best results have been using no-till methods. Plant the seed at a depth of 1/8 inch in the soil.

OTHER MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

Noxious weeds and other undesirable plants, insects, and pests shall be controlled, including such maintenance as necessary to avoid detrimental effects to the surrounding agricultural fields.

For optimum wildlife habitat, plant legumes such as clover or alfalfa along with the grasses. These mixtures will provide insect production for young birds to feed on while providing flowers for pollinating insects. Also, the legumes will provide nitrogen for the grasses to use.

Plant native grasses, CREP-CP2, to provide good winter cover. A minimum of 30% of the area must be planted to the CP2 practice. Plant the native grasses in blocks or wide strips with irregular boundaries to provide the best habitat.

If the field contains areas that were wetlands in the past, consider restoring these areas to a wetland using the "CREP-CP23 Wetland Restoration" practice. To develop shallow water areas for wildlife, consider installing the "CREP-CP9 Shallow Water Areas for Wildlife" practice.

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OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

These plantings must be maintained as an Introduced Grass Planting for the life of the CREP Agreement which is usually 14 or 15 years.

These plantings may not be used for pasture or hay production.

It is important to control unwanted vegetation, especially the first year. Use mowing or herbicides as needed the first summer to control the unwanted vegetation. Always apply herbicides according to labeled directions.

After the first year, use mowing or disking to manage the stand according to your CREP conservation plan. The field can only be mowed or disked to maintain stand health, maintain stand diversity or control noxious weeds. The stand must be at least 4 years old before disking is allowed. No more than one-third of the field can be disturbed in any year. A system of mowing or disking the field in alternating strips or blocks is best for wildlife. This ensures that a portion of the field has undisturbed vegetation and provides additional vegetation diversity to the field. Mow before April 1 or between Aug 1st and Aug 20th.

INTRODUCED GRASS PLANTINGS DESIGN WORKSHEET CREP-CP1

Participant: Field: Tract: Date:

Requirements

Before planting:

_____ Lime according to soil test _____ Fertilize according to soil test _____ Weed – free seedbed	_____ Plant April 15th to June 1st. _____ Firm Seedbed _____ Plant 1/8 inch deep

Seeding mixture#1: (lbs. per acre) Upland Soils	**Or Other mixture:**
Timothy @ 2.5lbs.\acre Orchardgrass @ 2.5lbs.\acre Red clover @ 3 lbs.\acre Alfalfa @ 3 lbs.\acre **Or** **Seeding Mixture #2 (lbs. per acre) Wet Soils** Orchardgrass @ 2.5lbs.\acre Redtop @ 1 lbs.\acre Alsike clover @ 3 lbs.\acre White Dutch Clover @ 3lbs\acre	

Considerations:

_____ Mow or herbicide first year as needed
_____ Food plots
_____ Restore wetlands
_____ Plant blocks or strips of CREP-CP2
_____ Impacts on Threatened and Endangered Species

Acres to be seeded:

Mixture #1

Mixture #2

Maintenance

_____ Mow or disk the area to maintain the health of the stand, improve diversity or control noxious weeds.

_____ No more than one third of the field can be mowed or disked in any year.

_____ Other: