

Guidance Document for Selecting Sites for Planting NWSG CRP practice CP36

Longleaf pine forests and savannas once covered approximately 92 million acres across the Southeast. Today, less than 3 percent of this habitat remains, and what is left is being lost at an estimated rate of 100,000 acres per year.

The new CCRP practice CP36 was created to help re-establish longleaf pine and the native ground cover that accompanies this ecosystem.

After the application is received from FSA, they will forward to the GFC and NRCS for a field validation of the practice. The *GFC* will determine if the site is suitable for long leaf pine and recommend a planting spacing plus other practices necessary for establishment. These will include scalping, ripping, planting and any release treatments. The Conservation Plan will be written by the NRCS with input from the GFC. This plan outline will be provided by the NRCS state office. This plan is needed so that the landowner can begin receiving their monthly rental payments. The Plan may need revision when the *NRCS* makes a field visit in mid to late summer to determine the need for establishing a ground cover of native grasses and forbs that will carry a fire plus provide habitat for ground nesting birds and cover mammals.

During a field visit, at least four scenarios are possible that address the integrity of native plant communities and burnability of each field.

1. **High Native Plant Integrity and High Burnability.** (Fallowed and No Restoration Needed). The field has been fallow for several years, but still meets the FSA eligibility years for cropping. The current ground cover is broom sedge and weeds. The broom sedge is uniform enough to carry a prescribe burn during the winter months. Bermuda grass, bahia or fescue do not occur.
2. **Low Native Plant Integrity and High Burnability.** (Fallowed and Needs Restoration). The same situation as number 1, but with bermuda, bahia or fescue occurring throughout the field OR the coverage is spotty, but there is a high likelihood that they will become a significant component of the ground cover during the life of the contract. If the control treatment for exotic grasses eliminates the broom sedge, then NWSG should be planted.
3. **Low Native Plant Integrity and Low Burn Burnability.** (Recently Cropped and Needs Restoration). The field was recently in crop production and exotic grasses such as bermuda, bahia and or fescue occur throughout the field, OR the coverage is spotty, and there is a high likelihood that they will become a significant component of the ground cover during the life of the contract. Also, the native broadleaf weeds that have become established following crop production are not suitable as a carrier for fire. The weed species that are not acceptable for prescribe fire include: dog fennel, ragweed and pigweed or any other weed that grows tall and shades out low growing ground cover that would normally carry a fire
4. **High/Moderate Native Plant Integrity and Low Burnability.** (Recently Cropped and Needs Restoration.) The field was recently in crop production and there is no evidence of exotic grasses such as bermuda, bahia and or fescue in the field. If they do occur, they only occur in only a place or two, and there is a very low probability that these grasses will become a significant ground vegetation cover during the life of the contract. Also, the broadleaf weeds that have become established following crop production are not suitable as a carrier for fire. The weed species that are not acceptable for prescribe fire include: dog fennel, ragweed and pigweed or any other weed that grows tall and shades out low growing ground cover that would normally carry a fire.

Once the field condition is determined, then select the appropriate management action.

The following management actions occur for each field condition.

If Condition 1 is selected then longleaf pine can be planted the following fall following the NRCS job sheet and GFC recommendations. NWSG planting will not be needed.

If condition 2 is selected then the actual time when the longleaf pines are planted may take up to two years.

The exotic grasses must be treated with the appropriate herbicide at the recommended rates. The most effective herbicide for bermuda is Imazapyr used at post-emergent rates. The area may need to be prescribed burned the winter prior to herbicide treatment to remove any heavy thatch. In late summer following the prescribed burn, treat bermuda with Imazapyr. A second treatment will be needed the following year in early summer after greenup using Glyphosate. The winter following this last treatment, plant LL. If it is determined that native weeds are not sufficient as a carrier for fire, then NWSG should be planted. The NWSG will be planted after the LL pines are planted. For best results: either plant with a no-till drill or conventional methods. See NWSG job sheet for details. If the pine rows are 12 ft wide, then the equipment used to plant NWSG should be no wider than 8ft to protect pines from planting equipment. Also the pines will have a broadband herbicide treatment the following spring after planting that will kill any newly planted NWSG that occur in the band width.

If condition 3 is selected then, just like in condition 2, the actual time when the longleaf pines are planted may take up two years.

The exotic grasses must be treated with the appropriate herbicide at the recommended rates. The most effective herbicide for bermuda is Imazapyr used at post-emergent rates. The area will not need prescribe burning since it has only recently come out of crop production and the grass thatch has not developed. In late summer treat bermuda with Imazapyr. A second treatment will be needed the following year in early summer after greenup using Glyphosate. The winter flowing this last treatment, plant LL pine. If it is determined that the native weeds are not sufficient as a carrier for fire, then NWSG should be planted. The NWSG will be planted after the LL pines are planted. For best results: either plant with a no-till drill or conventional methods. See NWSG job sheet for details. If the pine rows are 12 ft wide, then the equipment used to plant NWSG should be no wider than 8ft to protect pines from planting equipment. Also the pines will have a broadband herbicide treatment the following spring after planting that will kill any newly planted NWSG that occur in the band width.

If condition 4 is selected, then LL pine can be planted according to job sheets. If it is determined that the native weeds are not sufficient as a carrier for fire, then NWSG should be planted. The NWSG will be planted after the LL pines are planted. For best results: either plant with a no-till drill or conventional methods. See NWSG job sheet for details. If the pine rows are 12 ft wide, then the equipment used to plant NWSG should be no wider than 8ft to protect pines from planting equipment. Also the pines will have a broadband herbicide treatment the following spring after planting that will kill any newly planted NWSG that occur in the band width.