

■ Expired CRP Lands

Evaluation for productivity of expiring CRP stands

Once the rancher evaluates the existing stand for noxious or perennial weed problems, vigor, and overall stand viability, proper renovation techniques may be implemented to improve the stand quality and quantity.

Renovation

Burning, fertilization, heavy harrowing, interseeding or complete re-establishment may be needed to produce a healthy, productive stand for use as pastureland, hayland or other conservation uses (i.e. wildlife habitat).

Prescribed burning would be primarily used to remove old plant residues, increase the amount sunlight for new plant growth and release tied-up nutrients.

A prescribed burn plan is recommended to ensure the burn accomplishes the objectives in a safe manner.

Fertilization with N may be needed to rejuvenate CRP stands, especially if the legume component of the stand has become limited. The amount of nitrogen needed will vary from 40 to 90 pounds of actual N depending on soils and rainfall (higher rainfall areas and sandier soils will require the higher rates). Phosphorus may also be limiting. A soil test is recommended before fertilizing with phosphorus to determine if the need exists.

Heavy harrowing using two to four passes will remove standing litter, disturb low vigor plants, and minimize pocket gopher mounds. A more robust regrowth with greater vigor is often achieved using this technique.

Interseeding may be an option if the existing stand is weak (bare ground) or one or more desired plant species is missing from the stand. If bare ground exists, interseed with the one or more species that have management requirements similar to the existing stand. If the objective of the interseeding is to introduce one or more new plant species into the existing grass stand, interseeding with a legume has proven the most effective. Suppression of the existing vegetation with an herbicide is recommended when adding legumes to the stand to reduce competition and enhance seedling establishment.

In either case, without conventional seedbed preparation, a drill that can penetrate the plant residues, place the seed at the proper depth and firm the soil around the seed is critical. A dormant seeding is recommended but spring seeding may also be used if moisture conditions are favorable.

Grazing management

(see grazing management section)

Haying management

(see haying management section)