

Name of Practice: CONTINUOUS HIGH RESIDUE MINIMAL SOIL DISTURBANCE  
TILLAGE SYSTEM  
VACS Program Specifications for No. SL-15A

This document specifies terms and conditions for the Virginia Agricultural Best Management Practices Cost-Share Program's High Residue Minimal Soil Disturbance Tillage System best management practice which are applicable to all contracts entered into with respect to that practice.

A. Description and Purpose

This practice will implement continuous high residue minimal soil disturbance tillage systems and nutrient management technologies resulting in the reduction of non-point source pollution to state waters from nutrients and sediments. It will also increase biomass/soil quality, recognize nutrient management indicators, and manage the movement of nitrogen, phosphorus, sediments and runoff by maintaining rain drop intercepting residue cover on the soil surface.

The purpose of this practice is to encourage the conversion of minimum and conventional tillage fields to a continuous high residue minimal soil disturbance tillage system and will maintain a minimum of 60% rain drop intercepting residue cover on the enrolled acres for the lifespan of the practice.

B. Policies and Specifications

1. Eligibility:

- i. All eligible fields must be converting from a minimum till or conventional till systems to a high residue minimal soil disturbance tillage system.
- ii. Fields must have a cropping history for two out of the past five years.
- iii. Multi-year, multi-crop rotations must include at least two crops of small grain, including those planted as cover crops, in five years to be eligible. No harvest of small grain hay or straw is allowed. Permanent grass or hay land is not considered cropland for this practice.

2. If the planting of a cover crop is needed to maintain biomass, the producer is eligible to plant cover under SL-8B or WQ-4.

3. In order to be eligible for cost-share or tax credit, producers must be fully implementing a current Nutrient Management Plan (NMP) on all agricultural production acreage contained within the field on which this practice will be implemented. The NMP must comply with all requirements set forth in the Nutrient Management Training and Certification Regulations (4VAC50-85 et seq.) and the Virginia Nutrient Management Standards and Criteria (revised July 2014); must be prepared and certified by a Virginia certified Nutrient Management Planner; and must be on file with the local District before any cost-share payment is made to the participant. Plans shall also contain any specific production management criteria designated in the BMP practice (4VACV50-85-130G).

4. State cost-share and tax credit contracts for the SL-15A will be provided only one time per field.
5. Fields that have received payment in federal continuous no-till or conservation tillage programs are not eligible to participate in this practice. However, fields that have received cost share payment through this practice are not restricted by this practice from participation in federal or state conservation systems programs.
6. Biomass requirements for all crop rotations must maintain a minimum of 60% rain drop intercepting residue cover on the enrolled acres for the lifespan of the practice.
7. This practice is subject to NRCS Standards 340 Cover Crop, 328 Conservation Crop Rotation, and 595 Integrated Pest Management.
8. All practice components implemented must be maintained for a minimum of five years following the calendar year of installation. The lifespan begins on Jan. 1 of the calendar year following the year of certification of completion. By accepting either a cost-share payment or a state tax credit for this practice, the participant agrees to maintain all practice components for the specified lifespan. This practice is subject to spot check by the District throughout the lifespan of the practice and failure to maintain the practice may result in reimbursement of cost-share and/or tax credits.

C. Rate(s)

1. As set forth by Virginia Code, the Commonwealth currently provides a tax credit for implementation of certain agricultural best management practices as discussed in the Tax Credit Guidelines of the VACS Manual.
2. The VACS payment rate is a one-time incentive payment of \$70 per acre.
3. Only the participant's eligible out-of-pocket expenses may be used to determine the tax credit.

D. Technical Responsibility

Technical and administrative responsibility is assigned to qualified technical DCR and District staff in consultation, where appropriate and based on the controlling standard, with DCR, Virginia Certified Nutrient Management Planner(s), NRCS, DOF, and VCE. Individuals certifying technical need and technical practice installation shall have appropriate certifications as identified above and/or Engineering Job Approval Authority (EJAA) for the designed and installed component(s). All practices are subject to spot check procedures and any other quality control measures.

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