

Name of Practice: CONTINUOUS CONSERVATION TILLAGE
PRODUCTION SYSTEM
VACS Program Specifications for No. SL-15B

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

A. Description and Purpose

This practice is designed to expand implementation of continuous conservation tillage planting systems, continuous cover, and nutrient management technologies that will result in the reduction of non-point source pollution to state waters from nutrients and sediments.

Its purpose is to reduce erosion by minimizing tillage of soils on cropland. This will improve soil quality by recognizing nutrient management indicators that manage the movement of nitrogen, phosphorous, sediments and runoff with the use of conservation tillage planting techniques.

B. Policies and Specifications

1. Eligibility:
 - i. All eligible fields must be converting from a conventional till system to a continuous conservation system.
 - ii. All eligible fields must have a cropping history 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. 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. Participants may receive payments for the cover crop practices and the Continuous Conservation Tillage Production System simultaneously, so long as all practice specifications have been met. Cover crops are strongly encouraged throughout the life of the contract.
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-15B 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 system programs.
6. Cropping rotations that involve the removal of residue are eligible, **so long as the residue coverage levels are maintained at a minimum of 30%.**
7. All crops must be planted using conservation tillage methods maintaining a minimum of 30% residue coverage at planting and utilizing a non-inversion tillage method (i.e., strip till).
8. Biomass requirements for all crop rotations must maintain a minimum of 30% rain drop intercepting residue cover on the enrolled acres for the lifespan of the practice.
 - i. For fields that have been rutted during harvest, small grains or cover crop must be planted within 30 days to maintain compliance with this specification. It is recommended that cover crops planted after November 1 be drilled to ensure an adequate stand.
9. This practice is subject to NRCS Standards 340 Cover Crop, 328 Conservation Crop Rotation, and 595 Integrated Pest Management.
10. 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. If a participant receives cost-share, only the participant's eligible out-of-pocket share of the project cost is used to determine the tax credit.
3. The VACS payment rate is a one-time incentive payment of \$35 per acre.

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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