

Name of Practice: LONG TERM VEGETATIVE COVER ON CROPLAND  
VACS Program Specifications for No. SL-1

This document specifies terms and conditions for the Virginia Agricultural Best Management Practices Cost-Share Program's Long Term Vegetative Cover on Cropland best management practice which is applicable to all contracts, entered into with respect to that practice.

A. Description and Purpose

Grass and/or legume vegetation will be established on cropland with existing cover of less than 60% converting it to pasture or hayland to reduce soil erosion and enhance water quality.

State cost-share is intended to promote conversion of cropland to fields with a healthy, well-maintained sod.

B. Policies and Specifications

1. 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 can be either a one-year or three-year plan that is updated to continuously cover the acreage or a five-year grass and hayland plan. This is to ensure proper nutrient application for a successful practice. This plan must be prepared and signed by a Virginia Certified Nutrient Management Planner and on file with the SWCD before a cost-share payment can be made.
2. Soil loss rates must be computed for all applications for use in establishing priority considerations and reflect at minimum a three year cropping history.
3. This practice is not intended to be used to reseed or improve hay or pastureland.
4. Pastures and haylands that are planted under this practice will be grazed or harvested and maintained in accordance with NRCS Standard 512 for the lifespan. Cost-share will be refunded if the cover is destroyed during the lifespan. This practice is subject to verifications by the District throughout the life of the practice and failure to comply may result in the forfeiture of the funds.
5. State cost-share and tax credit will be provided only one time per field, while that field is under the same ownership.
6. State cost-share or tax credit will not be approved for fields with more than 60% cover, with the exception of crop fields that have a row crop or small grain residue, in which case cover in excess of 60% is permissible.

7. State cost-share is allowable only for BMP installations that are not receiving cost-share from other sources.
8. Cost-share and tax credit are not authorized for obstruction removal, fencing, or watering facilities.
9. Fertility - Lime and fertilizer can be applied for maintenance purposes but must be done in accordance with current soil test recommendations (at Virginia Cooperative Extension maintenance rates for the appropriate sod species). Maintenance applications are the obligation of the participant. If biosolids or manure is used, the material must be properly sampled and tested for nutrient content and given credit in fertilizer recommendations.
10. Cost-share and tax credit are not authorized for the planting of pure stands of alfalfa.
11. This practice is subject to NRCS Standard 512 Pasture and Hay Planting.
12. All practice components implemented must be maintained for a minimum of five years and a maximum of 15 years following the calendar year of certification of completion. 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. The VACS payment rate is 75% of the approved estimated cost or eligible actual cost, whichever is less, in addition to a one-time incentive payment of \$25 per acre for a five-year contract, \$100 per acre for a 10-year contract, or \$150 per acre for a 15-year contract.
2. Eligible components are as follows:
  - i. Eligible seed
  - ii. Minerals (fertilizer, lime, manure); if manure (e.g. poultry litter) is purchased from off farm, a bill and nutrient analysis must be presented.
  - iii. Herbicides
  - iv. Pesticides
  - v. Nutrient management planning
  - vi. Labor
3. 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.

4. 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.

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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