

Name of Practice:
PROTECTIVE COVER FOR AGRICULTURAL CROPLAND
VACS Program Specification for No. SL-8A

This document specifies terms and conditions for the Virginia Agricultural Best Management Practices Cost-Share Program's Protective Cover for Agricultural Cropland best management practice that are applicable to all contracts entered into with respect to that practice.

A. Description and Purpose

This practice will provide an incentive to keep a cover on agricultural cropland when it is not being used after harvest of a crop, after harvest of a specialty crop, or in situations due to an unforeseen circumstance or natural disaster. Unforeseen circumstances or natural disasters could include flooded fields, fire, failed crops, or damage by hail, tornadoes, hurricanes, etc. Cost-share or tax credit are provided to establish vegetative cover on agricultural cropland.

The purpose is to reduce wind and water erosion, thus improving water quality.

B. Policies and Specifications

1. Eligibility:

Crop examples for this practice could include, but are not limited to, the following:

- i) Vegetables
- ii) Tobacco
- iii) Turf
- iv) Hemp
- v) Other

2. Agricultural croplands after harvest of a crop, failed crop, unforeseen circumstances, or natural disaster are given consideration due to bare sites and highly erodible soil conditions.

3. This practice is applicable for Preventative Planting to prevent erosion after crop failures, flood, hail, tornado, and/or hurricane damage, or any other unforeseen circumstance or natural disaster.

4. Soil loss rates must be computed for all applications for use in establishing priority considerations.

5. A Conservation Plan containing crop rotations is required to calculate soil loss reductions and nutrient management planning. The conservation plan and NMP shall include crop rotations for at least one year post completion of this practice.

6. Payment is provided as a variable rate per acre incentive to encourage proper establishment and to offset a portion of the cost of seed and the seeding operation.
7. The planting must be certified within 45 days after crop harvest or destruction of the crop due to natural disaster or unforeseen circumstances. All seeding must be planted and certified no later than November 15 and no earlier than March 1. A good stand and good growth of cover, achieving 60% or greater cover, must be obtained in sufficient time to protect the area. The stand/vegetative cover, 60% cover or greater, must be maintained for at least 60 days after seeding certification or until the conservation purpose has been served in accordance with NRCS 340, whichever is greater. The vegetative cover shall be left on the land or incorporated.
8. In order to be eligible for cost-share, producers must be fully implementing a current Nutrient Management Plan (NMP) on all agricultural production acreage contained within the field that this practice 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).
9. Manure application may be made in accordance with the Nutrient Management Plan prepared by a Virginia certified Nutrient Management Planner.
10. Pasturing consistent with sound agronomic management is permitted as long as a 60% cover is maintained. In years of drought, if producers anticipate a need for additional feed harvest, they should apply for the SL-8H practice, as harvest is not allowed under this practice.
11. The cover crop shall not be harvested for seed/grain.
12. Seed type and rates shall be those listed:

Spring Seed Type	Rate
Tetraploid Rye (pure strain only)	2.0 bu./acre
Winter Rye	1.5 bu./acre
Winter Barley	2.5 bu. /acre
Winter Annual Ryegrass	20 lbs./acre
Winter Wheat	1.5 bu./acre

Spring Oats	2.0 bu./acre
Small Grain Mixtures	1 bu./ac.with
a) legume†	10 lbs./acre or,
b) forage radish	6 lb./ acre or,
c) canola or rape	4 lbs./acre
Triticale	1.5 bu. /acre
Forage Radish	6-8 lbs. /acre
1) mixture with grass or legume†	4 lbs./acre
Winter-Hardy <i>Brassica</i> (canola/rape)	5 lbs./acre
1) mixture with grass or legume†	2-4 lbs./acre

Summer Seed Type	Rate
Sorghum Sudangrass	1.0 bu./acre
Pearl Millet	20 lbs./acre
Foxtail Millet	20 lbs./acre
Black Oil Sunflower	5 lbs./acre
Buckwheat	60 lbs./acre
Forage Soybean	60 lbs./acre
Cowpea	50 lbs./ac.
Sunnhemp	20 lbs./acre

Fall Seed Type	Rate
Tetraploid Rye (pure strain only)	2.0 bu./acre
Winter Rye	1.5 bu./acre
Winter Barley	2.5 bu. /acre
Winter Annual Ryegrass	20 lbs./acre
Winter Wheat	1.5 bu./acre
Winter Hardy Oats	2.0 bu./acre
Small Grain Mixtures	1 bu./ac.with
a) legume†	10 lbs./acre or,
b) forage radish	6 lb./ acre or,
c) canola or rape	4 lbs./acre
Triticale	1.5 bu. /acre
Forage Radish	6-8 lbs. /acre
1) mixture with grass or legume†	4 lbs./acre
Winter-hardy <i>Brassica</i> (canola/rape)	5 lbs./acre
1) mixture with grass or legume†	2-4 lbs./acre

† - legume = Crimson Clover, Austrian Winter Pea, Canadian Spring Pea, Woolypod Vetch or Hairy Vetch

°Use higher seeding rates for pure stands and lower seeding rates for mixed species plantings

Higher seeding rates are recommended for aerial seeding.

- 13. This practice is subject to NRCS standard 340 Cover Crop, including reference to the Cover Crop Planning Manual 1.0, Virginia Technical Note, Agronomy #10.
- 14. This practice has a one-program year completion date eligible for carryover (i.e. participant can apply in early part of a calendar year for summer/fall implementation).

C. Rate(s)

- 1. A one-time VACS payment per acre is available depending on the number of days the cover crop remains on the land after achieving 60% or greater cover, listed below:

Number of Days Maintained	VACS Payment Rate
60-89 Days	\$20.00/Acre
90-119 Days	\$30.00/Acre
120+ Days	\$40.00/Acre

- 2. 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.

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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