

Name of Practice: SMALL GRAIN AND MIXED COVER CROP FOR
NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT AND RESIDUE MANAGEMENT
WITH FALL MANURE APPLICATION
VACS Program Specifications for No. SL-8M

This document specifies terms and conditions for the Virginia Agricultural Best Management Practices Cost-Share Program's Small Grain and Mixed Cover Crop for Nutrient Management and Residue Management with Fall Manure Application Best Management practice which are applicable to all contracts entered into with respect to that practice.

A. Description and Purpose

Cost-share or tax credit are provided to establish vegetative cover on cropland for protection from erosion and the reduction of nutrient losses to groundwater. For the purposes of this practice, cropland includes land used for production of row crops for harvest. This type of cover crop is planted upon cropland where manure is applied following the harvest of a summer crop and prior to cover crop planting. The crop may not be harvested in the spring.

This practice will provide an incentive to keep a cover on cropland, which will help prevent the loss of nutrients, reduce erosion and the leaching of nutrients to ground water. The purpose is to increase above- and below-ground biomass returned to the soil by increasing the amount of manure amendments while minimizing nutrient loss risk, thereby providing adequate fertility to grow the extra biomass. This BMP is designed to utilize the maximum amount of residual nitrogen from previous surface nutrient applications and in the first three feet of the soil profile.

B. Policies and Specifications

1. Soil loss calculations using the presently approved NRCS calculation methodology shall be documented and included in the participant file for review during spot checks.
2. 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).
3. A current Nutrient Management Plan must be on file with the District Prior to issuing cost share. Cost-share is available for all acres with application rates in compliance with the NMP Spreading Schedule. Acres that receive application rates above NMP are not eligible for cost-share.

4. No nitrogen and no phosphorus from any source are allowed between the harvesting of the previous crop and prior to planting, except that use of manure (organic, with less than 40 lbs. N per acre tested) is permitted if all of the following conditions are met:
 - i. Inadequate manure storage is available for the winter at the source;
 - ii. Manure is applied in accordance with a Nutrient Management Plan prepared by a Virginia certified Nutrient Management Planner.
 - iii. New plans shall be written for a period of one to three years. Before cost-share payment can be made the following items must be submitted:
 - a. A complete copy of the NMP containing the planner's Virginia Nutrient Management Certificate number;
 - b. An invoice for planning services of the private certified planner;
 - c. A completed Imported Manure Supplier Verification form (if applicable).
5. No nitrogen or phosphorus may be applied at planting.
6. If available as set forth in Section C.1. of this specification, cost-share is provided as a flat rate per acre incentive to encourage proper establishment of vegetative cover and to offset a portion of the cost of seed and the seeding operation.
7. **A good stand and good growth of vegetative winter cover must be obtained by December 15 to protect the area from nutrient leaching and runoff in the fall and winter.** All cover crop plantings must maintain a minimum of 60% cover crop plant material on the enrolled acres through the lifespan of the practice. District staff will conduct field visits no later than February 28 to verify required cover has been established.
8. Aerial seeding is not applicable for this practice.
9. Seeding rates shall be adjusted based on germination rates.
10. The practice is intended to provide an incentive to keep a vegetative cover on cropland, which will help prevent the loss of nutrients by reducing surface erosion and absorbing any excess nutrients from the soil. Current research indicates that early planting of winter rye maximizes the environmental benefit of cover crops in Virginia. The SL-8BM is not intended to subsidize winter crop produced for commodity purposes.
11. Harvesting for hay, haylage, silage, grain, straw or seed is not permitted. Pasturing consistent with sound agronomic management is permitted as long as a 60% cover is maintained through March 14. **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.**
12. Land enrolled in this practice may not be enrolled in another state cover crop practice.

13. Select one of following species and/or mixtures of species to plant in all soils:

| Species | bu./acre |
|--|-----------------|
| Rye (Tetraploid) | 2 bu./acre |
| Winter Triticale | 2 bu./acre |
| Winter Rye (not tetraploid) | 2 bu./acre |
| Winter Barley | 2 bu./acre |
| Winter Hardy Oats | 2 bu./acre |
| Winter Wheat | 2 bu./acre |
| Winter Annual ryegrass | 20 lbs./acre |
| Small grain mixtures with | 1 bu./acre |
| a) legume† or | 10 lbs./acre |
| b) Diakon (forage or tillage) radish or | 6 lb./ acre |
| c) canola or rape | 4 lbs./acre |
| Diakon (forage or tillage) Radish | 6-8 lbs./acre° |
| mixture with annual rye grass | 10 lbs./acre |
| Winter-hardy <i>Brassica</i> (canola/rape) | 5 -7 lbs./acre° |
| mixture with annual rye grass | 10 lbs./acre |

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

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

Higher seeding rates are recommended for non-incorporation seeding methods. Aerial seeding is not eligible with this practice.

14. Seeding of all seed types must be planted by the dates listed below:

| Area | Early Planting Date | Standard Planting Date |
|---|---------------------|------------------------|
| Cities of Chesapeake & VA Beach | November 10 | November 30 |
| Coastal Plain (including the Eastern Shore) | November 10 | November 30 |
| Piedmont | October 25 | November 15 |
| Mountain and Valley | October 20 | November 10 |

In all cases, this practice is subject to NRCS standard 340.

15. The cover crop must be killed using mechanical or chemical means or by grazing no earlier than March 15 and no later than June 1. The cover crop residue may be left on the field for conservation purposes or the cover crop or its residue may be tilled under. The practice will be considered complete once the cover crop has served its purpose and been killed. Residue may not be removed at any time.
16. In order to provide additional nutrient uptake and promote soil health through the increase of biomass above and below the soil surface, an additional incentive is provided for cover crops that are killed using mechanical, chemical or grazing means on May 1 or thereafter, but no later than June 1. Planting green, planting directly into

the growing cover crop prior to termination, is allowed.

C. Rate(s)

1. A VACS payment rate of **\$20** per acre is available. Districts should not issue payment if a good stand and good growth of winter cover is not obtained before December 15 and maintained through March 14.
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. The cost of fertilizer may not be considered when calculating the participant's tax credit. Participants may receive either a cost-share payment or a tax credit for implementation of this practice but not both on the same acre.
3. A **\$25** per acre early planting bonus payment is available for cover crops planted on or before the early planting date specified for their physiographic region. Districts should not issue payment if a good stand and good growth of winter cover is not obtained before December 15 and maintained through March 14.
4. A **\$10** per acre bonus payment is available for all applicants that plant pure stands of rye from the following list on or before either planting date.

i. The following list of rye cultivars are approved*:

| | |
|--------------|------------------|
| 6250 Abruzzi | Paster |
| Abruzzi | Ryman |
| Dura | Virginia Abruzzi |
| Early Grazer | Wheeler |
| Elbon | Wintergrazer 70 |
| Grazer | Winterking |
| Graze Master | |

*Or any other indeterminate growth tetraploid rye cultivar.

5. A **\$5** per acre bonus payment is available for all applicants that plant pure stands of Winter Triticale on or before either planting date.
6. Cover crops that are killed using mechanical, chemical or grazing means, on May 1 or thereafter, but no later than June 1, are eligible for a **\$10** per acre bonus payment. Planting green, planting directly into the growing cover crop prior to termination, is allowed.

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.

Revised April 2025