

Name of Practice: PROTECTIVE COVER FOR SPECIALTY CROPS  
VACS Program Specifications for No. SL-8

This document specifies terms and conditions for the Virginia Agricultural Best Management Practices Cost-Share Program's Protective Cover for Specialty Crops best management practice which 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 specialty crop land when it is not being used after harvest of a specialty crop. The purpose is to reduce wind and water erosion, thus improving water quality.

B. Policies and Specifications

1. Eligibility:  
Specialty crops for this practice (for the purpose of the Virginia Agricultural Cost-Share Program only) are defined as: Vegetables, tree crops, perennial vine crops, ornamentals, horticultural crops, tobacco, hemp, turf, small grains, and other similar crops.
2. Specialty crops are given consideration due to bare sites and highly erodible soil conditions.
3. Soil loss rates must be computed for all applications for use in establishing priority considerations.
4. Payment is provided as a flat rate per acre incentive payment to encourage proper establishment and to offset a portion of the cost of seed and the seeding operation.
5. No nitrogen and no phosphorus from any sources are allowed between the harvesting of the previous crop and March 1 of the next calendar year. No nitrogen or phosphorus are allowed at planting.
6. The planting must be certified no later than November 30. A good stand and growth of vegetative cover must be obtained in sufficient time to protect the area no later than December 15. 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. After the growth has been maintained for at least 90 days after seeding certification or until the conservation purpose has been served in accordance with NRCS 340, whichever is greater, it may be left on the land or incorporated.
7. Pasturing consistent with good management may be permitted. No vegetative growth may be harvested for hay or seed.

8. Seed type and rates shall be those listed:

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 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.**

9. This practice is subject to NRCS standard 340 Cover Crop.

C. Rate(s)

1. A VACS payment rate of \$40 per acre is available.
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. Participants may receive either a cost-share payment or a tax credit for implementation of this practice but not both on the same 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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