

FPP02 - On-Farm Pilot Project



Enhancement Description

On-Farm Pilots showcase conservation activities that have proven environmental benefits, but have not been widely adopted in the local farm community. Participants select and agree to install, monitor and promote conservation activities (practices, components or management techniques) that have been identified by the NRCS State Conservationist as addressing specific resource needs.

Land Use Applicability

Each approved pilot project will have a land use designated, e.g. Cropland, Pastureland, Rangeland and/or Forest land.

Benefits

Conservation activities can show promise in research but until they are proven in actual field use farmers may be reluctant to adopt them. Pilot projects will provide a mechanism to prove that a new conservation activity is viable in the project area. Publicizing the implementation of the conservation activity can help other farmers learn about new conservation techniques by observing their peers.

Conditions Where Enhancement Applies

This enhancement applies to all crop, pasture, range or forest land use acres.

Criteria

- Producers will select from a pre-approved list of pilot projects (if available).
- Pilots include practices, components, or management techniques that have shown environmental benefits but have not been adopted by farmers in the project area.
- The pilots must be implemented and monitored according to protocols developed specifically for the project.
- Protocols include:
 - Specifics of the practice, component or management technique being piloted
 - Acreage required to adequately conduct the pilot
 - How many years the pilot is to be conducted
 - What the participant is required to provide (materials, labor, maintenance etc.)
 - Type(s) of publicized events that will be used (field days, signage, winter meetings, etc.) to meet the minimum number of three (3) events. This activity will be scheduled once per year that an educational event takes place.



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2012 Ranking Period 1

- Data on the costs and performance must be collected for the demonstration project as specified for each individual pilot project. The data collection needs are available in a separate document.

Adoption Requirements

This enhancement is considered adopted when the pre-approved pilot project has been implemented and monitored according protocols developed specifically for the project and events to publicize the project have been held.

Documentation Requirements

- Documentation of the events held to publicize the project.
- Data collected for the project will include as directed by the individual states:
 - Practice cost, field operations conducted, etc.
 - Frequency of collection
 - Data collection forms



Conservation Stewardship Program On-Farm Pilot Project Requirements

Overview

The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) encourages participants to address resource concerns in a comprehensive manner by undertaking additional conservation activities, and improving, maintaining, and managing existing conservation activities. This enhancement is eligible for cropland, pastureland, rangeland, and non-industrial private forestland. CSP enhancements means a type of activity installed and adopted to treat natural resources and improve conservation performance. Many of the CSP enhancements are related to existing NRCS conservation practice standards, but at a management intensity level that exceeds minimum practice standards.

On-Farm Pilots showcase conservation activities that have proven environmental benefits, but have not been widely adopted in the local farm community. Participants select and agree to install, monitor and promote conservation activities (practices, components or management techniques) that have been identified by the NRCS State Conservationist as addressing specific resource needs. Using field days, signage and/or other innovative publicity methods, conservation activities that have shown promise in research plots can be promoted on a larger scale, thus removing farmers' reluctance to adopt them. Participants in On-Farm Pilots learn about new conservation activities first hand, becoming advocates for how these new conservation techniques can be applied. On-Farm Pilots are not intended to pay for the cost of setting up or administering a pilot. CSP applicants that choose this activity will be awarded conservation performance points that increase their ranking score and payment level for participation in the program.

Pilot Project Requirements

Each year NRCS will identify broad national technology focus areas for which new and innovative conservation activities are needed. States will select specific pilot projects to emphasize and will develop a list of acceptable projects, guidelines for implementation and publicity requirements. This should be done in consultation with the State Technical Committee. Conservation partners are encouraged to help promote and organize On-Farm Pilots, but the activity is not intended to provide any financial assistance for doing so. Individual or groups of farmers are also encouraged to submit project proposal following the criteria listed below. Ideas for On-Farm Pilots should be submitted to the State Conservationist along with supporting documentation as to how the idea relates to a focus area and selected conservation activities (practices, components and/or management techniques).



Criteria for On-Farm Pilot Conservation Activities (Practices, Components and/or Management Techniques)

- Practices, components or management techniques:
 - Should have been demonstrated to provide environmental benefits either through research or practical field experience
 - Should not have been widely adopted in a given geographic area
 - Could be an activity that has been proven in another state or geographic area within the state and shows promise in addressing the resource needs in the targeted area
 - Address one of the State identified focus areas:
 - Air
 - Animal
 - Energy
 - Plant
 - Soil Erosion
 - Soil Quality
 - Water Quality
 - Water Quantity
- States will develop a pilot project protocol that includes:
 - Specifics of the practice, component or management technique being piloted
 - Acreage required to adequately conduct the pilot
 - How many years the pilot is to be conducted
 - What the participant is required to provide (materials, labor, maintenance etc.)
 - Type(s) of publicized events that will be used (field days, signage, winter meetings, etc.) to meet the minimum number of three (3) events. This activity will be schedule once per year that an educational event takes place.
 - This information can be presented to interested participants as a fact sheet that outlines their involvement.
- States will develop data collection criteria that includes:
 - Type of data collected (practice cost, field operations, etc.)
 - Frequency of collection
 - Data collection forms

On-Farm Pilot Project – FPP02 – *Targeted Grazing*

Reference:

- **Conservation Practice Standard 528 – Prescribed Grazing**

General Description

Targeted grazing is the application of a specific kind of livestock at a determined season, duration, and intensity to accomplish defined vegetation or landscape goals. Typically the focus of targeted grazing is to control invasive species or reduce their numbers on a site to acceptable levels. Research and on-the-ground experiences have clearly demonstrated that sheep and goats are a promising tool in the battle against many broadleaf invasive species. In warm season native grass and forb stands, cattle may be used to control the spread of invasive introduced cool season grasses and legumes.

The producer is responsible for identifying the target species, developing before and after plant surveys, developing a grazing plan, filing a yearend report, and holding annual field days to publicize the findings.

Field Size

This project will be completed on a minimum of 20 acres and a maximum of 50 acres per contract.

Target Species

The producer will identify the invasive species to be controlled. This can be one or many species depending on the site(s). A plant survey that characterizes the concentration of the target species expressed in plants per unit of area before grazing will be conducted. The plant survey methodology will be explained in detail and the concentration of these species and their location will be mapped on aerial photos.

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Grazing Plan

A grazing plan for managing the target species will be developed. The grazing plan will include the number, kind, class and weight of the livestock. An aerial photo showing the location of fences, water, environmentally sensitive features (wetlands, hydric soils, springs, seeps riparian areas, prairie remnants, sinkholes, steep slopes, woodlands, and droughty soils), concentrations of invasives and pasture subdivisions (paddocks) will be identified. If applicable the plan will address management of environmentally sensitive features. The plan will outline a schedule of operations detailing the proposed number of days of grazing in each paddock and the number and weight of animals grazing. A photo point will be established within each paddock and photos will be taken before and after grazing.

Reporting and Documentation

An annual report will be filed with the local NRCS office following this format:

Paddock ID	Date In	Date Out	Kind/Class Livestock	Weight	Number	Comments

The percent of the targeted invasive species removed by livestock should be noted upon moving to another paddock. Photo points will be taken and identified by paddock and submitted with the report. Photo points consist of before and after photos of the target species. Condition of the environmentally sensitive features will be recorded and submitted.

Final Report

Upon completion of the project a final report will be submitted comparing the initial concentration of the target invasive species with the final concentration. The final report will contain before and after photographs of the photo points taken during the same time of the year. The final report will contain recommendations for controlling the target invasive species.

Publicity

A field day will be held for the general public each year during the Pilot Project. Publicity for the meetings will consist of mailings, news media outlets, and it is suggested that the producer contact the Minnesota Resource Conservation and Development Council and/or the Minnesota Grazing Lands Conservation Association for assistance. The field days will discuss in detail the movement of the livestock throughout the grazing system, the kind, class, weight and number of animals involved and the effect the animals are having on the target species. Optionally the producer may discuss the economic affect to their operation of targeted grazing.