# Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative (CCPI)[1]

- CCPI has been established to assist potential partners with focusing conservation assistance in defined project areas to achieve high-priority natural resource conservation objectives. CCPI offers multi-year (MOU style) partnership agreements. This is not a grants program.
- NRCS will make EQIP and WHIP funds available to owners and operators of agricultural and non-industrial private forest lands who will participate in CCPI projects. In North Carolina, approximately $1M of EQIP and $65K of WHIP funds have been designated for use by new contracts originating from CCPI partnerships.

# Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative (CCPI)[2]

- A Federal Register notice of request for proposals and public comments for CCPI was published March 10, 2009.
- Multi-state and single state proposals will be accepted for FY 2009 funds until Friday, April 24, 2009.
- Eligible entities include:
  - State govt.
  - Local govt.
  - Indian tribes with federal recognition
  - Producer associations
  - Farmer cooperatives
  - Institutions of higher education
  - Non-governmental organizations w/ history of cooperative work with producers

# Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG)[1]

- CIGs are to stimulate the development and adoption of innovative conservation approaches and technologies.
- Terms of grants are 1-3 years. There are separate national and state-level opportunities. Organizations and individuals may submit proposals. Projects must be related to overall objectives of EQIP. Awards are based on competitive process.

# Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG)$_2$

- The national level opportunity has closed for this FY. Fourteen national proposals requesting a total of $9.4M were submitted for projects in North Carolina.
- North Carolina's CIG state-level opportunity to submit proposals is open through May 15, 2009. Maximum amt. allowed per grant is $75K.
- If STC participants would like to review the proposals they may register to do so by contacting me.

# Grassland Reserve Program (GRP)

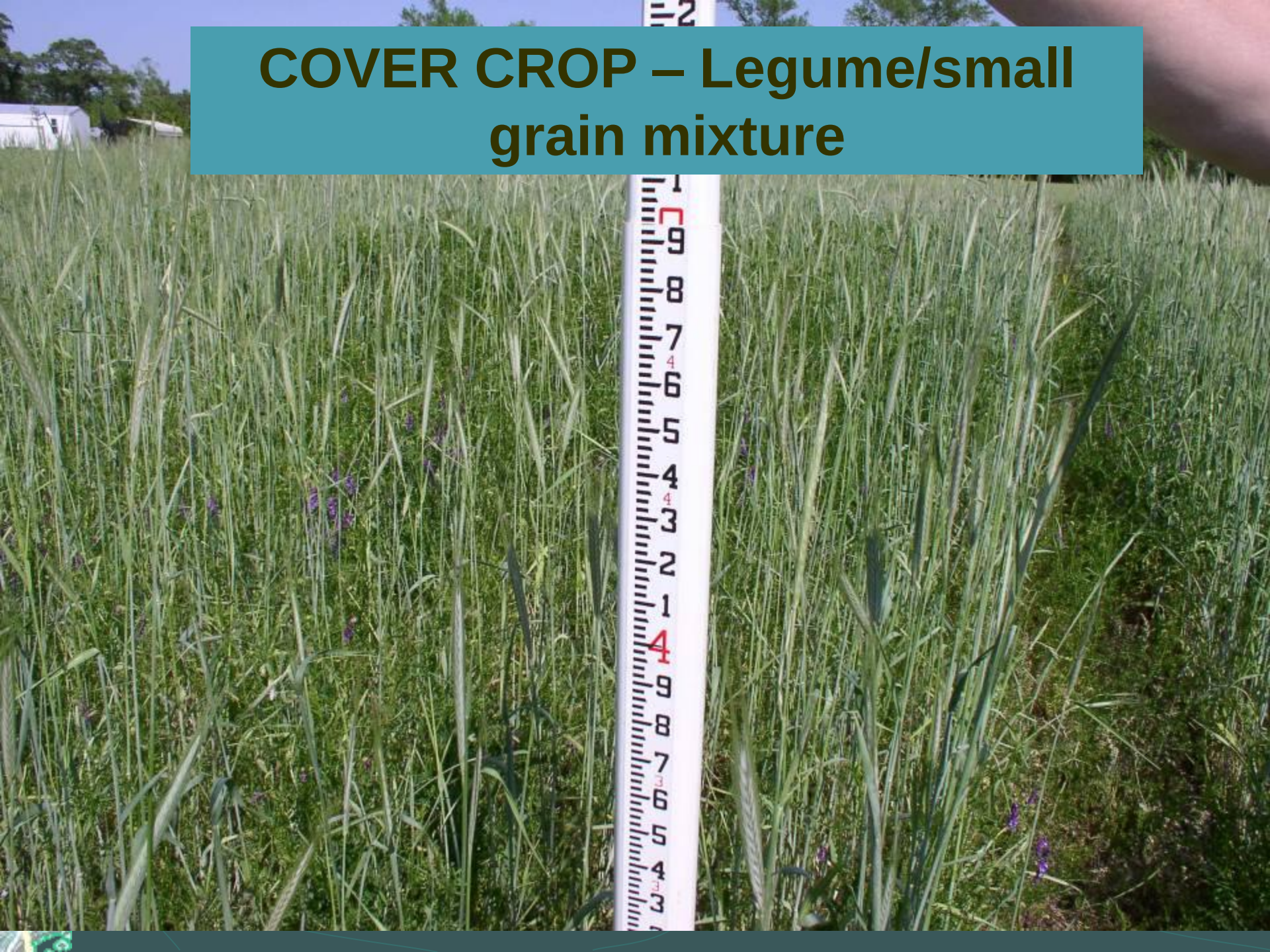
- GRP is established to assist landowners with restoring and conserving grasslands. Approx. $300K allocated to North Carolina's GRP. Press releases will be issued in early May and sign up activities will occur until mid-June. A competitive selection process will be used to select offers for enrollment.
  - NRCS proposes the following priorities for GRP in North Carolina:
  - Permanent easements vs. 30-yr easements or rental agreements
  - Grazing land vs. other grasslands
  - Land or water providing habitat for declining species vs. other land
  - Partnerships that leverage contributions to extend the program's reach

# Farm Bill Forestry Work Group

During the next 6 months, NRCS will establish and convene meetings of a new “Forestry Workgroup” to focus efforts on providing recommendations to the State Conservationist concerning the new Forestry Activity Plans, incentives for tree planting, and other forest management related topics for implementation during federal FY 2010.

Interested STC participants are encouraged to contact Robert Horton, NRCS forester.

# COVER CROP – Legume/small grain mixture



# Cover Crop – grain/legume mixture

Purpose (Resource Concerns Addressed):

Primary: Soil Health – Organic Matter Depletion And Water Quality – Excessive Nutrients

Eligibility:

- Producer who have not adopted small grain and legume cover crops on cropland

# Cover Crop – grain\legume mixture

Requirements:

- Planting & Termination Dates and rates must be followed (broadcast or no-till)
- A minimum of one legume species and one small grain species must be planted
- Cover Crop residue (straw) cannot be removed

# COVER CROP – ROLLER\CRIMPER

# Cover Crop - Crimping

Primary purposes (resource concerns addressed)

Primary: Soil Health – Organic Matter Depletion

Eligibility:

Produces who have not adopted cover crop rolling (crimping)

# Cover Crop - Crimping

Requirements:

- Follow cover crop specifications
- Maintain a positive SCI
- Producer agrees to reduce Herbicide use by 25%


Cover Crop – small grain (to increase organic matter)

# Cover Crop – small grain (to increase organic matter)

Purpose (Resource Concerns Addressed):

Primary: Soil Health – Organic Matter Depletion

Eligibility:

- Producer who have not adopted small grain cover crops (as required on the EQIP practice guide) on cropland

# Cover Crop – small grain (to increase organic matter)

Requirements:

- Planting & Termination Dates and rates must be followed (broadcast verses no-till)
- Long term no-till requirements are followed for the cover crop term (3 years)
- Cover Crop residue (straw) cannot be removed

# Organic Soil Quality Cropping System

- Practice Requirements
  - Implementation of crop mgmt and weed control strategies that will maintain positive SCI for 3-year cropping system (this is possible!)
  - Compliance with USDA National Organic Program standards
  - If perennials are used as part of organic cropping rotation, an annual production crop must be planted once during 3-year cropping system

# Organic Soil Quality Cropping System

- Payments, eligibility, etc.
  - **Cropland is eligible if within standard 3-year transition period, or proposes to begin transition within 12 months**
  - **Land may become certified during practice period**
  - **Idle land not eligible**
  - **Payment made in first year annual organic production crop is established—establishment of perennials for first year or two would = 'commencement' of practice if done within first 12 months (THINK SOD-BASED ROTATIONS w/legumes!)**

# Organic Soil Quality Cropping System

- News and notes
  - *Practice places emphasis on building SOM through minimal tillage and cover crops*
  - Perennials may be established (legumes!) to build soil organic matter (think SCI) and provide PAN
  - Producers remain eligible for other EQIP practices—cover crop establishment, cover crop crimping, sod-based rotations, pollinator habitat
  - Cover crops are an essential part of practice requirements—both SCI and weed suppression

# Organic Soil Quality Cropping System

- Difficulties in implementation?
  - Positive SCI will be tough to meet for many organic systems—this is not a transition practice!
  - Already ‘Certified’ organic land not eligible
  - 3-year rotations will be difficult to predict
  - Crops grown on plastic are likely out for THIS practice

# Organic Soil Quality Cropping System

Responses to difficulties

- SCI requirement will be tough, but is possible, and producers in transition are eligible for other practices
- Certified land is eligible for other practices—cover crop, cover crop mixture, sod-based rotations…
- Encourage several scenarios to make sure projected cropping possibilities meet SCI requirement
- Specialty crop producers are eligible for other practices—row covers, MB alternatives, etc…

# Organic Soil Quality Cropping System

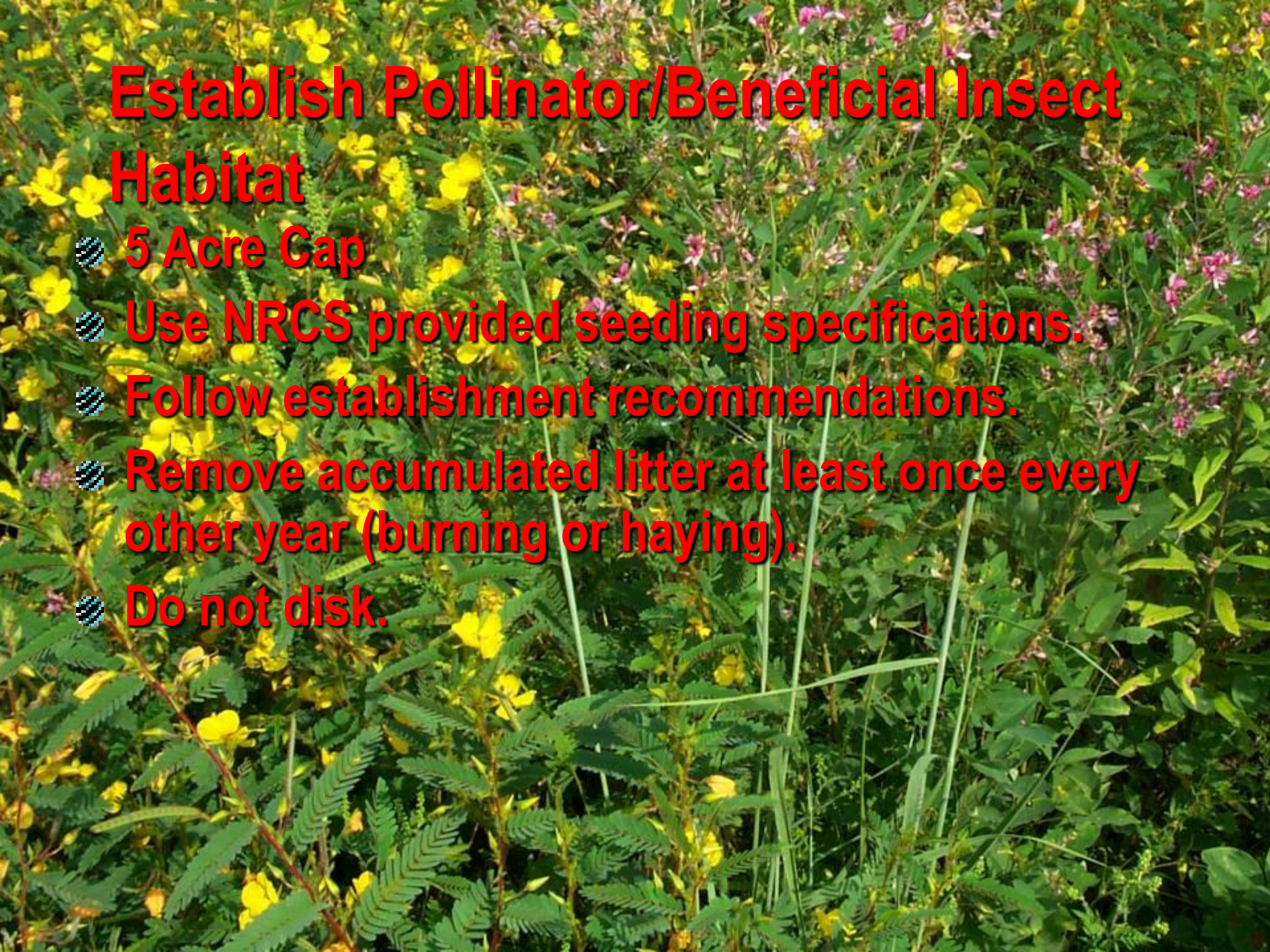
- SCI REQUIREMENT—What would work?
  - Example 1--Dothan Loamy Sand, 2% @ 200’
    - Establishment of cover crop in Fall Year 1
    - Cover Crop Termination through crimping April Year 2
    - No-till corn planting after cover crop termination
    - Corn harvest/crop kill Sept Year 2
    - Disking, Heavy Primary, late Oct Year 2
    - Disking, Light Finishing, late Oct Year 2
    - Establishment of cover crop in Fall Year 2
    - SCI = 0.06

# Organic Soil Quality Cropping System

- SCI REQUIREMENT—What works?
  - Example 2—Cecil Sandy Loam, 4% @ 150’
    - Corn, Soybeans, 3-years Alfalfa or Ladino Clover
    - Fall Disking after corn harvest, before cover crop
    - Fall Disking after soybean harvest, before CC
    - Fall Disking before Perennial Legume establishment
    - All cover crops are ‘crimped’ in Spring
    - SCI = 0.18
- NCSU organic specialists are going to offer technical support, and SO staff (Steve and I) available to help through RUSLE/SCI issues also

# Organic Soil Quality Cropping System

- SCI Requirement—What works in Area 1?
  - Example 3—Hemphill (Flood Plain) Loam, 2% slope @ 150’
  - Year 1—Cabbage
  - Year 2—Tomatoes
  - Disk in fall, Bed, then broadcast cover crop (Crimson Clover or Hairy Vetch)
  - Plant (Strip till?) 2nd year vegetable crop in at least 50% cover residue after termination
  - SCI = 0.025
  - Flat plant (no bedding) also an option



# Establish Pollinator/Beneficial Insect Habitat

- 5 Acre Cap
- Use NRCS provided seeding specifications.
- Follow establishment recommendations.
- Remove accumulated litter at least once every other year (burning or haying).
- Do not disk.


# Prescribed Grazing – Stockpile Fescue

# Prescribed Grazing – Stockpile Fescue

Primary purposes (resource concerns addressed)

- Plant Condition – Productivity, Health, & Vigor
- Domestic Animals – Inadequate Quantities & Quality of forage

Eligibility:

- Land control of adequate acreage

# Prescribed Grazing – Stockpile Fescue

Requirements:

- Grazing livestock excluded from practice area from Sept. 1-Dec. 15
- Specified acres will be one acre\animal unit
- Fall  fertilization required
- Prescribed grazing followed on entire operation
- Livestock rotated to new paddocks every 1-3 days

# Prescribed Grazing – Plus Pasture Conditioning Score (PCS)

Primary purposes (resource concerns addressed)

- Plant Condition – Productivity, Health, & Vigor
- Domestic Animals – Inadequate Quantities & Quality of forage

Eligibility:

- Land control of adequate acreage.

# Prescribed Grazing – Plus Pasture Conditioning Score (PCS)

Requirements:

- Prescribed Grazing followed on entire grazing operation (complete the checklist)
- Annual progress (demonstrated on PCS)
- No more than 20% hay/feed is needed from external or non grazing acres (use C-graze)

# PRESCRIBED GRAZING – ROTATIONAL FEEDING

# Prescribed Grazing – Rotational Feeding

Primary purposes (resource concerns addressed)

- Water Quality - Excessive nutrients
- Plant Condition – Productivity, Health, Vigor

Eligibility:

- At least one denuded concentrated feeding area is creating a resource concern
- There is adequate pastureland area to rotational feed

# Prescribed Grazing – Rotational Feeding

Requirements:

- Existing long term concentrated feeding sites must be revegetated/stabilized
- Feed no more than 4 days on the same site (portable hay rings & rolled out bales)
- Feeding sites may not be reused during a single feeding season


Wow! somebody should have thought of this years ago

# Forage Harvest Management on Native Warm Season Grass

- Predominant species within current stand must be a NWSG.
- Plan practice for three (3) consecutive years. All years will be cost shared.
- MINIMUM stubble height = 6 inches
- August 15th = Final Harvest
- March 15th = Remove Thatch

# Forest Stand Improvement Practices

- Non-commercial thinning (pre-commercial thinning)
- Release seedlings/saplings (planted/natural)
- Cull tree removal
- Midstory/Understory control in pines
- Thinning pines stand for tree productivity and wildlife
- Establish forest openings for wildlife
- Invasive plant control

# Conservation Crop Rotation 328 – 1, 2, or 3 Year Fallow

- Eligible Land = Cropland with annual row or close growing crops only.
- Utilize Appendix I or II from Practice Standard 645 for establishing cover.
- NO soil disturbance for life of practice.
- NO use of herbicide for life of practice.

# Conservation Crop Rotation 328 – 1, 2, or 3 Year Fallow

- Payment Rate
- 1 Year = $25 / Ac
- 2 Year = $65 / Ac
- 3 Year = $100 / Ac

- Life of Practice = 1 to 3 years

# Stream Habitat Improvement and Management
# 395 – Restore In Stream Habitat

- Streams that have been channelized and straightened and are currently "Maintained" are NOT eligible.
- Riparian Zone must be planned OR present (1/2 the width of the measured active channel)
- Stream Visual Assessment Protocol

# Not What We Are Looking For

# “Good Prospect”

# “Not As Good”

# “Not As Good”

# Fish Passage - 396

- Participant must have control of all adjacent land to be eligible.
- Get required folks involved (engineers, biologist, compliance, etc)
- Know the species you are planning for (leaping ability, swimming ability, etc)

# What to look for….

# Be careful when you look…..

# Forage Harvest Management
# 511 – Native Warm Season Grass

- Predominant species within current stand must be a NWSG.
- Plan practice for three (3) consecutive years. All years will be cost shared.
- MINIMUM stubble height = 6 inches
- August 15th = Final Harvest
- March 15th = Remove Thatch

# Idea of What We Want

# Prevent Spread of Invasive Species
# 666 – Forest Stand Improvement

- Species must be on NC Invasive Plant List (List is on the Share Point).
- Practice planned three (3) consecutive years.
- Practice cost shared all three years.
- Payment = Round UP to nearest half acre.
- 10 Acre CAP on practice scenario.

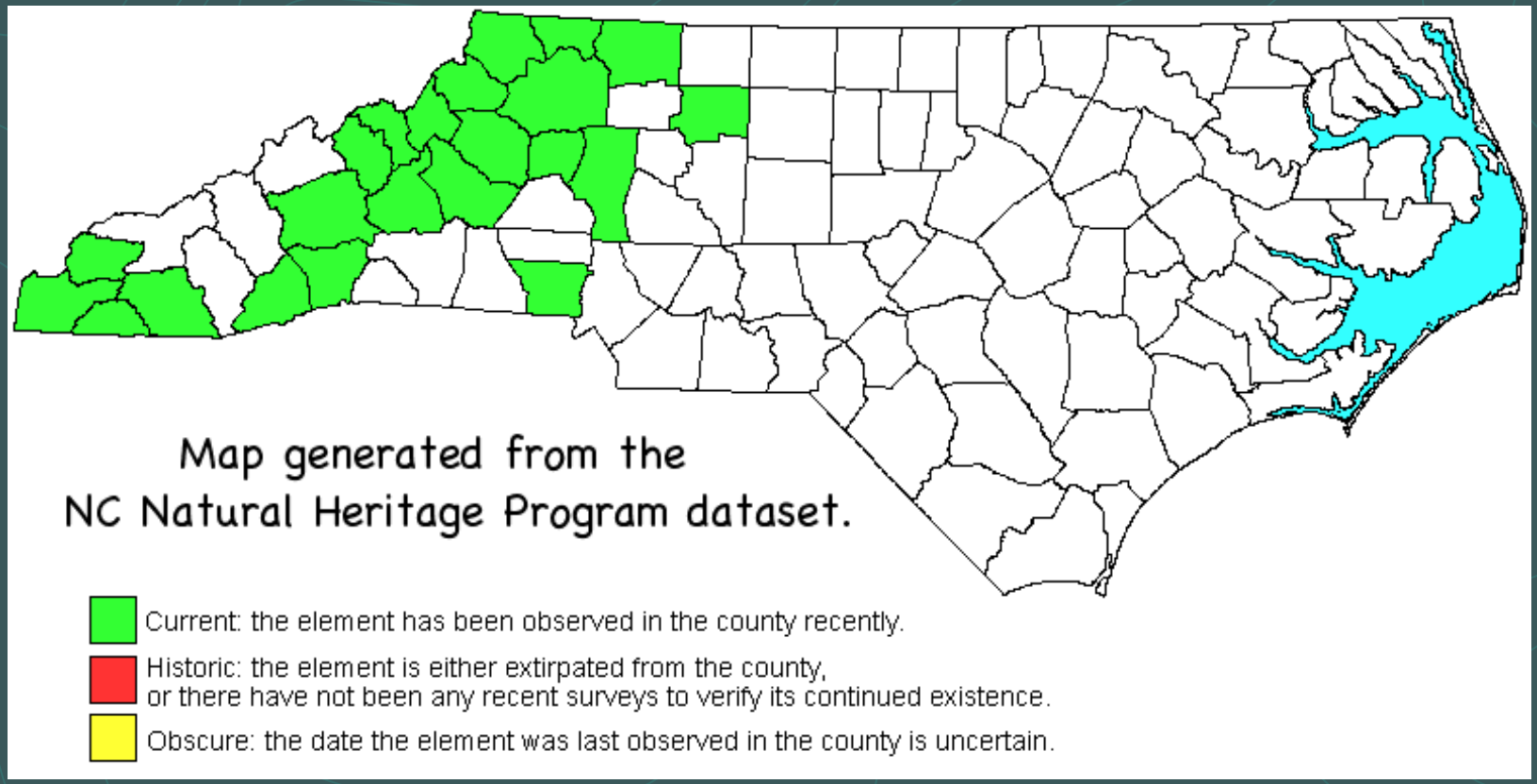
# Prevent Spread of Invasive Species
# 666 – Forest Stand Improvement

- Used on forest land where timber production is a primary objective.
- Contract must include another 666 practice or 338 as a cost shared item.
- Measure treatment area as a whole unit and round up to nearest half acre.

# Forage Harvest Management (511)
# Prescribed Grazing (528)
# Upland Wildlife Habitat Management (645)

- Still a Priority.
- Not going to be available this year.
- SORRY!!!!

# Restoration of Declining Habitat
# 643 – Manage Grazing on Wet Pasture



# Restoration of Declining Habitat
# 643 – Manage Grazing on Wet Pasture

- Exclude livestock from nesting habitat during nesting season (June 1 – Sept. 30)
- Not necessarily a permanent exclusion practice.
- 528 not required but grazing must be controlled.
- Remove livestock once appropriate grazing stop height has been reached.

# Restoration of Declining Habitat
# 643 – Manage Grazing on Wet Pasture

- Limit use of equipment in nesting habitat area between Nov. 1 and March 31.
- Consult with a biologist (NRCS, other Agency, or CWB) prior to the installation of permanent fence within nesting habitat.
- Practice will be planned and cost shared for three (3) consecutive years.

# Upland Wildlife Habitat Management 645 – Forest Land RMS

- Practice will be planned and cost shared for three (3) consecutive years.
- Use the NRCS Wildlife Habitat Suitability Index (WHSI) to document benchmark and planned conditions.
- Planned Condition habitat index must be 0.50 or greater.

# Upland Wildlife Habitat Management 645 – Forest Land RMS

- Two payment levels:
  Improvement 0.30 or greater = $4.50/ac (Ex. – benchmark: 0.2 planned 0.5)
  Improvement 0.50 or greater = $9.00/ac (Ex. – benchmark: 0.2 planned 0.7)
- Payment level is subject to change!
- More than likely, not a stand alone practice in the contract.

# Early Successional Habitat Development & Management 647 – Woods Edge Management

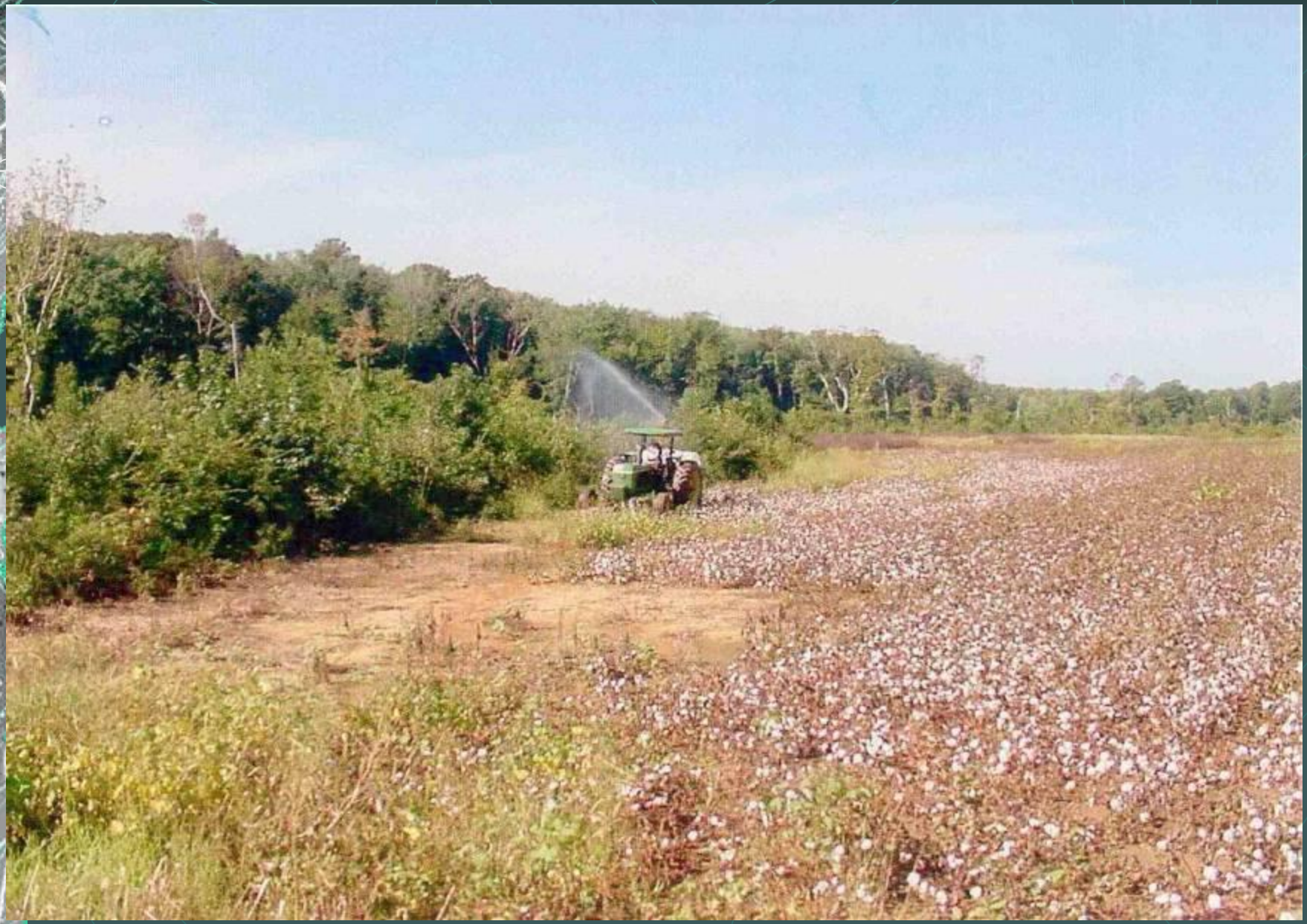
- Benchmark condition must indicate one of the following is a limiting factor: early successional cover, useable space, or barriers to movement (Inventory Of Planning Area Document).
- Create 30 foot wide strip along woods edge (average minimum).
- Utilize herbicide and if needed mechanical treatment.

# 647 – Woods Edge Management
# If Mechanical Treatment Is Needed…

- Separate Contract Item
- Cut or Sheer, Do Not Stump
- Must Include a Herbicide Treatment in Addition to Mechanical
- Dispose of Debris (burning, hauling, grinding, or other appropriate method approved by planner)

# 647 – Woods Edge Management Continued

- Once installed, area must remain fallow for contract duration.
- If significant soil disturbance occurs, consider vegetation (use Practice Standard 645 Appendix II)
- Prepare a Pest Management Plan that meets NC NRCS 595 standards.
- Payment based on acres.



# Early Successional Habitat Development & Management
# 647 – Est. Pollinator Habitat

- 5 Acre Cap
- Use seeding specifications provided.
- If hindrances arise, NRCS biologist can offer a substitute.
- Follow establishment recommendations.
- Remove accumulated litter at least once every other year (burning or haying).
- Do not disk.