

**NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE  
CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD**

**LAND CLEARING, (AC.)**

**CODE 460**

**DEFINITION**

Removing trees, stumps, and other vegetation to achieve a conservation objective.

closer than 100 ft. from adjacent woodland, buildings, or roads.

**PURPOSE**

- Allow needed land use adjustments and improvements in the interest of conservation.

**CONSIDERATIONS**

Consider land clearing when the soil is frozen with minimal snow cover or during a dry summer period to minimize disturbance and movement of topsoil.

**CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES**

This practice applies to wooded areas where the removal of trees, stumps, brush, and other vegetation is needed in carrying out a conservation plan.

Ground disturbing activities associated with this practice have the potential to affect significant cultural resources. Consider using methods that cause the least disturbance to the ground surface.

Land clearing is usually more efficient if the tree is less than 4 inches in diameter. For larger trees, the root wad or crown should be removed during drier soil conditions. Rough pushing under wet conditions can create deep rutting and can bury debris complicating final cleanup.

**CRITERIA**

Clearing and disposal methods shall be according to applicable federal, state, and local laws and with due regard to the safety of persons and property.

If a salvage harvest is made before clearing, leaving taller stumps will facilitate final clearing and grubbing activities.

Clearing shall be done when the soil moisture content is such that soil structural damage or compaction is minimized.

Special attention should be given to maintaining habitat for fish and wildlife. Strip clearing, windrowing debris, and maintaining den and food trees can minimize impacts on wildlife.

A 50-ft. wide undisturbed area will be left between the area being cleared and all wetlands, water bodies and perennial streams.

Temporary cover will be established as necessary to control sheet and rill and/or wind erosion on the cleared area until the planned land use is in place.

The orientation and layout of berm piles should be considered. Consider chaining or pushing trees down parallel to each other, and to follow topographical contours. The pile should be high, narrow, and compact and free of topsoil and snow. Piles with excess debris do not cure properly. Berms are normally 15 to 25 ft. wide by 10 to 15 ft. high, and are spaced 150 to 200 ft. apart. A break of 30 ft. between berms is recommended for every 200 ft. of berm length to act as a firebreak, allow natural drainage or runoff, and facilitate equipment.

The cleared area shall be left in a condition that will facilitate the planned use and treatment of the land.

Limit pushing the clearing debris into standing or green timber due to increased maintenance issues for re-clearing and the potential of creating a fire hazard. A pile should not be

Land clearing can increase the volume and rate of runoff. This is more pronounced on steeper land.

Consider the steepness of slope when selecting the size and type of equipment needed to clear land.

Consider activities to minimize the spread or introduction of weeds into a newly cleared field.

Consider the disposal of vegetation with regards to carbon sequestration. Burying, composting, or mulching the debris would limit the release of carbon.

### **PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS**

The plan shall specify the kinds of timber to be salvaged, lengths of logs, and place of stacking. Method of disposal shall be specified for all material not salvaged.

The plan shall provide for the measures necessary to protect the cleared area from erosion.

Plans and specifications for land clearing shall be in keeping with this standard and shall

describe the requirements for applying the practice to achieve its intended purpose.

### **OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE**

The following actions shall be carried out to insure that this practice functions as intended throughout its expected life.

A maintenance program shall be established to maintain vegetative cover while controlling undesired and exotic vegetation.

Watercourses and water quality shall be protected during and after removal of trees and vegetation.

Avoid crossing with heavy equipment when wet.

The use of mechanical treatments, prescribed burning, pesticides or other chemicals shall not compromise the intended purpose.

Select equipment sizes and capacities that will handle the clearing tasks in a timely and economically feasible manner.

Remove excess non-vegetative debris present or as it surfaces during clearing.

**CONSTRUCTION SPECIFICATION**  
NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE  
**LAND CLEARING**

**1. Scope**

This item shall consist of the clearing and disposal of cleared material from the designated areas.

**2. Clearing operations**

Clearing operations shall be done in such a manner that erosion, air, water, and noise pollution will be minimized and held within legal limits as established by state or local regulations.

All clearing shall be performed in a manner to achieve the intended purpose of the practice.

All timber to be salvaged shall be identified or marked in an acceptable manner. The method of stacking shall be adaptable to hauling equipment to be used. Salvaged trees shall be cut at the designated height.

All trees, stumps, and brush within the designated area shall be removed or cut at or below ground level insofar as possible. When the cleared area is to be used for pasture, groups of trees may be left as needed for shade.

All trees, stumps, and brush shall be disposed of by burning unless otherwise specified or approved. All burning shall conform to Alabama and local laws and regulations.

The cleared area shall be left in a condition suitable for operation of heavy land preparation equipment.

Erosion control practices shall be installed in the manner and at the time or sequence specified to maximize effectiveness of the measures.