

**2017-2018
WINTER COVER CROP PROGRAM
NEW CASTLE COUNTY
DELAWARE**

PURPOSE: Winter cover crops improve water quality by absorbing unused crop nutrients, improving soil health and reducing soil erosion. The New Castle Conservation District is offering cost-sharing to encourage the use of cover crops.

ELIGIBILITY:

Producers and landowners actively engaged in farming. A minimum of 5 acres is required per farm. A maximum of 250 acres per business entity is allowed. To be eligible for a payment, the New Castle Conservation District must approve the practice before planting begins. Eligible land must be following an annual crop (row crops or vegetables). Perennial crops, hay or pasture are not eligible.

SIGNUP:

Signup will begin on July 31st at the New Castle Conservation District Office (2430 Old County Road, Newark, DE 19702) and continue until all funds are obligated. Office hours are 8:00 to 4:30 Monday through Friday. Deadline for signup is close of business on Friday, October 13, 2017. Forms are available on line at www.newcastleconservationdistrict.org

REQUIREMENTS:

Cost-share Rates and Planting Dates*

| CROP | PLANTING DATE | SEEDING RATE (includes broadcast with disk or cultipack) | SEEDING RATE (aerial or broadcast with no incorporation) ** |
|----------------------------------|----------------------|---|--|
| Annual Ryegrass | 9/1 – 10/31 | 20 lbs/ac | 26 lbs/ac |
| Cereal Rye | 9/1 – 10/31 | 120 lbs/ac | 156 lbs/ac |
| Wheat *** | 9/1 – 10/31 | 120 lbs/ac | 156 lbs/ac |
| Triticale | 9/1 – 10/31 | 105 lbs/ac | 137 lbs/ac |
| Spring Oats | 9/1 – 10/15 | 95 lbs/ac | 124 lbs/ac |
| Barley | 9/1 – 10/31 | 120 lbs/ac | 156 lbs/ac |
| Forage Radish **** | 9/1 – 9/15 | 10 lbs/ac | 13 lbs/ac |
| Forage Radish & Spring Oats **** | 9/1 – 9/15 | 2 lbs/ac forage radish 52 lbs spring oats | 3 lbs/ac forage radish 57 lbs spring oats |
| Crimson Clover & Cereal Rye | 9/1 – 10/15 | 10 lbs/ac clover 40 lbs/ac rye | 17 lbs/ac clover 50 lbs/ac rye |
| Hairy Vetch & Cereal Rye | 9/1 – 10/15 | 18 lbs/ac vetch 40 lbs/ac rye | 27 lbs/ac vetch 50 lbs/ac rye |

* Other seedings may be approved before planting by NRCS or NCCD planner or Extension Agent

** For soybean acres, aerial seeding must occur before leaf drop. For corn acres, aerial seed prior to Oct 15th.

*** For wheat, the Hessian Fly (fly-free) date for New Castle County is October 3rd.

**** No radishes into double cropped soybeans.

- ❖ Receipts for cover crop seed must be provided before payment. Homegrown seed will need to be tested prior to planting for >80% germination, purity, and free of noxious weeds by a Delaware or Maryland seed laboratory. Cost-share for seed testing is provided at 50% (up to \$15).
- ❖ Participants will self-certify in writing which tracts and fields have been planted and the date planted prior to receiving the initial \$30 per acre cost-share payment. An additional \$20 will be made after the participant certifies that the cover crop has been destroyed. Harvested cover crops only receive the initial \$30 payment. EQIP payments will be made prior to the District's payments. CSP payments newer than 2014 and EQIP payments are not co-cost-shared.
- ❖ Fields will be spot checked before the initial payment and final payment.
- ❖ Establishment of cover crops must be done according to NRCS standard and specification for this practice. Seed will be drilled, no-tilled, lightly incorporated (disked or vertical tillage) or aerially seeded before leaf drop.
- ❖ Application of commercial fertilizers or animal manures are not allowed on a field that is intended to receive or is receiving cover crop incentive payments. In the case of a hardship, manure may be allowed to be applied to enrolled land in the fall only after receiving approval from the New Castle Conservation District Board of Supervisors or their designee. If the cover crop has not already been planted, it must be planted within 7 days of manure application. Examples of hardships might include heavy rains that fill to capacity or overflow a liquid manure storage structure or diseased poultry litter that must be removed from the house immediately. The poultry integrator must provide certification of diseased litter. The Board of Supervisors has the right to approve or disapprove such requests. Commercial fertilizer or animal manure applications may be done according to a nutrient management plan after March 1st.
- ❖ Grazing of cover crops is permitted within the following guidelines:
 - (a) Farmer must notify the District, in writing, 2 weeks prior to grazing livestock. Fields and the number of animals per acre intended for grazing must be identified. The District reserves the right to deny a grazing request based on poor crop establishment, too many animals per acre, or other factors that may apply.
 - (b) Prior to grazing, the cover crop must be well established. Under optimal conditions, grazing can commence 6 to 8 weeks after planting (+/- 80% cover) and after the two week written notification has been submitted.
 - (c) The District reserves the right to deny a grazing request based on poor crop establishment, too many animals per acre, or other conditions that may apply.
 - (d) Green chopping is permitted (for on farm use only).
- ❖ Cover crops must be destroyed on or after March 15th but before June 1st. Cover crops may be destroyed by herbicide or plowing, with the exception of highly erodible cropland (HEL). All designated HEL cropland must retain 30% surface crop residues following spring planting.
- ❖ Exceptions to planting dates maybe made for specialty crops such as pumpkins. Exceptions for destruction dates may be made for specialty crops such as peas.

CERTIFICATION:

Final payment on unharvested cover crops will be made when farmer certifies that the cover crop has been destroyed according to the program guidelines. Farmers will self-certify on a "Cover Crop Program Certification" form that the program provisions have been met prior to receiving the cost-share payment. This form will be mailed to the applicant around March 1st and must be reported by June 15th.