

Big Pine Creek Watershed Project

Best Management Practices Fact Sheet

Cover Crop

Cover crops are plant species that grow after the cash crop is harvested in the fall. Some cover crop species will winterkill while other species will need to be terminated with herbicides in the spring. This termination may be done either prior to or after the next season's cash crop is planted.

Purposes of cover crops include, but are not limited to:

- Reducing erosion from wind and water.
- Increasing soil organic matter content.
- Suppressing weed growth.
- Improving soil structure and loosening soil compaction.
- Capturing and cycling nutrients in the soil.
- Providing food source for beneficial soil microbes.

Planting methods for establishing cover crops:

- Planting with a row crop planter in 15" rows.
- Using a small grain drill.
- Broadcasting the seed into standing crop using a high clearance seeder.
- Aerial application into standing crop using airplane or helicopter.
- Broadcasting the seed and subsequently incorporating the seed with a shallow tillage pass.
- Other methods not listed here may be acceptable. Please contact your local SWCD office to discuss alternative seeding methods.

Seeding rate guidelines: The seeding rate recommendations from the Midwest Cover Crops Council - Cover Crop Decision Tool are designed to meet the standards set by the NRCS. If you need assistance with using this tool or if you have other questions about seeding rates please contact your county's SWCD office.

The most common cover crop species are listed on page 2. For a more detailed list of cover crops that will work in our geographical area, refer to the Midwest Cover Crops Council - Cover Crop Decision Tool <http://mcccdev.anr.msu.edu/VertIndex.php> This will allow you to choose acceptable cover crop species and view recommendations for planting dates, planting rates and seeding depths.



Photo courtesy of Tippecanoe County SWCD.

Contact Info for the Soil & Water Conservation Districts in the Big Pine Creek Watershed

Benton County: Jon Charlesworth 765-884-1090 x3 jon.charlesworth@in.usda.gov

Warren County: Deb Lane 765-762-2443 x3 debra.lane@in.nacdnet.net

White County: Sharon Watson 574-583-5962 x3 sharon.watson@in.nacdnet.net

NRCS standards for cover crop seeding date.

Plant Species	March	April	May	June	July	August	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.-Feb.
Annual Ryegrass	Increased freeze risk	Suitable seeding dates	Suitable seeding dates				Suitable seeding dates	Increased freeze risk		
Cereal Rye						Suitable seeding dates	Suitable seeding dates	Suitable seeding dates	Increased freeze risk	
Winter Wheat							1	Increased freeze risk	Increased freeze risk	
Spring Oats	Increased freeze risk	Suitable seeding dates			Suitable seeding dates	Suitable seeding dates	Increased freeze risk			
Winter Triticale						Suitable seeding dates	Suitable seeding dates	Increased freeze risk		
Hairy Vetch					Suitable seeding dates	Suitable seeding dates	Increased freeze risk			
Winter Peas						Suitable seeding dates	Suitable seeding dates	Increased freeze risk		
Cow Peas					Suitable seeding dates	Suitable seeding dates	Increased freeze risk			
Non-dormant Alfalfa					Suitable seeding dates	Suitable seeding dates	Increased freeze risk			
Berseem Clover				Suitable seeding dates	Suitable seeding dates	Suitable seeding dates	Increased freeze risk			
Crimson Clover				Suitable seeding dates	Suitable seeding dates	Suitable seeding dates	2			
Red Clover	Increased freeze risk	Suitable seeding dates	Suitable seeding dates							3
Brassicas ⁴						Suitable seeding dates	Suitable seeding dates	Increased freeze risk		
Sorghum Sudangrass			Suitable seeding dates	Suitable seeding dates	Suitable seeding dates					
Millet			Suitable seeding dates	Suitable seeding dates	Suitable seeding dates	Increased freeze risk				
Buckwheat				Suitable seeding dates	Suitable seeding dates	Suitable seeding dates				

Legend

	Suitable seeding dates
	Increased freeze risk

1. Not to be planted prior to Fly-Free Date (Ranges from Sept. 27th to Sept. 29th in the Big Pine Creek watershed)

2. Depends on variety

3. Dormant/Frost seeding from December thru February. Increase seeding rates by 25%.

4. The Brassica family includes Oil Seed Radish, Rape, Canola and Turnips.

Available financial assistance:

The Big Pine Creek Watershed group will be offering cost-share incentives to help producers adopt best management practices (BMPs) aimed at reducing the amount of nutrients, sediment and bacteria entering our surface waters. **Cover crops** are one of the BMPs we want to encourage. Applications for cost share consideration can be submitted at any time by contacting your local SWCD office (Benton, White or Warren County).

- Applications will be ranked based on merit. Pairing cover crops with other conservation practices such as conservation tillage and/or filter strips will increase the ranking score of the application.
- Closing dates for ranking periods are still to be determined. Please check the watershed group's webpage which can be accessed via the Benton County SWCD website bentoncountyswcd.org
- Successful applicants will sign a contract spelling out the terms of the cost-share agreement.
- After the seed is applied, the applicant will turn in receipts for seed and application charges as well the seed analysis listing germination and purity of the seed lot or seed mix to Jon Charlesworth at the Benton County SWCD. It is acceptable to use bin run seed as long as it has been cleaned and you have a current germination and purity report for that seed from an accredited testing lab. To be considered current, the germination testing date must be within 6 months of the date of cover crop seeding.
- Assuming the seeding rate meets NRCS standards for cover crop (practice 340), and the field passes visual inspection, the applicant will be mailed a reimbursement check.