



Photo Provided by SDGFP

DEFINITION

Dense Nesting Cover (DNC) is a mix of grass and forb species, in the “right” proportions, that provides adequate vertical cover for nesting wildlife. Many upland nesting birds such as waterfowl begin nesting before the growing season begins. Available nesting cover at this time is tall, upright, and brown. The key factor is to have tall and upright cover after the snow melts and before the growing season begins that can hide a nesting bird. DNC can be 1) a mix of cool-season grasses with forbs or 2) a mix of warm- and cool-season grasses with forbs.

DNC mix requirements are:

- At least 2 cool-season grass species.
- At least 33% cool-season grasses.
- At least 60% cool-season grasses and forbs.
- At least two different forb species.
- At least 10% forbs

USES OF DENSE NESTING COVER

- DNC provides wildlife cover and attracts insects for wildlife food.
- DNC can be seeded in cropland (e.g., Conservation Reserve Program) and may be particularly attractive to wildlife in close proximity to other cropland, wetlands, and high quality grassland cover.

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

- Plant species should be native to South Dakota whenever possible and meet soil suitability requirements.

- Select grasses that will compete with the highly aggressive smooth brome and Kentucky bluegrass in the spring of the growing season.
- The minimum DNC size is 20 acres in a single block. However, a 40 acre single block or larger size is highly recommended.
- Diverse DNC mixes are generally more palatable than less diverse tame grass DNC mixes and can be integrated into an agriculture operation after contract expiration.

DENSE NESTING COVER PLANT SPECIES

- Some species may not be suitable for your location. Consult your local NRCS staff for further assistance.
- Most forbs/legumes benefit wildlife. Preference should be given to native forb/legume species that exhibit some level of herbicide tolerance (based on the herbicide label).
- See example DNC mixes on the next page.
- The following is a list of DNC grasses:

Green Needlegrass	Prairie sandreed
Needle and thread	Sand bluestem
Porcupine grass	Sand dropseed
Western wheatgrass	Sideoats grama
Slender wheatgrass	Tall wheatgrass
Big bluestem	Intermediate/Pubescent wheatgrass
Indiangrass	
Little bluestem	AC Saltlander wheatgrass

- The following is a list of DNC forbs/legumes:

Purple prairie clover	Maximilian sunflower
White prairie clover	Grayhead coneflower
Illinois bundleflower	False sunflower
Canada milkvetch	Showy partridge pea
Black-eyed Susan	Sweet Clover
Milkweeds	Alfalfa (grazing type)

SITE PREPARATION AND PLANTING

- Initial seedbed preparation is critical for success.
- Consult your local NRCS office for seedbed preparation and seeding methods.
- Consult your local Cooperative Extension Service office for chemical application information.
- When using chemicals, follow all label directions. Check site for chemical carryover and do not use chemicals with carryover.

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

- DNC blocks should not be grazed by livestock during the primary nesting season (May 1-August 1).
- DNC blocks should be managed to maintain the cover every 3-5 years east of the James River and every 5-7 years for the rest of the state.
- Control noxious weeds as identified by state & local laws, by (1) treating with chemicals per label directions or (2) spot mow before seed heads form. If possible, delay the use of control measures until after August 1 to protect wildlife.
- Protect the acres from unplanned grazing, construct and maintain livestock exclusion fences as needed.

DNC ECONOMIC EXAMPLES:

Example 1-

CRP 10 Year Contract Example

CP 37 Duck Nesting Habitat (100 acre offer)
90 upland acres and 10 wetland acres

	Install Cost	Cost Share
Seeding Operation Cost per Acre	\$ 20.00	\$ 10.00
Seed Mix Cost per Acre	\$ 92.00	\$ 33.00
Seedbed Preparation Cost per Acre	\$ 40.00	\$ 20.00
Weed Control after Planting	\$ 30.00	\$ 15.00
Cost per Acre	\$ 182.00	\$ 78.00

Offer Cost \$ 16,380.00

CRP Practice Cost Share	\$ 7,020.00
Practice Incentive Payment (40% of install costs)	\$ 6,552.00
Signing Incentive Payment (\$10/ac/year - max \$100)	\$ 10,000.00
Soil Rental Rate Payment and Rental Payment Incentive	\$ 180,000.00

Offer Incentives/Payments \$ 203,572.00

Net Cost to Producer \$ (187,192.00)
The producer pockets \$187,192

Example 2 -

CRP 10 Year Contract Example

CP 37 Duck Nesting Habitat (100 acre offer)
90 upland acres and 10 wetland acres

	Install Cost	Cost Share
Seeding Operation Cost per Acre	\$ 20.00	\$ 10.00
Seed Mix Cost per Acre	\$ 275.00	\$ 137.00
Seedbed Preparation Cost per Acre	\$ 40.00	\$ 20.00
Weed Control after Planting	\$ 30.00	\$ 15.00
Cost per Acre	\$ 365.00	\$ 182.00

Offer Cost \$ 32,850.00

CRP Practice Cost Share	\$ 16,380.00
Practice Incentive Payment (40% of install costs)	\$ 13,140.00
Signing Incentive Payment (\$10/ac/year - max \$100)	\$ 10,000.00
Soil Rental Rate Payment and Rental Payment Incentive	\$ 180,000.00

Offer Incentives/Payments \$ 219,520.00

Net Cost to Producer \$ (186,670.00)
The producer pockets \$186,670

DNC MIX EXAMPLES:

Example 1-

Seed Species	Variety or Seed Source 1/ may be Common or improved variety listed	Pure Live Seed (PLS) Pounds (lbs)/ac Full Rate	Percent in Mixture	Pure Live Seed (PLS) lbs/ac Needed	Acres to Seed	Pure Live Seed (PLS) lbs Required
Intermediate Wheatgrass	Revenue	5.50	25	1.38	20	27.5
Tall Wheatgrass	Reliant	10.00	10	1.00	20	20.0
Green wheatgrass	AC Sallander	12.50	25	3.13	20	62.5
Alfalfa	grazing variety	6.50	25	1.63	20	32.5
Maximilian Sunflower	Medicine Creek	4.50	15	0.68	20	13.5
			100			

Example 2 -

Seed Species	Variety or Seed Source 1/ may be Common or improved variety listed	Pure Live Seed (PLS) Pounds (lbs)/ac Full Rate	Percent in Mixture	Pure Live Seed (PLS) lbs/ac Needed	Acres to Seed	Pure Live Seed (PLS) lbs Required
Slender wheatgrass	Revenue	5.50	25	1.38	20	27.5
Western Wheatgrass	Rosana	10.00	20	2.00	20	40.0
Tall Wheatgrass	Reliant	10.00	3	0.30	20	6.0
Big bluestem	Bison	7.50	10	0.75	20	15.0
Sideoats grama	Pierre	7.50	20	1.50	20	30.0
Canada milkvetch	Sunrise	4.00	10	0.40	20	8.0
Purple prairie clover	Bismarck	3.80	10	0.38	20	7.6
Black-eyed Susan	Common	0.80	10	0.08	20	1.6
Maximilian sunflower	Medicine Creek	4.50	10	0.45	20	9.0
Showy partidgepea	Common	20.00	10	2.00	20	40.0
Common Milkweed	Common	17.00	2	0.34	20	6.8
			130			