



Marginal Land Recovery Program Policy

Community Specific Objectives

- 1) To provide an Educational and Conservation opportunity for Vulcan County rate payers to access a program to promote better Agricultural & Environmental sustainability.
 - a. ASB recognizes the importance of salinity education due to the nature and complexity of reducing unfavorable soil conditions. By providing information either directly to individual growers or through other resources, Vulcan County can help lead the ratepayers in navigating the complex issue of salinity.
- 2) Agricultural Service Board Targets: Targeting salinity/alkalinity prone land where there is little to no benefit growing an annual rotational crop to providing the following benefits:
 - a. Improve:
 - i. Water Quality of surrounding water bodies – Surface & Ground
 - ii. Soil Fertility & Soil Quality
 - iii. Per/Acre Profitability
 - iv. Ground water utilization to reduce soil surface salt load
 - b. Reduce:
 - i. Nutrient Runoff
 - ii. Erosion through wind and water movement
 - iii. Input costs on marginal land
 1. Fertilizers, Herbicides, Insecticides and other Input Costs
 - iv. Weed Population/Pressure for neighboring lands

1. Program Eligibility

- 1) Land Eligibility:
 - a. Marginal or environmentally sensitive agricultural land where little to no beneficial vegetation is present. This could be a result of the following:
 - i. Presence of excess salt accumulation from ground water
 - ii. Overpopulation of weeds due to little competition from poor stand establishment
 - iii. Lands with high soil losses due to erosion.

2) Participant Eligibility:

- a. Lands eligible for program will also require participant to either:
 - i. Own parcel of land the project is located and/or
 - ii. Have written letter of approval from title owner on file at county.

2. Program Funds Allocation

- a. Vulcan County will provide \$10,000 per annum to go towards marginal land recovery projects within its borders.
 - i. Each project is eligible to receive up to \$1,000 to help with recovery project implementation. Eligible expenses are as follows:
 1. Soil Testing
 2. Seed
 3. Seeding Equipment

3. Roles & Responsibilities**1) Agricultural Service Board**

- a. Oversees project implementation by county.
- b. Policy review
- c. Project approvals
- d. Provide direction to county program & staff.

2) Participant

- a. Participant will be responsible for field preparation and any other establishment or maintenance items needed. This may include:
 - i) Weed Control
 - ii) Cultivation
 - iii) Spraying
 - iv) Mowing
 - v) Land Rolling
 - vi) Seeding

3) Agriculture Fieldman & Rural Conservation Technician

- a. Project Inspection
- b. Participant Consultation
- c. GPS Mapping

- d. Plant/Weed Identification
- e. Soil Testing & Analysis

4) GIS Technician

- a. Provide GIS-mapping services to agricultural field staff for project implementation requirements.

4. Applying to Enter Program

- 1) Participant wanting to inquire about program eligibility should contact the Agricultural Fieldman or Rural Conservation Technician to discuss potential future projects.
- 2) After ratepayers make an inquiry, County staff will continue with project consultation.

5. Project Query – Administrative

- 1) A Query will benefit the following county operations:
 - a. Funding available for Fiscal Year will determine number of projects eligible to be implemented.
 - b. Ensured program longevity by providing a valuable service for ratepayers.
- 2) ASB can determine by level of monetary commitment from Vulcan County as to how to best allocate funds towards projects.
 - a. This will allow county employees to plan and allocate their time effectively.
- 3) Heavy weed infestations may result in having to commence herbicide applications to reduce crop competition. This could result in 1-2 years of weed control before the project can be implemented
 - a. Where projects that cannot be completed until requirements are met, placing them in a Query will provide outlook on potential projects.

6. GIS Mapping

- 1) Each project is to be GPS located to determine boundaries and establish size of the project in acres. This will also aid in record keeping.
- 2) Throughout the consultation process, the maps will be reviewed and approved by the participant and Agriculture Service Board.

7. Project Approval

- 1) Agricultural Fieldman & Rural Conservation Technician will provide direction and feedback to ASB on where they are at in the project discovery stage.
- 2) Appropriate timeframes:
 - a. May – August
 - i. Project Preparation
 - ii. Project Implementation
 - b. September – October:
 - i. Participant consultation
 - ii. Future fiscal year project preparation
 - c. November – April:
 - i. ASB to review project approvals for query

8. Educational

- a. Focus on bringing awareness to the potential benefits of planting alternative forage and legume plants on marginally producing lands. By helping identify factors that reduce a producer's per acre profit can shift focus to reduce costs, increase profitability, and improve their soil productivity for future years.
- b. The conservation technician role will the help of producer develop a plan to address their specific issue. By working with individual producers in discussing the how and when, it will give them the tools to be able to apply this type of system on other parts of their farm.
- c. Much of the approach will be producer focused so the knowledge of the process of assessing and improving marginal lands can be implemented in other regions of their farm.
- d. Hosting information sessions will help boost interest in the program to bring awareness as well as information regarding how to apply for the program