

# Best Management Farming Practices for Water Quality Protection

## Straw Mulching (Fact Sheet-55)

**BMP:** Bare soil is covered with vegetation, reduction of erosion from non-cropped areas, protect newly planted areas.

### Straw Mulching – NRCS Fact Sheet (55)

Straw mulching can be used on bare or seeded slopes to reduce potential for erosion. To prevent being blown or washed away, straw requires anchoring by matting, crimping or other methods. The mulch should cover the entire seeded or bare area. The mulch should extend into existing vegetation or be stabilized on all sides to prevent wind or water damage which may start at the edges.



### Straw Mulching (Fact Sheet-55)

**Definition:** The application of straw as a protective cover over seeded areas to reduce erosion and aid in revegetation or over bare soils that will be landscaped later to reduce erosion.

#### Purposes:

- To budget, supply, and conserve nutrients for plant production.
- To minimize agricultural nonpoint source pollution of surface and groundwater resources.
- To properly utilize manure or organic by-products as a plant nutrient source.
- To protect air quality by reducing odors, nitrogen emissions (ammonia, oxides of nitrogen), and the formation of atmospheric particulates.
- To maintain or improve the physical, chemical, and biological condition of soil.

#### *Consider this:*

Use no-till/strip-till with cover crops to sequester nutrients, increase soil organic matter, increase aggregate stability, reduce compaction, improve infiltration, and enhance soil biological activity to improve nutrient use efficiency.

Develop site-specific yield maps to diagnose low- and high- yield areas, or zones, and make the necessary management changes.

Use soil tests, plant tissue analyses, and field observations to check for secondary plant nutrient deficiencies or toxicity that may impact plant growth or nutrient availability.

Use conservation practices that slow runoff, reduce erosion, and increase infiltration, e.g., filter strip, contour farming, or contour buffer strips.

Use application methods and timing strategies that reduce the risk of nutrient transport by ground and surface waters.

Use high-efficiency irrigation technologies (e.g., reduced-pressure drop nozzles for center pivots) to reduce the potential for nutrient losses.

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