

# CRITICAL AREA PLANTING

## PRACTICE INTRODUCTION

USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service—Practice Code 342



### CRITICAL AREA PLANTING

Critical area planting is planting vegetation on critically eroding areas that require extraordinary treatment.

### PRACTICE INFORMATION

This practice is used on highly erodible areas that cannot be stabilized by ordinary planting techniques and, if left untreated, may cause severe erosion or sediment damage. Examples of critical areas include the following:

- Dams, dikes, levees, and other construction sites with very steep slopes
- Mine spoil and surface-mined land with poor quality soil and possibly chemical problems
- Agriculture land with severe gullies requiring specialized planting techniques and management

Erosion control is the primary consideration for plant material selection. However, a broad choice of grass, trees, shrubs, and vines are usually available and adapted for most sites. Wildlife and beautification are additional considerations that influence planning decisions on a site needing this practice.

The following decisions must be made when planning this practice:

- Function or use of the site following establishment
- Species of plants to establish
- Methods and rates of planting
- Fertilizer, lime, and soil amendments necessary for establishment and growth of the plants
- Mulching requirements
- Planting site preparation
- Irrigation requirement
- Site management following establishment of the vegetation

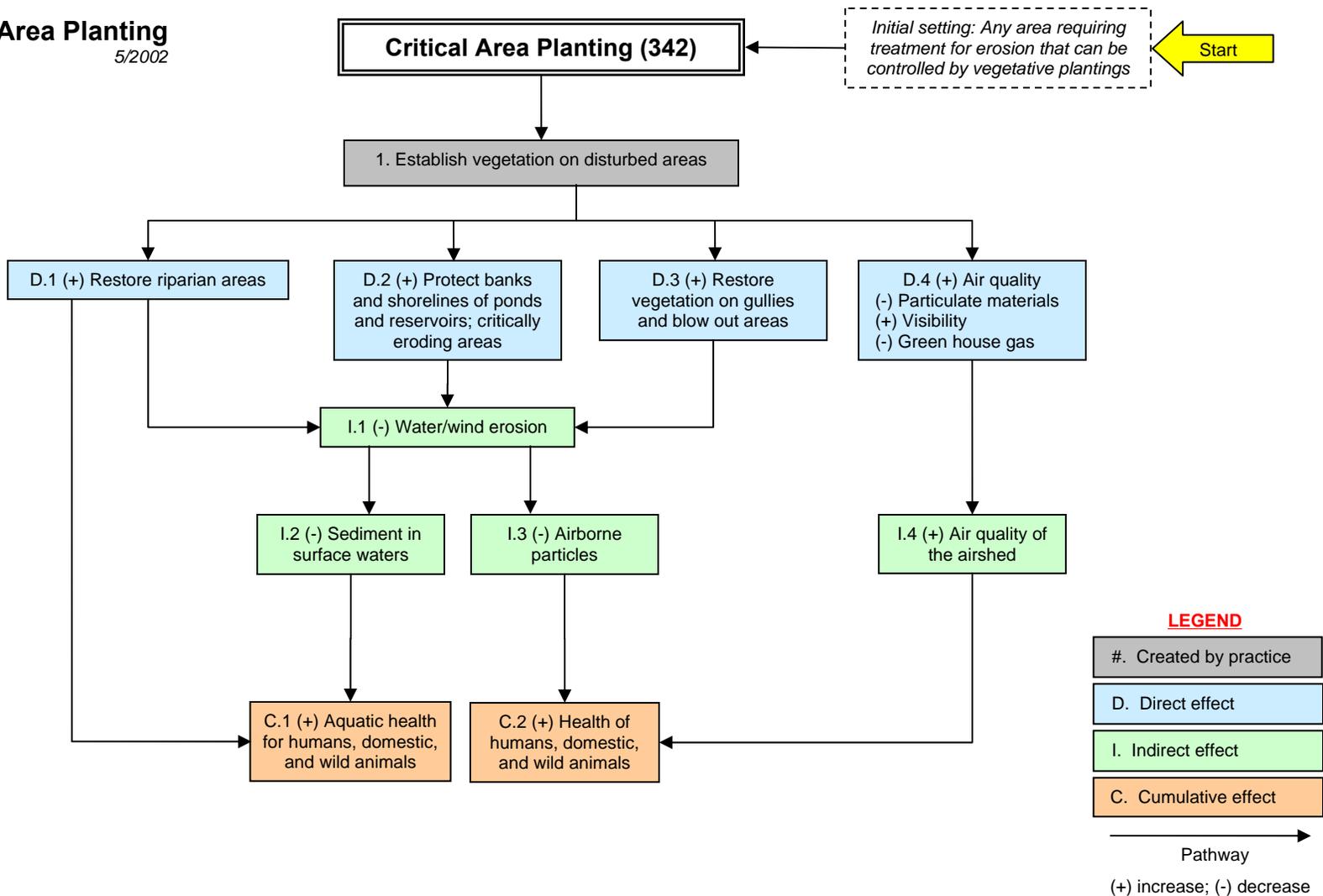
### COMMON ASSOCIATED PRACTICES

Critical Area Planting is commonly used in a Conservation Management System on a variety of land uses with practices such as Dam (402), Dike (356), and erosion control practices.

For more information, refer to the practice standard in the NRCS Field Office Technical Guide and associated specifications and design criteria.

The following page identifies the effects expected to occur when this practice is applied. These effects are subjective and somewhat dependent on variables such as climate, terrain, soil, etc. All appropriate local, State, Tribal, and Federal permits and approvals are the responsibility of the landowners and are presumed to have been obtained. Users are cautioned that these effects are estimates that may or may not apply to a specific site.

**Critical Area Planting**  
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Note: Effects are qualified with a plus (+) or minus (-). These symbols indicate only an increase (+) or a decrease (-) in the effect upon the resource, not whether the effect is beneficial or adverse.

The diagram above identifies the effects expected to occur when this practice is applied according to NRCS practice standards and specifications. These effects are subjective and somewhat dependent on variables such as climate, terrain, soil, etc. All appropriate local, State, Tribal, and Federal permits and approvals are the responsibility of the landowners and are presumed to have been obtained. All income changes are partially dependent upon market fluctuations which are independent of the conservation practices. Users are cautioned that these effects are estimates that may or may not apply to a specific site.