



Including Stewardship in Lease Agreements

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*Developing farm rental agreements that reflect your land ethic starts with putting them in writing. Here are a few examples of practices and the words to describe them that can change the way your land looks and behaves.**

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→ Tillage

- Fields shall be tilled on the contour as agreed by all parties.
- Soybean ground will not be fall tilled.
- No-till will be used on these fields: (list fields).
- Permanent pasture will be tilled only as agreed by all parties.
- The full breadth and length of grassy waterways will be preserved and maintained by (in part) picking up tillage implements when crossing.
- Moldboard plowing is not an option.
- We seek the least soil-disturbing methods of tillage: no-till, reduced chisel, (other).
- Existing terraces/strips will be fully maintained (list fields, exceptions).
- Tillage must not be done when the soil is too wet and risks compaction as a result.

→ Rotations

- Crop rotations will be planted and maintained as follows: (list field and crop).
- X% of all fields will be covered with a living plant or residue at all times of the year: (list field/year, cover crop species, timing, planting method, termination timing and method, and grazing plan if appropriate).
- At least X species of cover crops will be planted per field according to this plan: (list fields, species, timing, planting method, termination timing and method, and grazing plan if appropriate).
- Corn harvested for silage will be followed expeditiously by the following cover crop(s): (list crops)

→ Residue

- All soybean straw shall remain in place in the field.
 - Corn stover shall be baled once, with remaining stover left over winter.
 - Corn stover will be baled once, followed by managed grazing. If weather and soil conditions prevent grazing (name options).
- ### **→ Chemicals**
- Chemicals must be agreed upon before application by all parties.
 - The following chemicals are prohibited on all acres, tillable and otherwise: (list).
 - In order to protect organic certification, only these fertilizers are permitted: (list).
 - Anhydrous ammonia will only be applied in the spring, never in the fall.

→ Sensitive Areas

- A vegetative buffer will be planted and maintained around the following sites: (list field, sink hole location, stream, highly eroded sloped area, etc.).

→ Erosion

- Farm ponds will be ringed by a minimum X-foot-wide buffer of permanent vegetation.
- A 50-foot vegetative buffer will be maintained on both sides of the stream. The buffer will be planted and maintained as follows: (list options).
- Erosion control structures will be fully maintained and improved (list sites, practices).

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* Adapted in part from the Fillmore County Soil and Water Conservation District's "Sample Checklist of Conservation Practices for Farm Land Rental Agreements" and Iowa State University Extension Ag Decision Maker's "Lease Supplement for Obtaining Conservation Practices and Controlling Soil Loss." Both resources are available on the Land Stewardship Project's Conservation Leases web page (www.landstewardshipproject.org/conservationleases), or by contacting **Caroline van Schaik in LSP's Lewiston, Minn., office at 507-523-3366, caroline@landstewardshipproject.org**.

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- The following erosion control structures will be put in place according to this schedule: (list site, practice, when, who will do, who will pay, who will maintain).

→ Miscellaneous

- The following hay field(s) will not be cut until Aug. 1 to allow ground-nesting birds to fledge: (list).
- Hay will be cut high and for maximum quality, not quantity, as best as conditions permit.
- Whether hay ground is cut more than once this season will be determined jointly by X and Y, based on rainfall and forage growth.
- Manure application will follow setback requirements.
- A manure management plan will be actively in place, per county assistance.
- A catch-all statement about cover crops: for example when a field is planted to cover crops, at least X number of species shall be planted together as soon as possible. The (who) shall pay for seed, (who) shall plant. Outline grazing and termination plan for the cover crops.
- Waterways removed or damaged by tillage,

chemicals, or other means shall be repaired/replaced at the tenant's expense.

- The following expenses will be covered by X: (list). The following expenses will be covered by Y: (list). This is a good place to share the expenses of practices that are new, might pose a financial or social risk to the tenant, could encourage the tenant to be a better sport about something new, or to stretch everyone's experience (for example, that third cover crop species or poly wire to manage a grazing situation more intensely).
- (Landowner) shall cover the financial difference between the full cost and what Y (tenant) receives through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) or other cost share program for putting in the following permanent practices: (list — for example, livestock fencing and watering system, ponds, pollinator strips, buffers, cover crops).
- The windbreak (state location) shall be protected from equipment and chemical damage. Damages shall be at the tenant's expense.
- Manure application, haying and anything else involving vehicles and machinery on fields must not take place if there is risk of soil compaction.

√ A Stewardship Values Checklist √

Use this list to finish the following statement: What is most important about my land, to me...

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Healthy, biologically active soil | <input type="checkbox"/> Permanently protected natural resources |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation of soil | <input type="checkbox"/> Permanently protected as a farm |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Year-round vegetative cover | <input type="checkbox"/> Source of recreation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> No synthetic fertilizer | <input type="checkbox"/> Public access – open to others |
| <input type="checkbox"/> No chemicals | <input type="checkbox"/> Certified organic or other sustainable method |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Little to no soil loss | <input type="checkbox"/> Managed for the long-term |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clean water | <input type="checkbox"/> Build biodiversity |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pastured (grazed) livestock | <input type="checkbox"/> People actively living on the farm |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Trees | <input type="checkbox"/> People actively farming the land for clean water and healthy soil |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Useful for human food production | <input type="checkbox"/> Legacy of stewardship |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pretty, aesthetic | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sets a good example of sustainability | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Supports birds and other wildlife | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Something to pass on | |

NOTE: Of course, modify these and add others to best express your priorities.