

Grasscycling Guidance

What is grasscycling?	Grasscycling is a practice where staff maintains lawns or grassy areas by mowing and leaves the grass clippings on the ground to mulch and decompose and eventually serve as a soil amendment fertilizer, rather than collecting those grass clippings. Grasscycling, regardless of if it is counted in the SWM Database, is considered a best management practice.	
The origins of grasscycling	Grasscycling gained popularity around 1990; the term represents the change in turf management for residential lawns as part of the push to reduce the huge quantities of bagged lawn clippings going into landfills.	
Why do some practices count and not others?	The conversion factor used in the SWM Database was derived from analyses of residential lawn growth rates and grass clipping generation rates. For this reason, we restrict reporting acreages as grasscycling in the SWM Database to those that most closely resemble residential lawns in use, grass type, and turf management practices.	
Additional resources	Best Management Practices: Mowing - Grasscycling. The Lawn Institute. https://www.thelawninstitute.org/pages/environment/best-management-practices/mowing-grasscycling/ Grasscycling. Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grasscycling	
	Counts	Does Not Count
Frequency	Frequent, repeated	Once or twice per year
Purpose	Appearance, pedestrian access	Intended management reason (e.g., fire reduction weed control, cutting or baling hay fields)
Area types	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Residential lawns, or areas that closely resemble residential lawns in use, including pedestrian access, picnicking, recreation areas, walking trails, and roadside points of interest. - Battlegrounds, cemeteries and other historic preservation sites: These areas often provide for pedestrian access and gathering for activities such as viewing the sites, reenactments, and memorials. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Large non-urban green space - Roadside/parkway areas - Hay fields
Grass types	Turf grass	
Turf management practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Finish mowing - Mulching mowing - 1/3 blade length cutting - Frequent cutting to reduce clipping size 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rough mowers - Brush hog cutters
How do I report in the SWM Database?	Enter the number of acres. You do not need to multiply the acreage by the number of times you cut the grass. The SWM Database will use a conversion factor to estimate the total tons of grass clippings reused over a full growing season of cutting, so the system already takes into account multiple cuttings. The grasscycling acreage is typically the same for your park every year unless you change the acreage of turf grass at the park maintained by finish mowing and grass clipping mulching.	These management practices are not currently reported in the database. They are still recommended and commendable best practices. A category may be added to future versions of the SWM database so that parks can report this additional managed acreage.