United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

2014 Ranking Period 1

Animal Enhancement Activity – ANM36 – Enhance wildlife habitat on expired tree covered CRP acres or acres with similar woody cover managed as forestland

Enhancement Description
Implement a focused habitat management plan for the benefit of selected wildlife species on expired CRP tree covered acres that has CRP conservation cover or acres with similar woody cover managed as forestland.

Land Use Applicability
Forest

Benefits
Acres of preexisting conservation cover from expired CRP contracts or acres of similarly vegetated woody conservation cover implemented as a component of an operation's conservation plan have utilitarian value when managed for both wildlife and forest products (e.g., wood, food, fiber). Targeted management of wildlife species on working lands will maintain valuable cover on sensitive lands for continued reductions in soil erosion while providing habitat for recreationally and economically important wildlife as well as species of broader conservation interest.

Conditions Where Enhancement Applies
This enhancement only applies to forest land use acres where a predominance of tree conservation cover from expired CRP contract(s) exists or where woody cover implemented as a component of an operation's conservation plan exists, and a management system can be demonstrated or documented.

Criteria
1. Identify species or suite of species (e.g., Bobwhite quail, New England cottontail, Golden-winged warbler, Gopher tortoise, wild turkey) described in need of action within State Wildlife Action Plans or other reputable wildlife conservation plans.
2. Fire tolerant sites
   a) Develop and implement a focused wildlife habitat management plan that identifies the following:
      i. As applicable, the critical nesting and fawning periods for targeted wildlife,
      ii. The number of snags expected per acre (max 4) where the snags are in wood decay classes 2-5 (see Figure 1 below) and are 10 inches DBH (diameter at breast height) or greater, and

iii. Method to increase tree species diversity and greater structural (vertical and horizontal) diversity.

b) Develop and implement a prescribed burning plan written and carried out by a certified prescribed burner.

c) Develop and implement a tree release plan with the following components:

i. The number of trees to be retained based upon site productivity and spacing guide developed within each state for the existing tree species as suited for the targeted wildlife species or suite of species,
Note: If more than one tree species are present, base spacing upon the most abundant tree species.

ii. The landowner's objectives for the forest,

iii. Where possible, retain and promote a mixture of tree species to diversify the vertical and horizontal structure of the stand and reduce the potential of an epidemic event (e.g. insect outbreak) that may kill some/all trees,

iv. Impact of crowns touching the crop tree's crown on three or four sides,

v. Method for handling the marked trees (i.e., cut for harvest or killed using approved methods within in the state), and

vi. Where pockets of dead trees occur, ensure the Criteria # 2(a)(ii) is met.

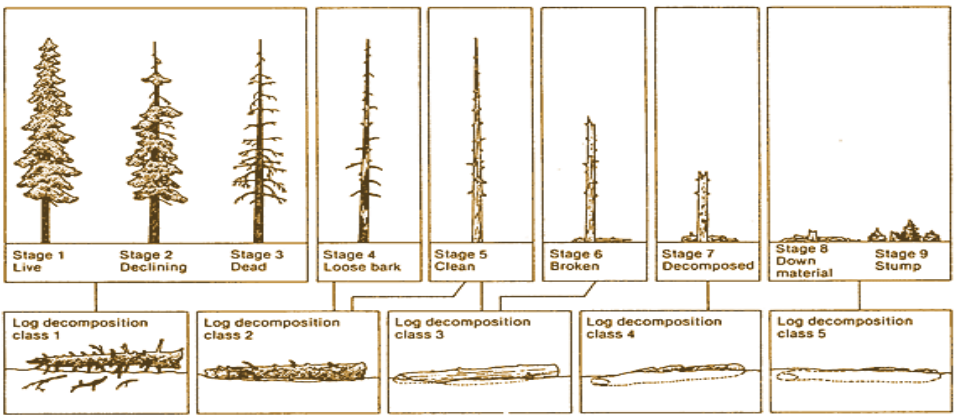

Figure 1. Snag and down wood decay classification system (Maser et al. 1979)

3. Non-Fire tolerant sites

a) Develop and implement a focused wildlife habitat management plan that identifies the following:

i. As applicable, the critical nesting and fawning periods for targeted wildlife,

ii. The number of snags expected per acre (max 4) where the snags are in wood decay classes 2-5 (see Figure 1 above) and are 10 inches dbh (diameter at breast height) or greater, and

iii. Method to increase tree species diversity and greater structural (vertical and horizontal) diversity.

b) Develop and implement a tree release plan with the following components:

i. Identifies the number of trees to be retained (e.g., between 25-35 trees per acre) for the targeted wildlife species or suite of species,
ii. Identifies targeted tree species as determined by NRCS state office (e.g. white and red oak or other species that have a high market value and provide wildlife benefits),
iii. The landowner's objectives for the forest,
iv. The impact of crowns touching the crop tree's crown on three or four sides,
v. Method for handling the marked trees (i.e., cut for harvest or killed using approved methods within in the state), and

Adoption Requirements
The enhancement is considered adopted when Criteria #1 plus either 2 or 3 above has been fully implemented.

Documentation Requirements
1. The average number of snags per acre,
2. Delineations on a map or aerial photo of the treated (released and/or burned) areas,
3. Copy of the tree release plan,
4. Representative digital images/photos of the area showing before and after treatment conditions,
5. A copy of the written burn plan (if applicable), and
6. Description of post-burn conditions with representative digital images of the treated area

References
Maser, C., R.G. Anderson, K. Cromack, Jr., J.T. Williams, and R.E. Martin. 1979. Dead and down woody material. In: Wildlife habitats in managed forests of the Blue Mountains of Oregon and Washington, USDA Handbook No. 553. pp 78-95.

Twedt, D.J. 2012. Wildlife Forestry, Global Perspectives on Sustainable Forest Management, Clement A. Okia (Ed.), ISBN: 978-953-51-0569-5, InTech, Available from: http://www.intechopen.com/books/global-perspectives-on-sustainable-forest-management/wildlife-forestry