



Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

Key Practices for Forestry

Since 1996, the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) has helped farmers address resource concerns on private land. EQIP, NRCS' principal program for delivering conservation technical and financial assistance to those who need it most, supports the needs of all agricultural operations, offering ideas, science-based solutions, and guidance for successful and sustainable conservation farms and forestlands. Just select and install any of the practices described below--and many others--once you develop a conservation plan designed to address your specific resource concerns. EQIP solves problems for farmers and forest landowners.



Forest Management Plan (FMP) (Practice/Activity Code 106)

An FMP is a site-specific plan developed for clients by a Technical Service Provider. The plan addresses one or more resource concerns on land where forestry-related conservation activities or practices will be planned and applied. This practice may also qualify for benefits under Illinois State Department of Natural Resources, Forest Development Act program. Practices often included in a FMP are designed around the client's objectives to address various natural resource concerns.



Forest Stand Improvement (Conservation Practice Standard 666)

Use of Forest Stand Improvement techniques helps landowners manage species composition, stand structure, and stocking by removing selected trees and understory vegetation. Management practices can directly:

- Increase forest product quantity, quality & restore natural plant communities
- Improve vigor; initiate forest stand regeneration
- Achieve desired crop tree stocking and density levels and increase carbon storage
- Reduce potential damage from wildfire, pests, and moisture stress
- Improve aesthetics, recreation, & wildlife habitat



Prescribed Burning (Conservation Practice Standard 338)

Burning can be an effective tool to meet specific forestland and site preparation management objectives. Frequency and intensity of burning should be closely assessed and weighed against resource concerns and management objectives of the site. Under proper conditions, prescribed burns can:

- Achieve proper site preparation
- Reduce wildfire hazards
- Remove slash & debris
- Control undesirable vegetation & plant diseases
- Improve wildlife habitat
- Enhance seedling production
- Restore & maintain ecological sites



Brush Management (Conservation Practice Standard 314)

Brush management techniques can be used in forestland to help landowners control invasive woody species problems such as bush honeysuckle, autumn olive, and multiflora rose. Woody invasive species are very prolific at seed production and sprouting, and are mostly shade tolerant. These characteristics give them a distinct advantage over native species and often times, if not addressed completely, can takeover and even replace native plants, trees and shrubs.



Herbaceous Weed Control (Conservation Practice Standard 315)

Herbaceous weed control, similar to brush management, can be used in forestland to help landowners control invasive herbaceous weed species such as garlic mustard and Japanese stilt grass. Herbaceous weeds are very prolific at seed production and germination and are often very mobile in seed dispersal. These characteristics give them a distinct advantage over native species and often times, if not addressed completely, can takeover and even replace native plants, trees and shrubs. Herbaceous weed control is also used to treat weeds and grass in tree plantings and provide release from competition.



Tree/Shrub Site Preparation (Conservation Practice Standard 490)

Cropland or grassland sites differ from forestland sites, which can dictate site preparation needs and requirements. With proper site preparation, landowners can treat areas and improve site conditions in order to successfully establish woody plants. Considerations include:

- Type of establishment planned – natural regeneration or artificial planting
- Type of equipment used, set-up & maintenance costs
- Site preparation method /combination of methods needed—mechanical, chemical, burning
- Identification & protection of onsite cultural resources
- Cover crop needs



Tree/Shrub Establishment (Conservation Practice Standard 612)

Trees/Shrub establishment introduces woody plants to an area by planting seedlings or cuttings, direct seeding or natural regeneration. Once established, woody plants provide wildlife habitat, potential forest products, and long-term erosion control. They also improve air and water quality, sequester carbon, and enhance area aesthetics.

Considerations include:

- Suitable species selection
- Type & purpose of stock
- Planting density/rate for intended purpose
- Continued control of plant/weed competition following establishment
- Size & quality of stock/seed
- Appropriate site preparation needs



Access Control (Conservation Practice Standard 472)

Access Control offers an effective forestry management tool that provides temporary or permanent exclusion of animals, people, vehicles and/or equipment from an area in order to apply, maintain or install planned conservation practices or measures. One commonly used EQIP forestry application for proper Access Control is the physical construction of a barrier fence to exclude livestock from damaging the forest application area. See also Fence (Conservation Practice Standard 382).



Riparian Forest Buffer (Conservation Practice Standard 391)

Riparian Forest Buffers consist predominantly of trees and shrubs planted adjacent to and upslope from permanent streams, lakes, ponds, wetlands and areas with ground water recharge. Riparian Forest Buffers are created for various purposes and benefits which can:

- Create shade to lower water temperatures for aquatic organisms and create camouflage for predatory fish
- Create wildlife habitat & establish wildlife corridors
- Reduce sediment, organic material, nutrients & pesticides in surface runoff
- Provide a harvestable crop of timber & fiber
- Provide protection against scour erosion within the floodplain
- Restore natural riparian plant communities



Upland Wildlife Management (Conservation Practice Standard 645)

The Upland Wildlife Management practice offers several techniques to treat upland wildlife habitat concerns identified during conservation planning. One example of forestland application for wildlife management is creation of a transitional zone of shrubs, vines and herbaceous vegetation that lies between forestland and an adjacent land use. Transitional zones can be effectively incorporated into forest management systems through Woodland Edge Feathering. For additional information, review Woodland Edge Feathering Job Sheet 645D.

Contact your local NRCS office to learn more about technical and financial assistance available.