

**Animal Enhancement Activity – ANM15 - Forest stand improvement for wildlife habitat and soil quality**



**Enhancement Description**

This enhancement consists of the creation of snags, den trees, and coarse woody debris on the forest floor to a level optimum for native wildlife usage and long-term forest soil health. It may be implemented during thinning or harvesting or it can be implemented separately.

**Land Use Applicability**

Cropland and forestland

**Benefits**

The natural abundance and distribution of snags, den trees (trees with cavities) and coarse forest floor wood have been altered by decades of land conversion, fire suppression, and timber and firewood harvest. Creating an optimum level of such materials provides nesting and hiding cover and substrate for bird, mammal, reptile, and amphibian species while also providing the insects and detritus on which they feed. Downed wood is a preferred growing medium for various species of bryophytes, lichens, and fungi. Rotting wood found on the forest floor and later integrated in the soil surface layer by decomposition provides seedbeds for a variety of tree, shrub, and herbaceous species as well a rooting medium that retains moisture during dry periods.

**Criteria**

This enhancement requires:

1. Creation of snags
2. Downed wood
3. Suitable den/cavity trees distributed throughout the area being treated.

The levels and distribution of materials must be equal to levels found in similar natural community phases indicated in the correlated Ecological Site Description (ESD).

If a suitable ESD has not been developed, NRCS State Offices will develop an example site description that defines the number of snags, the amount of downed wood and number of den trees expected per acre.

This enhancement is implemented mainly by managing existing live trees, dead snags and woody debris. It may be implemented during thinning or harvesting operations or may be undertaken separately. Refer to Conservation Practice Standard Forest Stand Improvement (666) for criteria on the creation of snags, den/cavity trees, and downed wood.



United States Department of Agriculture  
Natural Resources Conservation Service

2011 Ranking Period 1

Producers who want to conduct prescribed burning for other purposes on their forest land should consider enhancement PLT04.

### **Documentation Requirements**

Following implementation of this activity, the landowner must document:

1. The average number of snags per acre
2. An estimate of percentage of the forest floor covered by downed wood.
3. The average number of den/cavity trees per acre
4. Delineations on a map or aerial photo of the areas having the distribution of snags per acre, percent cover downed wood, and/or den/cavity trees per acre
5. Representative digital pictures of snags, downed wood, and den/cavity trees

## Michigan Supplement

### Animal Enhancement Activity – ANM15 – Forest Stand Improvement for Wildlife Habitat

To be eligible for this enhancement, the following criteria must be met:

- Create or maintain at least 5 snags per acre  $\geq$  9 inches in diameter at breast height (DBH).
- Create or maintain downed coarse woody debris (CWD)  $\geq$  4-inches in diameter, at least 50% of which should be  $\geq$  15 inches in diameter, on at least 1% of forest floor. This can be determined using 3 to 5 randomly placed 100' line transects, similar to the method used to estimate field crop residue (see the National Agronomy Manual, Part 503.43 for more information on this technique).
- Maintain at least 3 den trees per acre  $\geq$  12 inches DBH.

Manage vegetation to create or maintain a level and distribution of materials appropriate for the likely Presettlement or Natural Community type of the site. Use the “Vegetation circa 1800” maps online at: <http://web4.msue.msu.edu/mnfi/data/veg1800.cfm> or in the Customer Service Toolkit to determine the presettlement vegetation.

For a description of plant community types refer to the “Natural Communities of Michigan”:  
<http://web4.msue.msu.edu/mnfi/communities/index.cfm>.

For additional assistance with determining and planning for appropriate plant communities, contact the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) State Biologist.

All enhancement activities must meet the NRCS Michigan conservation practice standard, Forest Stand Improvement (666), and all other applicable standards such as Herbaceous Weed Control (315), Brush Management (314) in the eFOTG, Section IV.