

Early Successional Habitat Management

“Feathered Edge” Conservation Practice Job Sheet NH-647

Definition:

A “feathered edge” is a transition zone of young forest and/or shrubs at least 50 feet wide between mature forest and hayfields or between mature forest and shrub or open wetlands.

Benefits:

- This area provides important nesting and escape cover for several declining wildlife species.
- Improves soft mast producing shrubs for wildlife food
- Improves flowering plants for pollinators
- Increases light to the edges of cropland improving yields
- Helps improve the site for high tunnels
- Reduces damage to fencing from blow-down

Considerations:

- Can create a problem with bear adjacent to corn fields and other crops. Consider leaving a 25 foot shooting lane between crops and feathered edge to control nuisance wildlife.
- Feathering edges around larger openings and wetlands >5 acres provide more benefit for wildlife.
- Target poor quality timber including aspen, red maple, birches & pasture pine

- To improve light for high tunnels and agricultural operations, the width of the feathered edge should be at least 1.5 times the height of the surrounding trees.
- Control invasive plants



Above: a feathered edge adjacent to a travel way on the edge of an agricultural field which has regenerated into aspen, golden rod and dogwood.



Above: a wide 100 foot feathered edge 2 years after cutting, beginning to regenerate.