Forest Stand Improvement

Forest Stand Improvement involves reducing competing vegetation that hinders development and health of preferred trees and/or understory species. Removing undesirable trees to concentrate subsequent growth on the most desirable trees and allows for plant regeneration to restore natural communities. These activities reduce soil erosion, sedimentation, and runoff. Other benefits include improved water conservation and wildlife habitat.

Fuel Break

A fuel break is a strip or block of land on which the vegetation, debris, and litter have been reduced and/or modified to control or diminish the intensity of fires. Fuel breaks are planned and located at strategic locations on the landscape to reduce wildfire risk and unwanted damage to land and structures.

Riparian Forest Buffer

A riparian forest buffer improves water quality by filtering contaminants from entering open water. Woody vegetation stabilizes the banks along water bodies while improving fish and wildlife habitat. These buffer zones reduce the amount of sediment, organic matter, nutrients, pesticides, and other pollutants in surface runoff and the amount of nutrients and other chemicals in shallow groundwater.

Other Forestry Practices

Other forestry practices are available through the NRCS, including alley cropping, firebreaks, stream crossings, access roads, prescribed fire, and more. Contact your local NRCS Service Center in your county for more information.

For More Information

To learn more about conservation planning or to request assistance from an NRCS Certified Conservation Planner, contact the NRCS office in a local USDA Service Center or visit www.nrcs.usda.gov.

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USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

EQIP Forestry Practices

Forest Management Plan

A Forest Management Plan (FMP) is a site-specific plan developed for a client that addresses resource concerns on land where forestry-related conservation activities will be applied. The FMP is drafted by a pre-approved forester or natural resource professional. The FMP includes planned practices, the amounts of each to be applied, the schedule for implementation, and appropriate specifications for each practice.

The following practices require a FMP that meets Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) requirements found on the states eFOTG webpage when applying on forested land. The plan must be developed prior to practice implementation and must specifically state that these practices are needed to address a resource concern.

Brush Management

Brush management can be used to improve or restore meadows and open areas. Many plant species are "out of place" and this practice allows for the use of herbicides or mechanical treatments to remove these species. The goal of this practice is to allow desired plant communities and wildlife habitats to be re-establish in forest or pasture environments.

Woody Residue Treatment

This practice allows removal and disposal of "slash," resulting from natural disasters, forestry activities, or where the slash causes a resource concern. This slash can be converted into wood chips or piles. The branches and treetops can be scattered on the forest floor in a manner that allows for quick decomposition. These activities cut down on the amount of fuel that would be available in the event of a fire and prevent the spread of insects and diseases.

Silvopasture

Silvopasture systems are specifically designed and managed to produce trees, forage, and livestock on the same acreage. Silvopastures are created when forage crops are introduced or enhanced in a forested system. Silvopasture practices contribute to the well-being of livestock and provides high-quality forages along with shade and shelter from sun, wind, and storms.

Forest Trails and Landings

Having access to your woods is important when maintaining and managing a healthy stand of trees. This practice minimizes damage to soil, water, plant, and animal resources. It is not intended to establish trails for recreational activities. Forest trails and landings involve the creation and/or management of temporary or infrequently used routes, paths, or cleared areas. This practice is to establish a new trail/landing or to restore old ones in the forest land.

Road Trail and Landing Closure

Roads, trails, and landings can be relocated to reduce or eliminate erosion from steep erodible areas. Avoiding sensitive areas, such as wetlands and riparian zones, and by closing roads or trails, including gully erosions and sedimentation to water bodies, will restore vegetation, protect wildlife habitat, and provide human safety.

Tree and Shrub Pruning

Trees and shrubs have the potential to be damaged from pests, disease, and wildfires. Pruning branches of trees can increase the health and strength of the tree. Pruning also helps to reduce wildfire, pest, and disease risk by eliminating branches that show signs of stress.

Tree and Shrub Site Prep

Tree and shrub site preparation involves the treatment of areas to improve site conditions for establishing trees and/or shrubs. It encourages natural regeneration of desirable woody plants and permits artificial establishment of woody plants. This practice may be applied on all lands needing treatment to establish trees or shrubs.

Tree and Shrub Establishment

New trees and shrubs are established under this conservation practice to achieve desired species composition. Areas that are favorable for planting woody vegetation are eligible for this activity. Tree and shrub establishments can also be used to diversify existing stands and create and increase wildlife habitat. It can be used on non-forested land to establish a new forest and reduce soil erosion.

Windbreak/Shelterbelt Establishment & Renovation

Windbreaks are planted to provide needed protection in preventing damage to farmsteads from wind and snow. Open areas of cropland or livestock can be protected from wind erosion by establishing windbreaks. A renovation improves an existing windbreak that is no longer functioning or growing satisfactorily. That may be caused from poor design, overcrowding, dead or dying trees, insufficient width, or extreme competition from sod or weeds.