



Healthy Forest Practices in Alaska

Assistance Available to Non-Industrial Private Forestland Owners, Tribes and Tribal Entities



Forest Management Plan

A Forest Management Plan is a site-specific, written plan for your non-industrial private forestland. It's a roadmap for how the forest will be used, protected and maintained. It details the overall property condition and inventory information such as types of trees, vegetation and soils on the property along with a map. It lays out options to address natural resource concerns related to soil, water, air, plants, animals and human health. For example, the plan may identify conservation practices needed to reduce wildfire risk on the property; or to improve tree health and vigor; or to improve biodiversity and wildlife habitat. As the private landowner, your goals are also included in the plan. A Forest Management Plan is required first before implementing conservation practices.



Forest Stand Improvement

Forest Stand Improvement is the intentional removal or modification of trees and forest vegetation to achieve a desired stand density or tree/shrub species composition. For example, thinning a dense, overcrowded stand can reduce the amount of forest fuels, thus reducing the risk of catastrophic wildfire. The trees left standing receive more sunlight and water which promotes healthy growth and productivity. The desired spacing will depend on the tree type and the management goals for the property. Thinning also creates more open understory areas that benefit wildlife habitat.



Woody Residue Treatment

This practice deals with the reduction, removal and/or disposal of woody "slash" material created by thinning and other forest management activities. In some cases, the slash can create a wildfire risk or facilitate the spread pests and disease. There are multiple ways to treat the slash depending on your situation. The slash can be converted into wood chips; it can be left in the woods to decompose; or it could be scattered as small piles to provide wildlife habitat.



Tree/Shrub Pruning

Trees and shrubs have the potential to be damaged by pests, disease and wildfires. Pruning helps reduce that risk by removing branches that show signs of stress from disease or insect infestation, or that could become fuel for a wildfire. Pruning branches of trees and shrubs can improve the quality of wood products and production of plant products such as nuts, fruits and boughs. Pruning may also increase the health and vigor of the woody plant.



Tree and Shrub Site Preparation

Tree/shrub site preparation includes the activities necessary to prepare a site for planting or seeding trees and/or shrubs. This may include performing any mechanical, chemical or prescribed burning methods to the land such as removing diseased vegetation from the site or leaving slash material or woody debris on the site to retain soil moisture and organic matter. This practice encourages natural regeneration of desirable woody plants and permits artificial establishment of woody plants.



Tree and Shrub Establishment

This practice involves planting or seeding trees and shrubs, and promoting natural regeneration. This practice is used to maintain or improve desirable plant diversity, productivity and health. Establishing trees and shrubs can improve water quality by creating a filter for excess nutrients and other pollutants in runoff and ground water. It can help control erosion; sequester and store carbon; and create or improve wildlife habitat resulting in beneficial ecological services.



Fuel Break

A fuel break is the intentional removal or minimizing of trees and vegetation to create a safe, defensible space that reduces the spread of wildfire. They are most effective when placed in areas that would protect homes, infrastructure, and water sources from potential wildfire threats. A fuel break can significantly reduce the spread of wildfire because it eliminates excess forest fuels that can cause a wildfire to burn hotter and spread higher into the canopy. It forces fires to stay lower to the ground and provides access for firefighters to respond to a wildfire. Fuel breaks also can enhance wildlife habitat.



Riparian Forest Buffer

A riparian forest buffer is a section of trees and/or shrubs alongside a body of water that improves water quality. It acts as a filter to keep sediments from entering surface water and to keep pathogens, chemicals, pesticides and other contaminants out of surface and ground water. It can also be used to improve fish habitat; store and sequester carbon to reduce greenhouse gases; and restore plant diversity.



Road Trail and Landing Closure

There may be a need to close, decommission or abandon a road, trail or landing to achieve a conservation goal. For example, a road may be closed to control erosion, or to avoid impacts to sensitive areas such as wetlands or riparian areas. This practice also includes treatment of the site to restore the land to a productive state. This may include re-establishing plants and wildlife habitat or re-establishing drainage patterns that existed before the road was built. The goal is to minimize human impacts to the closure area to meet requirements for safety, aesthetic, sensitive area protection, or wildlife habitat.



Forest Trails and Landings

Access to your woods is important to maintain and manage a healthy stand of trees. Forest trails and landings involves the creation and/or management of temporary or infrequently used routes, paths, or cleared areas to facilitate access to perform conservation activities. This practice minimizes damage to soil, water, plant and animal resources. It is not intended to establish trails for recreational activities. This practice is for establishing a new trail/landing or restoring old ones in forest land.



Early Successional Habitat

Early successional habitat refers to the first stage of plant growth immediately following a disturbance such as a fire, drought, freezes, cutting or mowing. At a young stage, these plants are generally very nutrient rich and provide critical food sources for wildlife. However they depend on frequent disturbance in order to continue to create early successional growth. This practice involves the deliberate management of the forest to promote early/new plant growth specifically for a target wildlife species. For example, partially cutting and tipping willow trees to promote new willow shoots that are desirable food for moose.



Structures For Wildlife

Structures for wildlife are any structures installed to replace or modify a missing or deficient wildlife habitat component. The purpose is to provide structures in proper amounts, locations and seasons to enhance or sustain non-domesticated wildlife, or modify existing structures that pose a hazard to wildlife. The practice applies to all lands where planting or managing vegetation fails to meet the short-term needs of the species or guild under consideration. One example is installing bat boxes or bird nesting boxes.



Windbreak/Shelterbelt

For use in Agroforestry Operations: Windbreaks or Shelterbelts are single or multiple rows of trees planted in a linear or curved layout for the purpose of protecting agricultural lands and farmsteads from wind and snow. This practice can be used to plant a new windbreak or to enhance or renovate an existing windbreak. Windbreaks can help reduce soil erosion caused by wind; and enhance plant health and productivity by protecting crops from wind-related damage.



Silvopasture

For use in Agroforestry Operations: Silvopasture is the intentional integration of trees, forage and grazing livestock operations on the same land. NRCS can help you establish and manage certain tree species or forage plants on your silvopasture operation. Silvopasture activities can help improve the health and productivity of forage, improve biodiversity, improve soil health, enhance wildlife habitat, reduce erosion, and increase carbon sequestration and storage.

Helping People Help the Land

NRCS provides farmers, ranchers, forest owners, Tribes and Tribal entities with financial and technical assistance to conserve natural resources on private lands.

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