



CONSERVATION ENHANCEMENT ACTIVITY

E666M

CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

Maintaining structural diversity in dry Western forests

Conservation Practice 666: Forest Stand Improvement

APPLICABLE LAND USE: Forest, Associated Ag Land

RESOURCE CONCERN: Plants, Animals

ENHANCEMENT LIFE SPAN: 10 Years

Enhancement Description

This enhancement retains the beneficial effects of treatments that have been applied to restore ecological function in dry Western forests. It is implemented following a forest stand improvement treatment designed to restore variable and patchy conditions typical of benchmark ecological sites. After a restoration treatment, young trees often regenerate in numbers higher than desired, leading to increased fire risk and loss of wildlife habitat. The enhancement will address follow-up activities needed for maintaining forest structure. Site conditions will be monitored and follow-up treatments recommended as needed. The enhancement protects investments in habitat creation by providing for follow-up activities that require the expertise of a forester or wildlife biologist.

Criteria

States will apply general criteria from the NRCS National Conservation Practice Standard Forest Stand Improvement (Code 666) as listed below, and additional criteria as required by the NRCS State Office.

- Develop or update a forest management plan in consultation with NRCS personnel and a professional forester to direct the management of the property. The plan will include guidelines for determining what amount of regeneration is desirable, and when prescribed burning is needed. The FMP will include guidelines for inspection and monitoring, the types of forest health impacts or stand damage to look for during inspections, and potential additional

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activities that may be needed to preserve habitat conditions. The participant will make the FMP available for NRCS review.

- This enhancement may be applied only to forest stands that have already had treatments designed to restore variable and patchy structural conditions typical of benchmark ecological sites in dry Western forests.
- A forestry specialist will inspect the stand and determine whether the amount of regeneration is desirable. If there is excess regeneration, the forestry specialist will recommend timing for using NRCS Conservation Practice Standard Prescribed Burning (Code 338) to reduce the amount of regeneration.
- During the growing season, a forestry specialist will inspect the stand for damage from harmful insects, plant diseases, invasive plant species, and any other impacts on forest growth and health. The specialist will make recommendations for additional practices needed to correct undesirable forest health conditions. Practices may include: NRCS Conservation Practice Standards Integrated Pest Management, (Code 595), Brush Management (Code 314), Herbaceous Weed Control (Code 315), etc.
- A forestry specialist will inspect the stand for damage from storms, ice, drought, floods, and other weather-related impacts, and recommend practices to correct undesirable aspects of forest structure and/or composition.
- During the bird breeding season, a trained forestry or wildlife specialist will conduct a bird census according to protocols of the Integrated Monitoring in Bird Conservation Regions (IMBCR) (<https://birdconservancy.org/what-we-do/science/monitoring/imbcr-program/>)
- A skilled laborer will accomplish treatments as directed by the forestry or wildlife specialist, including treatments for harmful insects, diseases, and invasive plants, to control their spread and minimize damage to forest habitat.
- The participant will control access to the stand to prevent resource damage, and to reduce disturbance to wildlife.

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Documentation and Implementation Requirements:

Participant will:

- Prior to implementation, obtain a current or updated Forest Management Plan (FMP) that includes activities required to implement this enhancement. The FMP will identify desired wildlife species, and will include a map of the property that identifies zones of topographic features related to moisture availability. It will document the treatments that have been previously implemented to emulate historical stand structure. Maps of the site showing areas of openings, clumps of trees, roads, and other site features will be included. The plan will describe the types of management practices needed to keep the site in the desired condition. (NRCS will provide technical assistance, as needed.) The participant will make the FMP available for NRCS review.
- Prior to implementation, review the NRCS Conservation Practice Standard Forest Stand Improvement (Code 666) conservation practice standard or appropriate state Job Sheet and use this information to meet the criteria of this enhancement.
- Prior to implementation, plan for a forestry and/or wildlife specialist to inspect the stand and make recommendations, conduct a bird survey, and accomplish other tasks called for in the enhancement.
- During implementation, protect the site from introductions of pests, wildfire, and adverse impacts to the soil resource.
- During implementation, notify NRCS if there are any planned changes, to verify they meet the enhancement criteria.
- During implementation, keep a written log and take digital photos.
- After implementation, retain a map showing the location of activities, and photos. Make the map and photos available to NRCS for verification.
- After implementation, notify NRCS that the work has been completed, and make the following information available to NRCS: dates that inspection was conducted, methods used, reports on bird counts, photos, and a map showing bird monitoring points.
- After implementation, control access to the stand as needed to prevent resource damage, and to reduce disturbance to wildlife.

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NRCS will:

- Prior to implementation, verify the enhancement activity is planned for acres that meet the criteria within the enhancement guide sheet.
- Prior to implementation, provide assistance with interpretation of a current or updated FMP on acres targeted by this enhancement.
- Prior to implementation, provide and explain the following NRCS Conservation Practice Standards as they relate to implementing this enhancement.
 - Forest Stand Improvement (Code 666)
 - Integrated Pest Management (Code 595)
 - Herbaceous Weed Control (Code 315)
 - Prescribed Burning (Code 338)
- As needed, prior to implementation, NRCS will provide technical assistance by:
 - Preparing specifications for applying this enhancement for each site using approved specification sheets, job sheets, technical notes, and narrative statements in the conservation plan, or other acceptable documentation, and will discuss the details with the participant.
- During implementation, provide technical assistance if requested by the participant.
- During implementation, as needed, evaluate any planned changes to verify they meet the enhancement criteria.
- After implementation, certify that the enhancement was completed according to the NRCS Conservation Practice Standard Forest Stand Improvement (Code 666) specifications and the enhancement criteria.

NRCS Documentation Review

I have reviewed all required participant documentation and have determined the participant has implemented the enhancement and met all criteria and requirements.

Participant Name _____ Contract Number _____

Total Amount Applied _____ Fiscal Year Completed _____

NRCS Technical Adequacy Signature

Date

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