



CONSERVATION ENHANCEMENT ACTIVITY E666P (with Montana Supplement)

CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

Summer roosting habitat for native forest-dwelling bat species

Conservation Practice 666: Forest Stand Improvement

APPLICABLE LAND USE: Forest, Associated Ag Land, Farmstead

RESOURCE CONCERN: Animals

ENHANCEMENT LIFE SPAN: 10 Years

Enhancement Description

Create new potential roost trees within upland and riparian forests to achieve desired summer habitat for forest-dwelling bat species.

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.
- These criteria and any tree removal activities will be coordinated with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). This includes the establishment of minimum criteria to meet the habitat requirements of the bat species of concern while avoiding potentially detrimental disturbances during the maternity period.
 - **MT: Consult with NRCS biologist for minimum criteria to meet the habitat requirements of the bat species of concern while avoiding potentially detrimental disturbances during the maternity period, and guidelines for roost tree species and species groups to determine spacing, density, size-class distribution, and amount of understory species to be retained.**

E666P Summer roosting habitat for native forest-dwelling bat species with Montana Supplement (bold)	August 2019 Montana Supplement November 2022	Page 1
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CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

- Create additional snags within the forested acres by girdling/killing live trees. When choosing trees to kill, consider that the majority of snag-roosting bats prefer the largest available snags, which often extend above the forest canopy and retain bark for a longer period of time. Also focus on killing trees that are undesirable for quality forest products due to species or form.
- Promote use of live trees with loose or exfoliating bark by killing all trees adjacent (canopies within 15 feet of habitat tree) to trees determined to have desired bark characteristics, as defined by NRCS state technical staff. Larger diameter trees should be considered as habitat trees, as desirable bark characteristics tend to improve with the size and age of the tree. Large/mature trees also develop splits, breaks, dead limbs, and cavities that serve as roosting areas.
- Habitat trees should be distributed evenly across the treated acres.
- The combined snags and live, loose bark trees should be created or maintained at a combined rate as determined to be necessary to meet the habitat requirements of the bat species of concern and the specific forest type, as defined by the USFWS and NRCS state technical staff.
- The enhancement will comply with all applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations, and with States' Forestry Best Management Practices for Water Quality.
- When determining which trees will be killed for snag creation, and/or used to create loose/exfoliating bark, consider effects on the remaining stand.
 - Identify and retain preferred tree and understory species to achieve all planned purposes and landowner objectives.
 - Use available guidelines for species and species groups to determine spacing, density, size-class distribution, number of trees, and amount of understory species to be retained. Schedule treatments to avoid overstocked conditions using approved silvicultural stocking guides.
 - Implement forest stand improvement activities in ways that avoid or minimize soil erosion, compaction, rutting, and damage to remaining vegetation, and that maintain hydrologic conditions.



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Documentation and Implementation Requirements:

Participant will:

- Prior to implementation, work with NRCS to complete a wildlife habitat evaluation guide or State equivalent.
- Prior to implementation, obtain a wildlife habitat management plan for the targeted species suite which includes:
 - Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Guide scores for benchmark and desired conditions.
 - The minimum criteria to meet the targeted species habitat requirements.
 - A plan map indicating the stands and individual trees selected for the treatment.
 - A list of NRCS Conservation Practice Standards that will be applied to reach the desired habitat conditions
- During implementation, keep a field log which includes:
 - Treatment dates
 - Count of treated (girdled) trees and treatment actions completed (i.e. removal of canopies within 15 feet of habitat tree).
- During implementation, notify NRCS of any planned changes, notify NRCS of any planned changes to verify they meet the enhancement criteria.
- After implementation, notify NRCS that implementation has been completed.
- After implementation, make the follow items available for NRCS review to verify implementation of the enhancement:
 - Wildlife Habitat Management Plan.
 - Wildlife habitat plan treatment map.
 - Field log.
 - Digital photographs.



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NRCS will:

- Prior to implementation, assist the participant in completing the state's approved NRCS Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Guide (WHEG) or State equivalent.

- **MT: Use Biology Tech Note MT-19 Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Guides for Montana for species of concern. Target Bat Species of concern:** _____

Current/Existing Condition WHEG score: _____

Planned WHEG score after implementation: _____

- Prior to implementation, provide participant assistance in the development of a wildlife habitat management plan.
- Prior to implementation, provide participant with additional technical assistance to the, as requested.
- During implementation, as needed, evaluate any planned changes to verify they meet the enhancement criteria.
- After implementation, verify implementation of the wildlife habitat management plan, by reviewing field log records kept and digital photographs taken during enhancement implementation.
- After implementation, complete the state's approved NRCS Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Guide (WHEG) or State equivalent.
- WHEG score after implementation:** _____



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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

