



Requirements:

- 2 acre minimum
- Flagged by NRCS/Partners
- 98% canopy removal
- 90% removal of all stems down to 1" dbh
- 4 snags and 4 large down logs left per acre
- 50% of tree tops left on site

Example of Young Forest Habitat – 3 years after cutting

Background: This fact sheet is intended to give landowner's a clear understanding of the Early Successional Habitat Management Practice that is used to create **young forest** habitat for declining species of wildlife. This practice is also commonly referred to as **patch cuts** and involves the cutting down of nearly all the trees on a flagged acreage of land. Then it is left alone to re-vegetate naturally. The intent is to create conditions where thousands of young woody stems an acre will grow; providing excellent cover and food including fruit (e.g. raspberry, cherry, etc.) and browse. Often times a handful of trees are left on these areas as they may be valuable mast (nuts or fruit) producers, good cavity trees or seed trees.

What You Should Expect: NRCS and partners with the Agency of Natural Resource's – Department of Fish and Wildlife and/or Forests and Parks will work with you to develop a habitat plan for your property. Good locations for managing young forest habitat are in places dominated by poor quality (form) trees with low commercial value. Old farmland and overgrown apple orchards as well as forested areas with aspen ("poplar"), paper birch, and cherry work very well. Aspen is especially desired because when it is cut it will readily sprout from the tree's root network. This quickly establishes excellent habitat.



Aspen sprouts in 1st summer following a winter cut



Recently completed young forest patch cut

Once you and the foresters/biologists settle on a good location, it is critical for the planned treatment area to be flagged and measured for later reference. This step is typically completed by NRCS or the partner forester/biologist and will also involve flagging of snags, mast trees or other wildlife trees for retention.

These **young forest cuts must be at least two acres** but preferably larger. A minimum of **four snags per acre** must be maintained or created through girdling. As part of the project, firewood can be removed. However, at least **four large logs per acre** must be left on site to provide cover and future drumming sites for

grouse. The cut will **remove at least 90% of the tree canopy cover** and **at least 90% of all woody stems down to 1” d.b.h.** on the flagged area. This removal of nearly all trees will assure thick regrowth of desired woody species. Finally, **at least 50% of the tree tops** must be left on the site. These tops will provide immediate cover for numerous species, soil nutrients and provide protection for regenerating trees. Invasive plants may establish in these cuts so be prepared to monitor and control if necessary. Early detection and rapid response is the best control approach.

Final Thoughts: Be aware that this practice can provide excellent habitat but it is a **major disturbance** to the forest. The cut area is likely going from closed canopy and shaded forest to a large opening with little canopy cover and full sun. Those not accustomed to large forestry operations may be surprised and even shocked at the way their forest looks. However, it should grow back thick and fast and provide some needed young forest habitat. Landowners whose land is enrolled in Use Value Appraisal (UVA) will need to be sure that any planned cut is in compliance with their Forest Plan. Contact your County Forester.



Recent cuts will look messy with standing snags, downed trees, logs, tops and exposed areas