

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE
MONTANA CONSERVATION PRACTICE SPECIFICATION

PRESCRIBED FORESTRY (ACRE)

CODE 409

DEFINITION: Manage forested areas for forest health, wood and/or fiber, water, recreation, aesthetics, wildlife habitat and plant biodiversity.

PURPOSE:

- Maintain or improve forest health
- Protect soil quality and condition
- Maintain or enhance water quality and quantity
- Maintain or improve forest productivity
- Maintain or improve plant diversity
- Improve aesthetic and recreational values
- Improve wildlife habitat
- Achieve or maintain a desired understory plant community for forest products, grazing and browsing.

SCOPE: Conditions where prescribed forestry applies:

- On all forest land
- On land capable and suited to growing trees.

PRESCRIBED FORESTRY SPECIFICATIONS: Specifications for applying this practice shall be prepared for each site and recorded using approved specifications sheets, job sheets, and narrative statements in the conservation plan, or other acceptable documentation.

Forest Prescription

A forest prescription shall be developed. It shall consist of planned activities that achieve the intended purpose(s). It shall address the owner's objectives as well as perpetuate a sustainable forest ecosystem.

A forest prescription is an element of a forest management plan which is a component of a more comprehensive conservation plan. It shall recognize and be compatible with other requirements of the conservation plan.

The prescription should include:

- 1) An inventory of the existing forest condition, and
- 2) Description of desired forest condition.

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The prescription shall be developed for a minimum management period of 10 years.

Activities are not limited to conservation practices and may include other activities essential to implementation of the prescription. Provide a schedule of activities over at least a 5 year period in the forest management plan.

Forest Inventory Method

Use the Zigzag transect and fixed plot sampling inventory methods. These inventory methods and the tools needed for the inventory are explained in the National Forestry Handbook (NFH). The inventory methods are explained in Part 636.2 of the NFH. The inventory tools are described in Part 636.3 of the NFH. The National Forestry Handbook can be found at the following site:

<http://soils.usda.gov/technical/nfhandbook/>.

Use the Forest Inventory and Summary Form, MT-ECS-1. The form allows for collecting data in both even-aged and uneven-aged stands and provides an efficient means of recording and summarizing field inventory data for forest planning. See [Montana Forestry Technical Note MT-22](#) on *Forest Inventory and Summary Form, MT-ECS-1* for more detailed information.

Forest Management Plan

The following components shall be included in the forest management plan:

- Statement of landowner's goals and objectives. Identify why the practice is needed and feasible.
- An environmental assessment of the planned management activities, including regeneration/harvest strategies and guidelines for addressing the potential impacts on soil, water, air, plant, animal and human resources.
- An alternatives narrative that identifies and describes several methods that could be used to address the resource issue. Also identifying the landowners selected method.
- Description of ecological and silvicultural systems and rationale for selection of silvicultural system.
- Inventory of the existing forest condition and a description of desired forest condition.
- Location of roads, property boundaries, protected areas.
- Maps of forest and soil types. Map of site with location of practice on the map.
- The Montana Prescribed Forestry practice job sheet.
- Operations and maintenance instructions.

Maintain Forest Health and Productivity

Stand growth will be maintained or enhanced by forest stand improvement or regeneration harvest activities. Identify: a) preferred tree species, b) insect and disease concerns, c) animal damage, and d) noxious weed concerns. Use established guidelines for spacing, density, size class, number and amounts of trees and understory species to be retained. Follow the Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG), Section IV – practice standards and specifications for Forest Stand Improvement – Code 666, Tree/Shrub Establishment – Code 612, and Tree/Shrub Pruning – Code 660.

Maintain a Desired Understory Plant Community for Grazing and Browsing

Trees should be properly spaced to produce desired forage production and increase desirable woody plants for browsing. Maintain a 25 to 35 percent canopy cover to provide enough light to reach the forest floor for good forage production. Develop a prescribed grazing plan for the grazable forest land. Follow the Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG), Section IV – practice standards and specifications for Forest Stand Improvement – Code 666, Prescribed Grazing – Code 528, and Tree/Shrub Pruning – Code 660.

Protect Soil Quality and Condition

Minimize soil erosion and compaction during harvesting and site preparation for planting. Soil loss will not exceed T. Establish herbaceous vegetation on disturbed areas to control soil erosion. Follow the Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG), Section IV – practice standards and specifications for Forest Trails and Landings – Code 655, Tree/Shrub Site Preparation – Code 490 and Critical Area Planting – Code 342.

Protect Water Quality and Quantity

Ensure road location, design, construction, maintenance, and vegetation re-establishment reduces water erosion. Use filter strips or buffers to remove or reduce the transportation of sediment or organic matter into streams, lakes, or other sensitive areas. Follow the Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG), Section IV – practice standards and specifications for Access Road – Code 560, Forest Trails and Landings – Code 655, Riparian Forest Buffer – Code 391 and Critical Area Planting – Code 342.

Maintain Plant Diversity

Assess current conditions, including disturbance regimes, old-growth, rare and imperiled plants including those that are state or federally listed. Written guidelines will address the management of these special plant species and their communities. Native plant species will be inventoried and managed for vertical and horizontal structural complexity and understory diversity. Follow the Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG), Section IV – practice standard and specification for Restoration and Management of Rare or Declining Habitats – Code 643.

Improve Aesthetics and Recreational Values

Develop written guidelines to improve ecotourism and recreation, including hunting and fishing. Select and manage plant materials adapted to the site and that fulfill a specific aesthetic or recreational need. Follow the Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG), Section IV – practice standards and specifications for Recreation Trail and Walkway – Code 568, and Stream Habitat Improvement and Management – Code 395.

Improve Wildlife Habitat

Develop written guidelines to recognize and maintain forest resources for terrestrial and aquatic life. Identify and develop specific management guidelines for habitat protection areas, including riparian buffers, critical habitats and those of special needs. Coordinate forest and wildlife management objectives and activities.

Manage for tree species and stocking rates that meet desired wildlife species food and cover requirements. Uneven-aged stands attract a wider variety of wildlife than even-aged stands. However, wildlife habitat needs to be evaluated on a landscape level. Use the Wildlife Habitat Appraisal Guide (WHAG) for forest wildlife species to determine habitat needs.

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Create, recruit and maintain sufficient snags and down woody material to meet requirements of desired species in balance with conditions needed to achieve other intended purposes.

Limit the effects of practices on threatened and endangered species. The Canadian lynx is a threatened and endangered species in Montana. The snowshoe hare is the primary food source of the lynx. Leave lynx foraging habitat alone.

Refer to Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG), Section IV – practice standards and specifications for Upland Wildlife Habitat Management – Code 645, and Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management – Code 644 to further develop and manage wildlife-related activities.

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE: The following actions shall be carried out to insure that this practice functions as intended throughout its expected life. These actions include normal repetitive activities in the application and use of the practice (operation), and repair and upkeep of the practice (maintenance):

- Minimize resource damage during operation.
- Conduct periodic inspections during and after treatment activities to ensure that the purposes are achieved.
- Perform post harvest and/or activity inspection.
- Monitor and evaluate the current prescriptions.
- Annually summarize the forest management activities taken.
- Annually describe the condition of the forest (stand composition and structure), including regeneration, observed changes in flora and fauna (habitat conditions), and other impacts of harvesting and other operations.
- Annually record the yield for all forest products harvested.
- Damaging pests will be monitored and controlled.
- Maintaining the planting in a vigorous growing condition will aid in control of damaging pests. Early detection and application of control measures can often prevent extensive damage.
- Monitor disease and storm damage.
- Annually review timetables, schedules and coordinate actions. Modify as needed.