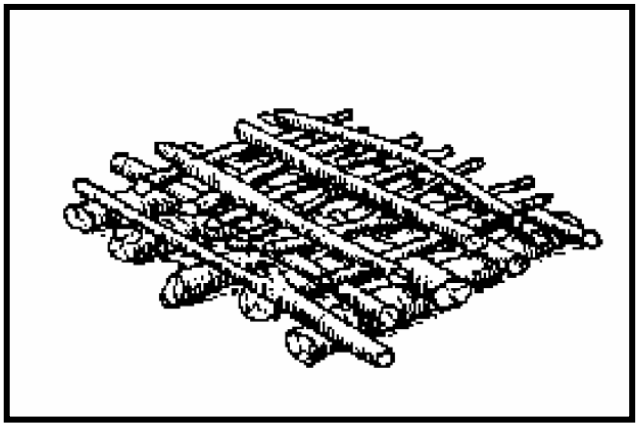
# Connecticut Wildlife Brush Piles- 645

## *Conservation Practice Job Sheet* *Lifespan- 1 Year*

### Definition

The construction of habitat features fashioned out of logs, branches and other woody material.



### Purpose

This practice is typically used to create cover for many songbirds, rabbits, and other small mammals when natural cover is limited; such as after clear-cutting. It provides areas for: nesting, resting, escape from predators, and protection from harsh weather conditions (bitterly cold or extremely hot temperatures, snow and ice).

### Where Used

On land where the decision maker has identified the need to increase cover as an objective for conserving a wild animal species, guild, suite or ecosystem.

On land within the range of targeted wildlife species and capable of supporting the desired habitat.

### Criteria, Considerations, and Specifications

Brush piles may be built to fit various dimensions; however, the size should be limited to 6 to 20 feet on a side and 4 to 8 feet high.

*Materials*

Brush piles can be constructed using a variety of materials. Commonly, materials left from timber harvesting, woodland edge development, forest stand improvement, forest opening development and firewood cutting are utilized. Natural features, such as rocks, boulders and stumps, or man-made materials, such as fence posts, pallets, and concrete blocks, may also be used.

*Foundation*

- Logs at least 6 to 10 inches in diameter and 10 to 15 feet in length are laid parallel and 6 to 12 inches apart with the second layer of logs laid on top and perpendicular to the first layer, in the same fashion.
- Tree stumps still in place- several logs (6 to 10 inches in diameter and 5 to 6 feet long) are placed on top of the stump in a pattern radiating from the center.
- Small rock piles- these should be staggered about 12 inches apart with each pile about 10 inches high and 12 inches across to support next layer of limbs.

*Brush Covering*

The next layers of a brush pile can be constructed using small limbs, saplings, old Christmas trees or loose brush. The larger branches and limbs should be used to cover the foundation placing smaller branches on top. The foundation should be covered with 2 to 4 feet of brush; larger piles provide more security than smaller piles. Openings about 6 to 12 inches in width should be left on the sides in several places for easy wildlife access.

*Other Construction Options*

- Living brush pile- take a cluster of living hardwood saplings; each tree is cut half way through the trunk about 12-18 inches above the ground; treetops are folded inwards towards other trees in groups so they rest on the ground or on top of the other half-cut trees.
- Lightly piled branches- provide more cover while allowing enough sun to reach the ground to stimulate grass and forb growth.

- Rocks- existing boulders and rocks on the landscape can be piled together to provide additional den sites; start with the largest rocks on the bottom of the stack to create hiding places between the rocks. These piles may or may not be covered with brush.
- Stonewalls- may be used as the base for brush piles; brush should be placed against the wall with similar dimensions and distribution to brush piles created in an open space.
- Windrowed trees- typically these linear brush piles can best be created following a forestry or tree removal operation. As with other brush pile creation, larger materials should be placed on the bottom with subsequently smaller material on top of that.

*Placement*

Several considerations should be made when placing brush piles:

- Multiple, strategically placed, medium sized (roughly 10 feet in diameter and 6 feet high) brush piles are better than one large one.
- Windrows should be at least 10 feet wide but no wider than 20 feet and should be 6 feet high.
- Good locations include- adjacent to edges of gullies, woodlands, and pastures or hay fields; within shrub thickets, fencerows, or shelterbelts; in field corners or other odd areas.
    - For edge habitats, locate one brush pile every 200-300 feet to provide adequate cover and travel lanes between food sources.
    - Windrows should have breaks built into them every 100 feet to provide travel lanes for wildlife.
    - On properties with little natural cover, create 3 or 4 brush piles per acre.
- Place near wildlife food sources
- Keep away from homes and lawns to avoid problems with nuisance wildlife
- Keep away from buildings due to flammability

*Additional Notes*

Brush piles are not permanent- new brush needs to be added over time or new piles may need to be constructed. Rot and decay is a natural process and may attract more insects providing additional food sources.

Do not use materials that contain toxic substances (i.e. pressure treated lumber/posts, creosote railroad ties, lead painted surfaces, tires, etc.). These substances can cause wildlife mortality either through contact, consumption, or inhalation.

## Wildlife Brush Piles– Job Sheet

| | |
|---|---|
| *Name:* | *County:* *Town:* |
| *Field(s):* | *Farm #:* *Tract #:* |
| *Designed By:* | *Approved By:*<br><br>*Signature:* |
| *Date:* | *Date:* |

| SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS |
|---|
| ✓ **Species to be benefited:** |
| ✓ **Purpose of brush pile:** |
| ✓ **Number and spacing of Brush Piles:** |
| ✓ **Acres Benefited:** |
| ☐ **Preparation:** |
| ☐ **Additional Maintenance needed for 1 year lifespan:** |
| ☐ **Site/Sketch map attached** |
| **Comments:** |

**COMPLETION/CHECKOUT CERTIFICATION**

I have job approval authority and certify this practice has been applied and meets design specifications:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| NRCS Representative name and title (type or print): | | |
| NRCS Representative Signature: | | Date: |
| Landowner name (type or print): | | |
| Landowner Signature: | | Date: |
| As-Built Notes (include date completed by client, treated acres and describe any changes to original design): | | |

Questions regarding the planting or maintenance of the tree/shrub establishment should be directed to [technical specialist], at