



Early Successional Habitat Development/Management - 647

Massachusetts Cut Back Border Job Sheet

Client:	Farm #:	Tract #:
Planned By:	Date:	

DEFINITION

Manage plant succession to develop and maintain early successional habitat to benefit desired wildlife and/or natural communities.

BACKGROUND/PURPOSE

Early successional habitats are transitional and require different levels of disturbance to be maintained. If they are not disturbed in some fashion (e.g., mowing, burning, etc.), they will transform into another habitat type over time through the process referred to as succession. Early successional habitats are of concern because many of the species that depend on this habitat type are declining in the Northeast due to loss of habitat.



Photo: NRCS New Hampshire – a 100 foot wide cut back border 2 years after cutting.

Cut Back Border

The purpose of *cut back borders* is to re-create early successional conditions that provide areas dominated by forbs, shrubs and small trees between grassland or cropland and adjacent mature forest. This cut back area creates an environment for many flowering and fruiting plants that cannot tolerate the shade and competition in a mature forest or the constant disturbance associated with cultivation and grazing. The increase in flowering forbs and shrubs provide nectar and pollen sources for pollinators; the soft mast producing shrubs provide an important wildlife food source during the summer and fall; and the dense woody structure created provides nesting and escape cover.





SITE SELECTION

Cut back borders should only be created on wooded sites directly adjacent to early successional vegetation such as grass fields, cropland, cranberry bogs, non-wooded wetlands, etc.. Avoid areas with valuable timber or mast producing trees. Additionally, avoid areas with exotic, invasive species such as multiflora rose, autumn olive, etc., because the increased sunlight will likely result in significant proliferation of the exotic species rather than germination of native plants. If pollinator habitat is a purpose, locate the cut back border within 1500 feet of the targeted crop to maximize the pollination benefits to the crop.

SPECIFICATIONS

- Mechanically cut all woody vegetation greater than two (2) inches in diameter at breast height (DBH) and all woody vegetation greater than 15 feet tall within the specified boundaries of the treatment area. Mechanical treatment can include hand cutting, use of a chainsaw, shearing, hydro-axe or brontosaurus, and other approved techniques.
- Depending on the targeted wildlife species, leave felled trees where they fall and/or create brush piles with the treetops. If the primary goal is pollinator habitat, remove all the cut woody material.
- Cut back borders may be completed in blocks or as long strips along field edges. The minimum length for a cut back border shall be 50 feet and the cutback border will extend into the woodland a minimum of 50 feet. Maximum habitat value will be obtained with larger patches.
- The best time of year to create cut back borders is after leaf fall. This minimizes disturbance to nesting wildlife and the wood is less heavy with sap.

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

- Exclude livestock from cut back borders.
- Monitor the area yearly and mechanically remove and/or chemically treat, on a spot basis, any invasive plant species that are encroaching.
- The wildlife benefits of cut back borders decline over time as woody species increase in size. Retreat the area when 50% of the regrowth exceeds 15 feet in height.



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Targeted Wildlife Species

[Empty text box for Targeted Wildlife Species]

Acres to Treat (specify location, length and width of area to be treated. Attach map)

[Empty text box for Acres to Treat]

Method to be used to Create Cut Back Border

[Empty text box for Method to be used to Create Cut Back Border]

Additional Specifications

[Empty text box for Additional Specifications]

Additional Operation and Maintenance Requirements

[Empty text box for Additional Operation and Maintenance Requirements]

RECORD OF COMPLETION AND CHECK OUT CERTIFICATION:

<i>Treated Acres:</i>	<i>Date Completed by Client:</i>	<i>Date Inspected:</i>	<i>Inspector:</i>

Notes:

[Empty text box for Notes]

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