



Structures for Wildlife - 649

Massachusetts Wildlife Brush Pile Job Sheet

Client:	Farm #:	Tract #:
Planned By:	Date:	
<i>Species Targeted:</i>		

DEFINITION

The term "brush pile" describes a mound of woody vegetative material constructed to furnish wildlife cover.

PURPOSE

Wildlife has four basic requirements: cover, food, water, and living space. Each must be present in an animal's habitat. Cover is the protective element within the habitat and includes protection from severe weather, concealment and protection from predators, and resting or loafing cover.

In areas where dense brush habitat is limited, brush piles can be constructed to provide much needed cover for a variety of wildlife such as rabbits, ground nesting birds and songbirds.



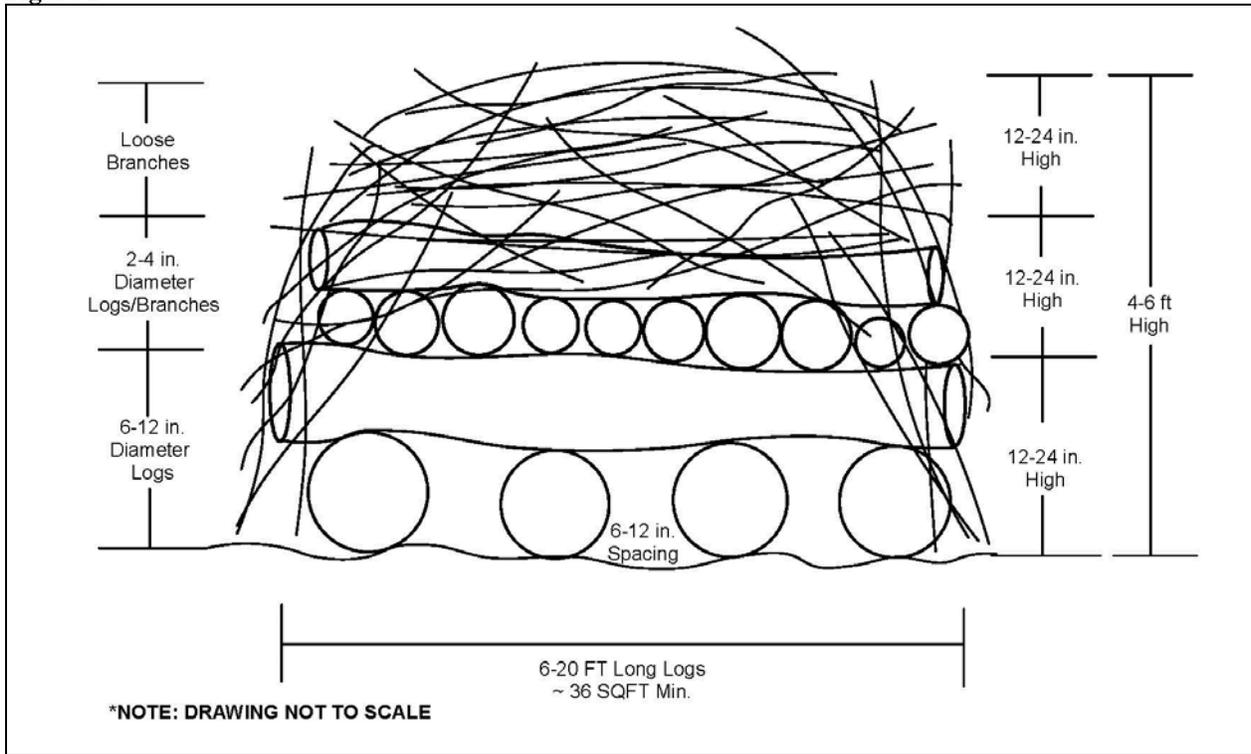
PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

- Place brush piles near wildlife food sources. Good locations include: along forest roads and edges; in woodland openings; along field edges and corners; and beside streams and wetlands. Isolated brush piles are not likely to be well used.
- Two to four brush piles per acre, spaced about 100 to 150 feet apart are usually sufficient for many wildlife species.
- Brush piles can be developed in forested habitats with the material left from timber harvesting, forest stand improvement, early successional habitat creation, or firewood cutting.
- Avoid using snags, cavity or mast trees to construct brush piles. These trees provide wildlife habitat in place.

CONSTRUCTION OF BRUSH PILES

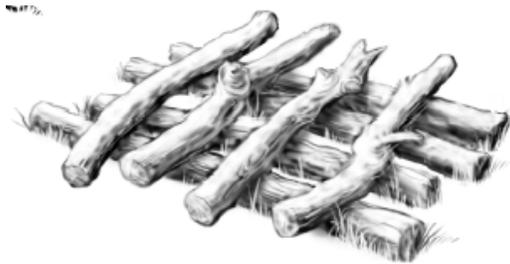
- Brush piles have two basic components – a base and a brushy top (see Figure 1). The base, composed of the largest material, raises the brush pile off the ground and creates tunnels for dens, nests and escape routes. The brushy top protects this space from predators and harsh weather conditions.
- Ideally, brush piles should be a minimum of 4 to 6 feet tall and ≥ 6 feet in diameter. They should be dense enough in the center to provide adequate protection from adverse weather and predators but loose enough around the edges to allow easy access.

Figure 1



To Construct Brush Piles:

1. Lay 6-12 inch diameter logs parallel to each other on the ground, 6-12 inches apart. The logs should be a minimum of 6 feet in length but ideally longer.
2. Place a second layer of similarly sized logs on top of, and perpendicular to, the first layer.



3. Cover the foundation with 2 to 4 inch logs, branches and limbs, placed in a crisscrossed pattern or at different angles to one another to lock the materials together and form air spaces.

4. Add smaller branches on the top to create an intertwining tangle of brush 4 to 6 feet in height.
5. Once the pile is 4 to 6 feet in height, place branches and limbs around the sides.

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

- Brush piles are not permanent structures. Rot and decay are a normal process of brush piles.
- The piles should be inspected yearly and refurbished with new limbs and branches as the older material rots down and becomes dislodged.
- Once the pile starts to deteriorate beyond usefulness, construct a new pile adjacent to the old one. Don't tear down the existing one as you may be disturbing some lingering wildlife. By building next to the old pile, you will be providing a continuous source of cover.



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Provide a map (may be attached) showing the location of the proposed practice and practice components.

Scale 1"= _____ ft. (NA indicates sketch not to scale: grid size=1/2" by 1/2")

REFERENCES/ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- Brush Piles: Section 5.3.1 US Army Corps of Engineers Wildlife Resources Management Manual. Technical Report EL-86-13. Chester O. Martin and John L. Steele
- NRCS-Maine, Brush Pile Job Sheet
- NRCS-Minnesota, Brush Pile Job Sheet

RECORD OF COMPLETION AND CHECK OUT CERTIFICATION:

Treated Acres:	Date Completed by Client:	Date Inspected:	Inspector:
Notes:			

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