



Brush Management Information Sheet

Missouri Information Sheet

IS-MO-314

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
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Missouri Conservation Practice 314

Brush management is the management or removal of woody plants, including those that are invasive and noxious, to accomplish the following purposes:

- Create the desired plant community consistent with the ecological site
- Restore or release desired vegetative cover to protect soils, control erosion, reduce sediment, improve water quality or enhance stream flow
- Maintain, modify, or enhance fish and wildlife habitat
- Improve forage accessibility, quality and quantity for livestock and wildlife
- Manage fuel loads to achieve desired conditions

This practice is applicable on all lands except cropland, however it does not apply to removal of woody vegetation to facilitate a land use change. This becomes a concern where woody vegetation has been allowed to advance to the point where the size and stocking density meet the NRCS definition of Forest Land (below) and the landowner wishes to convert it back to grassland.

Forest Land: A land cover/use category that is at least 10 percent stocked by single-stemmed woody species of any size that will be at least 4 meters (13 feet) tall at maturity. Also included is land bearing evidence of natural regeneration of tree cover (cut over forest or abandoned farmland) that is not currently developed for nonforest use. Ten-percent stocked, when viewed from a vertical direction, equates to an aerial canopy cover of leaves and branches of 25 percent or greater. The minimum area for classification as forest land is 1 acre, and the area must be at least 100 feet wide. [Source: Conservation Program Manual (440-502-A, Feb 2015)]

When evaluating a site to determine if Brush Management is applicable, careful consideration must be given to properly classify the woody material growing on site. Typically, if there is grass or other herbaceous species currently present that will be intact after treatment of the woody encroachment, then Brush Management would be allowed. Following treatment, the area can be converted to a cover that has a higher level of conservation benefit (e.g. introduced cool-season grass to native warm season grasses) with approval by the NRCS State Office. If there is a fairly closed canopy (> 25%) that limits the understory to mostly leaf litter, shrubs, and/or herbaceous species typically found on a forested site, then Brush Management would not be allowed when the treatment area meets the minimum size for classification of forest land above (acre in size and >100 feet wide). Single tree removal (for trees greater than 13 feet) is only



allowed when the tree falls within a larger Brush Management treatment area. Otherwise, removal of single or small groups of trees greater than 13 feet is not considered to be Brush Management.

Using a bulldozer to remove tree species that readily sprout from remaining roots, such as honey locust, black locust, and Osage orange, is not recommended. These species should be cut, sheared or clipped, followed with herbicide application to prevent re-sprouting.



Photo credit: Illinois DNR

Below are several examples for conservation planning consideration that provide additional clarification regarding when the application of Brush Management is and is not allowed.



Brush Management Allowed: grass understory with scattered woody plants, limited numbers greater than 13 feet



Brush Management Not Allowed: no or little grass present, understory and midstory typical of forest conditions, >100 feet wide and an acre in size



Brush Management Not Allowed: no or little grass present, understory and midstory typical of forest conditions, >100 feet wide and an acre in size



Brush Management Allowed: grass cover present and scattered trees and shrubs across the field; some heavier canopy areas, however they are <100 feet wide



Brush Management Allowed: majority of woody plants less than 13 feet tall with scattered trees greater than 13 feet; grass understory

Brush Management Not Allowed: majority of trees greater than 13 feet tall, fairly solid canopy, no or little grass present in understory.



Brush Management Not Allowed: no or little grass present, understory and midstory typical of forest conditions, >100 feet wide and an acre in size