United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

2016 – 1
2017 – 1 Renewal

Animal Enhancement Activity – ANM53 – Hinge cutting for wildlife

Enhancement Description
This enhancement creates hinge cuts for wildlife cover, resting or loafing areas while providing valuable browse and cover for several game and non-game species.

Land Use Applicability
Rangeland, Forestland

Benefits
Hinge-cuts have been widely used across the country to provide ground cover for northern bobwhite (*Colinus virginianus*), cottontails (*Sylvilagus spp.*), Gambel's quail (*Callipepla gambelii*), and many other small mammals and birds. The hinge-cut trees also provide a readily available source of browse for deer as the trees will live for several years. The cut trees or shrubs also provide screening cover for deer and nesting cover for quail, turkey and other birds that utilize early successional understory habitats. Secondary benefits may increase herbaceous vegetative on the forest floor while releasing the best saplings for timber production.

Conditions Where Enhancement Applies
This enhancement applies to all range and hardwood forest land use acres with either low or inadequate ground cover.

For forest land use acres, the activity is often used in intermediate to mature hardwood forest with an abundance of mid-level trees. Apply the activity throughout the forest in small patches as well as edge feathering to soften the hard edge and create a brushy early successional cover for edge-loving species.

For range land use acres, the activity has been successfully used on mesquite trees.

Criteria
Implement the following**:**

1. Develop a wildlife habitat management plan for the suite of species targeted.
   a. Consulting a forester or wildlife biologist with regard to the appropriate or best tree species to treat and treatment design.
2. Hinge cut areas will consist of a minimum of ½ acre per 40 acres of eligible habitat, with a minimum range of 50 to 100 stems to be cut within the 40-acre minimum.
3. Less desirable trees should be selected for cut while leaving more desirable better formed hardwoods.

4. Trees should be cut approximately waist high and only about ⅔ to ¾ through at a 45 degree angle, letting the tree fall while still being attached. The more bark and stem attached the better.
5. Hinge cutting is best accomplished during the dormant season to avoid unnecessary stress on the trees.

Adoption Requirements

The enhancement is considered adopted when the above criteria has been applied on the land use acre.

Documentation Requirements

1. Copy of the wildlife habitat management plan
2. A map showing the dates, size, and location of hinge cut treatment areas
3. Representative photographic documentation of hinge cuts.

References

Steele, J. L. Jr. and C. O. Martin. 1986. Half-cuts. Section 5.3.2, US Army Corps of Engineers Wildlife Resources Management Manual, Technical Report EL-86-14, UA Army Engineer Waterways Experiment Station, Vicksbury, MS.

Jackson, J. 2012. Create living thicket cover by hinge-cutting. Quality deer management association. http://www.qdma.com/articles/create-living-thicket-cover-by-hinge-cutting

Beauchamp, B. 2013. The strategies of hinge-cutting: Create food, cover and better hunting. http://www.mossyoak.com/our-obsession/blogs/how-to/2013/08/23/the-strategies-of-hinge-cutting

Utah State Supplement 2015 for ANM53

Do not create hinge cuts during the primary nesting/fawning season (Apr 1 – July 15). This enhancement should only be used when necessary to treat a limiting factor for a sensitive wildlife species, and should not be used if detrimental to any sensitive wildlife species. Do not hinge cut snags or trees that have potential cavity nest holes or sloughing bark.

Operations & Maintenance, Conservation Measures, and Client Acknowledgement

Operation and Maintenance
Operation: Maintenance:
Conservation Measures
Actions that must be implemented by the landowner/manager during enhancement implementation:
Client's Acknowledgement Statement
The Client acknowledges that: a. They have received a copy of the enhancement and understand the contents and requirements. b. It shall be the responsibility of the client to obtain all necessary permits and/or rights, and to comply with all ordinances and laws pertaining to the application of this enhancement. **Biologist:** _____ **Date:** _____ **Planner:** _____ **Date:** **Client:** _____ **Date:**