

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

Key Iowa Practices for Forestry

Through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service provides financial and technical assistance to implement conservation practices that address natural resource concerns on private lands. EQIP supports the needs of all agricultural operations, offering ideas, science-based solutions, and guidance for successful and sustainable conservation farms. Below are some of the more popular conservation practices that Iowa forest landowners install to treat resource concerns as outlined in their conservation plans.



Forest Management Plan (FMP) (Practice/Activity Code 106)

An FMP is a site-specific plan developed for clients by a Technical Service Provider. The plan addresses one or more resource concerns on land where forestry-related conservation activities or practices will be planned and applied. Practices often included in a FMP are designed around the client's objectives to address various natural resource concerns.



Forest Stand Improvement (Conservation Practice Standard 666)

Use of Forest Stand Improvement techniques help landowners manage species composition, stand structure, and stocking by removing selected trees and understory vegetation. Management practices can directly:

- Increase forest product quantity and quality, and restore natural plant communities
- Improve vigor; initiate forest stand regeneration
- Achieve desired crop tree stocking and density levels and increase carbon storage
- Reduce potential damage from wildfire, pests, and moisture stress
- Improve aesthetics, recreation, and wildlife habitat



Prescribed Burning (Conservation Practice Standard 338)

Burning can be an effective tool to meet specific forestland and site preparation management objectives. Frequency and intensity of burning should be closely assessed and weighed against resource concerns and management objectives of the site. Under proper conditions, prescribed burns can:

- Achieve proper site preparation
- Reduce wildfire hazards
- Remove slash and debris
- Control undesirable vegetation and plant diseases
- Improve wildlife habitat
- Enhance seedling production
- Restore and maintain ecological sites



Brush Management (Conservation Practice Standard 314)

Brush management techniques can be used in forestland to help landowners control invasive woody species problems such as bush honeysuckle, autumn olive, and multiflora rose. Woody invasive species are very prolific at seed production and sprouting, and are mostly shade tolerant. These characteristics give them a distinct advantage over native species and oftentimes, if not addressed completely, can take over and even replace native plants, trees and shrubs.



Herbaceous Weed Control (Conservation Practice Standard 315)

Herbaceous weed control, similar to brush management, can be used in forestland to help landowners control invasive herbaceous weed species such as garlic mustard and Canada thistle. Herbaceous weeds are very prolific at seed production and germination and are often very mobile in seed dispersal. These characteristics give them a distinct advantage over native species and oftentimes, if not addressed completely, can take over and even replace native plants, trees and shrubs. Herbaceous weed control is also used to treat weeds and grass in tree plantings and provide release from competition.



Tree/Shrub Site Preparation (Conservation Practice Standard 490)

Cropland or grassland sites differ from forestland sites, which can dictate site preparation needs and requirements. With proper site preparation, landowners can treat areas and improve site conditions to successfully establish woody plants. Considerations include:

- Type of establishment planned – natural regeneration or artificial planting
- Type of equipment used, set-up and maintenance costs
- Site preparation method /combination of methods needed – mechanical, chemical, burning
- Identification and protection of onsite cultural resources
- Cover crop needs



Tree/Shrub Establishment (Conservation Practice Standard 612)

Trees/Shrub establishment introduces woody plants to an area by planting seedlings or cuttings, direct seeding or natural regeneration. Once established, woody plants provide wildlife habitat, potential forest products, and long-term erosion control. They also improve air and water quality, sequester carbon, and enhance area aesthetics. Considerations include:

- Suitable species selection
- Type and purpose of stock
- Planting density/rate for intended purpose
- Continued control of plant/weed competition following establishment
- Cover crop needs
- Size and quality of stock/seed
- Appropriate site preparation needs



Access Control (Conservation Practice Standard 472)

Access Control offers an effective forestry management tool that provides temporary or permanent exclusion of animals, people, vehicles and/or equipment from an area to apply, maintain or install planned conservation practices or measures. One commonly used EQIP forestry application for proper Access Control is the physical construction of a barrier fence to exclude livestock from damaging the forest application area. See also Fence (Conservation Practice Standard 382).



Riparian Forest Buffer (Conservation Practice Standard 391)

Riparian Forest Buffers consist predominantly of trees and shrubs planted adjacent to and upslope from permanent streams, lakes, ponds, wetlands and areas with groundwater recharge. Riparian Forest Buffers are created for various purposes and benefits which can:

- Create shade to lower water temperatures for aquatic organisms and create camouflage for predatory fish
- Create wildlife habitat and establish wildlife corridors
- Reduce sediment, organic material, nutrients and pesticides in surface runoff
- Provide a harvestable crop of timber and fiber
- Provide protection against scour erosion within the floodplain
- Restore natural riparian plant communities



Upland Wildlife Management (Conservation Practice Standard 645)

The Upland Wildlife Management practice offers several techniques to treat upland wildlife habitat concerns identified during conservation planning. One example of forestland application for wildlife management is creation of a transitional zone of shrubs, vines and herbaceous vegetation that lies between forestland and an adjacent land use. Transitional zones can be effectively incorporated into forest management systems through Woodland Edge Feathering.