



United States Department of Agriculture



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USDA NRCS Wildfire Prevention Conservation Practices

RI LEGISLATIVE STUDY COMMISSION TO EVALUATE AND PROVIDE RECOMMENDATIONS ON
PROPER FOREST MANAGEMENT FOR FIRE PREVENTION - December 14, 2023

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Presenters

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Resource Conservationist (ACES)





Topics

- Who is NRCS?
- What Does NRCS Do?
- Forestry Programs
- Common Forestry & Wildfire Practices
- The Role of Forest Management Planning

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Who Are We?



The USDA **Soil Conservation Service (SCS)** was created in 1935 to reverse the devastation caused by the Dust Bowl. In 1994, through an act of Congress, we became the **Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)** to better reflect the broadened scope of the agency's resource concerns.



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Today NRCS is the lead federal agency within the USDA that helps private landowners voluntarily conserve soil, water, air, plants, animals, and other natural resources.



Productive Soil



Healthy Plants



Clean Water

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Our Work



NRCS offers voluntary programs to eligible landowners to provide financial and technical assistance to help manage natural resources in a sustainable manner.



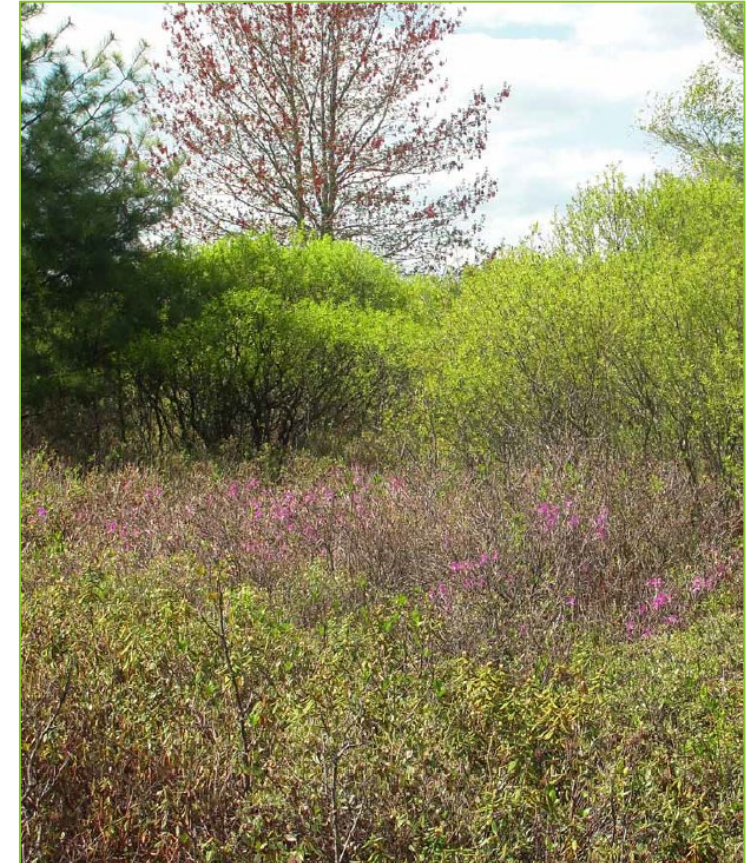
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What Do We Do?

- We work, primarily, on private lands.
- We help landowners develop and implement conservation plans to meet their objectives for their property.
- We provide financial assistance to both protect and restore natural resources.
- All our programs are voluntary and non-regulatory.



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Who Do We Work With?

- **Primarily with Private Landowners**
- **Closely with Conservation Districts, State, Local, Citizen-based and other partners**
- **We emphasize:**
 - Science-based conservation
 - Technical assistance
 - Partnerships
 - Incentive-based programs
 - Cooperative problem solving at the community level



Where Do We Work...

We have over 2,500 NRCS offices throughout all 50 states, as well as:

- Puerto Rico
- U.S. Virgin Islands
- Guam
- American Samoa
- Micronesia
- Mariana Islands
- Palau



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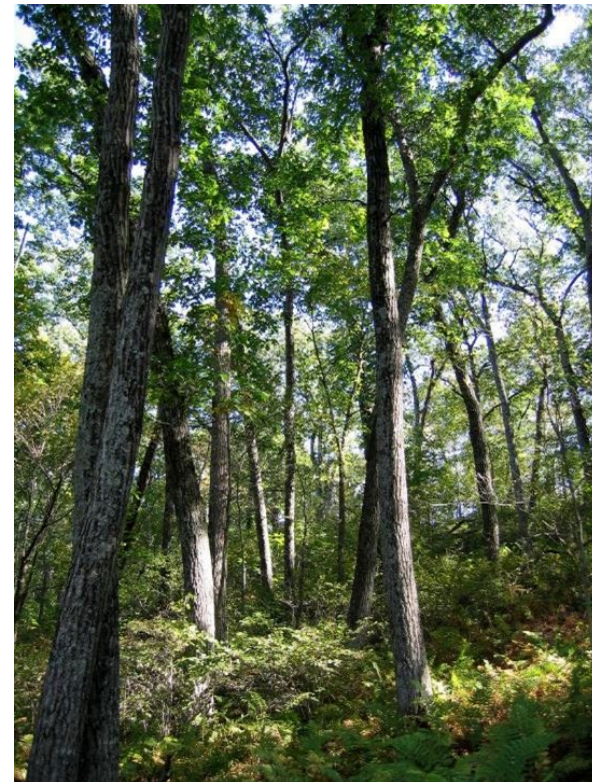
Conservation Assistance Programs

- Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)
- Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)
- Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)
- Easements
 - ❖ HFRP (Healthy Forest Reserve Program)
 - ❖ ACEP (Agricultural Conservation Easement Program)
 - Agricultural Land Easements
 - Wetland Reserve Easements



Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

- **NRCS' flagship program to help landowner's apply conservation practices on their land**
- **Provides financial and technical assistance to address natural resource concerns**
- **Multi-year contracts to install the needed NRCS Conservation practice(s)**
- **Must have a Forest Management Plan**



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Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

- Nation's largest conservation program by number of acres
- Helps farmers and forest landowners take conservation to the next level
- Minimum annual payment raised to \$4,000!
- NRCS accepts applications year-round



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Overall Progress in RI



Practice	# of Practices	Acres	Dollars
Forest Management Plans	446	31,072	\$685,578
Forest Stand Improvement	883	4,885	\$2,725,895
Total	1,329	35,957	\$3,411,473

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Forestry Projects in RI



- **New England/New York Forestry Initiative**
- **RCPP Projects**
 - **Partners Protecting Source Water**
 - **Young Forest RCPP**
 - **Southern New England Heritage Forest RCPP**
 - **RI Forest Health Works Project**
- **Forestry for Rhode Island's Birds**
- **RI Coverts Project**
- **Small Scale Forestry Project**
- **Women Owning Woodlands**
- **Forestry Assistance – RIRC&D/URI**



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Core Forest Conservation Practices

Code	Practice Name
311	Alley Cropping
379	Multi-Story Cropping
380	Windbreak/ Shelterbelt Establishment
381	Silvopasture
383	Fuel Break
384	Woody Residue Treatment
391	Riparian Forest Buffer
394	Firebreak
472	Access Control
490	Tree/ Shrub Site Preparation
612	Tree/ Shrub Establishment
650	Windbreak/ Shelterbelt Renovation
654	Road/ Trail/ Landing Closure and Treatment
655	Forest Trails and Landings
660	Tree/ Shrub Pruning
666	Forest Stand Improvement



Supporting Forest Conservation Practices

Code	Practice name
314	Brush Management
315	Herbaceous Weed Treatment
327	Conservation Cover
338	Prescribed Burning
342	Critical Area Planting
382	Fence
395	Stream Habitat Improvement and Management
560	Access Road
578	Stream Crossing
580	Streambank and Shoreline Protection
595	Integrated Pest Management
643	Restoration of Rare or Declining Natural Communities
644	Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management
645	Upland Wildlife Habitat Management
647	Early Successional Habitat Development/Management



CSP Forestry Enhancement Practices

Maintaining and improving forest soil quality. (E666A)

Forest management to enhance understory vegetation (E666D)

Reduce height of the forest understory to limit wildfire risk (E666E)

Reduce forest stand density to create open stand structure (E666F)

Reduce forest density and manage understory along roads to limit wildfire risk and improve habitat (E666G)

Increase on-site carbon storage (E666H)

Crop tree management for mast production (E666I)

Facilitating oak forest regeneration (E666J)

Creating structural diversity with patch openings (E666K)

Forest Stand Improvement to rehabilitate degraded hardwood stands (E666L)

Snags, den trees, and coarse woody debris for wildlife habitat (E666O)

Summer roosting habitat for native forest-dwelling bat species (E666P)

Forest songbird habitat maintenance (E666R)





Some Forest Management Practices to Reduce Wildfire Risk...



EQIP	CSP
Forest Management Plan	Reducing the height of the forest understory to limit wildfire risk
Prescribed Burning Design	Reducing forest density along roads to limit wildfire risk & improve wildlife habitat
Prescribed Burning	
Fuel Break	
Forest Stand Improvement	
Forest Trails & Landings	
Tree/Shrub Pruning	
Brush Management	
Woody Residue Treatment	
Dry Hydrant	



The Role of a Forest Management Plan

Definition:

A forest management plan is a site-specific plan developed for a client that addresses one or more resource concerns.

A forest management plan is required to receive technical and financial assistance through EQIP.



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Prescribed Burning/ Prescribed Burning Design

Definition

- Applying a planned fire to a predetermined area of land.
- Provides site-specific instructions for prescribed burning and related conservation measures.

Benefits:

- Reduce wildfire hazards from biomass accumulation.
- Manage undesirable vegetation to improve plant community structure and composition.



Forest Stand Improvement

Purpose:

Manage tree density and spatial arrangement to reduce wildfire hazard. Thin the overstory sufficiently to reduce the tree canopy and crown fire potential.

Benefits:

- Reduces the risk of wildfire.
- Protects life and property.



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Woody Residue Treatment

Purpose:

Treat or remove woody residue and minimize fine fuels in the fuel break to reduce wildfire risk.

Benefits:

- Reduces the risk of wildfire.
- Minimize the risk of wildfire.
- Protects life and property.



Brush Management

Purpose:

Control woody plants to reduce wildfire risk.

Benefits:

- Reduces the wildfire risk.
- Protects life and property.





Fuel Break

Description:

Opening the tree canopy on a strip of land to control or minimize the spread of wildfires.

Benefits:

- Minimize wildfire risk.
- Protects life and property.
- Improves wildlife habitat and food sources for many species.



Dry Hydrant

Description:

Provide water for fire suppression

Benefits:

- Provides water for fire suppression.
- Reduces wildfire risk.
- Protects life and property.



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Tree/ Shrub Pruning

Description:

The removal of all or parts of selected tree branches and shrubs to remove ladder fuels to reduce wildfire hazard.

Benefits:

- Reduces wildfire risk.
- Reduces safety hazards.
- Protects life and property.



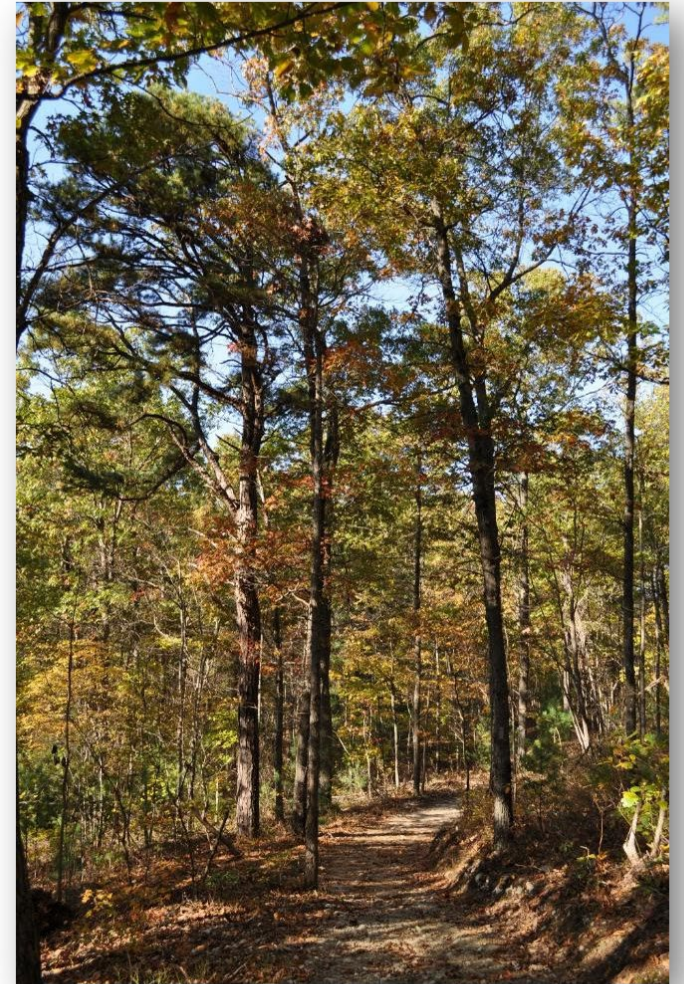
Forest Trails and Landings

Description:

Provides routes for access to conduct management activities to reduce wildfire hazard.

Benefits:

- Reduces wildfire risk.
- Protects life and property.





Reduce forest density & manage understory along roads to limit wildfire risk, improve habitat

Description:

- Opening the tree canopy along roads ("daylighting") and providing space between ground vegetation and tree crowns.
- Some trees near a forest road are removed by harvesting, cutting, mulching, or other means to create a partially open forest canopy bordering the road.

Benefits:

- Limit woodland fuel buildup and reduce fire intensity.
- Minimizes the spread of wildfires that often start along roads.
- Improves wildlife habitat and food sources for many species.





Reduce forest understory height to limit wildfire risk

Description:

- Forest stand improvement to manage forest structure to reduce wildfire risk and create conditions that facilitate prescribed burning.
- Reducing the height of the woody understory and midstory, creating space between the ground cover and the tree canopy.

Benefits:

- Reduce wildfire hazards.
- Improve forest health, restore natural plant communities, and achieve or maintain a desired native understory plant community.



Other Opportunities



Joint Chiefs Landscape Restoration Initiative Partnership

- Increase collaboration among federal agencies, states, tribes, and private partners to target investments to address landscape-scale priorities.
- Proposals should improve the health and resilience of forest landscapes by coordinating eligible activities across land ownerships. Proposals should enhance collaboration between FS and NRCS, as well as local partners.
- Proposals must also address at least one Joint Chiefs' objective:
 - 1) to reduce wildfire risk
 - 2) to protect water quality and supply
 - 3) to improve wildlife habitat for at-risk species





Through NRCS programs, landowners can work with our local USDA office and partners to apply targeted forest management practices on their land – thinning, hazardous fuel treatments, fire breaks and other systems – to meet unique challenge of reducing wildfire risk in their area.





Thank You and For More Information

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