

Florida Landowner Assistance Program

Practice Standard - Mechanical Vegetation Enhancement



DEFINITION

Application of the following mechanical treatments to improve habitat structure and composition for species dependant on early successional habitats or to manage woodland fuels to facilitate the introduction of prescribed fire.

- Mowing
- Harrowing, Single-drum chopping
- Double-drum chopping, Tree cutter
- Pre-commercial Thinning (Hand Crew)

PURPOSES

This practice may be applied as part of a conservation management system to support one or more of the following purposes:

- To improve overall wildlife habitat.
- To prepare sites for seeding or planting.
- To reduce wildfire hazards.
- To reduce excessive and/or ladder fuels prior to reintroduction of fire.
- To enhance native ground cover plants and improve mast and/or seed production.
- To restore and maintain ecological function.

CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES

This practice may be applied on any private land where deemed needed to improve overall wildlife habitat conditions in compliance with practice standards and specifications.

CRITERIA

I. General Criteria Applicable to All Purposes

The method(s) of mechanical treatment to improve habitat structure and composition for species dependant on early successional habitats shall be determined by the assigned biologist conducting the Needs Assessment. Application of the prescribed treatment will be based on the GIS analysis, site examination, and local wildlife species present. The landowner shall obtain all necessary permits before implementation of the practice. Planning and application shall comply with all applicable Federal, State, and local laws, rules and regulations. The procedure, equipment and number of trained personnel shall be adequate to accomplish the intended purposes as stated in the Landowner Assistance Program (LAP) prescription. Treatment will be accomplished in a manner that will maintain site productivity and minimize soil erosion.

CONSIDERATIONS

Consideration must be given to maintaining existing habitat for species at risk. The site preparation method should be cost effective and protect threatened and endangered species, cultural resources, wildlife habitat, water resources, and identified unique areas. Attention should also be given to soil productivity, preventing erosion, and conserving unique vegetative communities. Visual quality objectives should be considered when selecting site preparation methods. Anticipate possible off-site effects and modify the site preparation design accordingly. Consider personal safety during site preparation activities.

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

The following actions shall be carried out to ensure that this practice functions as intended throughout its expected life. These actions include normal repetitive activities in application and use of the practice (operation), and repair and upkeep of the practice (maintenance): Access by vehicles during site preparation or after should be controlled to minimize erosion, compaction and other site impacts. Use of the area shall be managed as long as necessary to stabilize the site and achieve the intended purpose. Evaluation to determine if the practice is meeting stated objectives should be made following implementation of the recommended practice.

Items to consider in these evaluations include:

- a. Were initial objectives met?
- b. Was the equipment used suited for proper implementation of the practice?
- c. Was the practice accomplished as prescribed within recommended timeline?
- d. What were the effects on soil, water, vegetation and wildlife resources?
- e. Were any problems (i.e. erosion, damage to timber) created by implementing the practice?
- f. How could implementation of these practices be improved?