

# Permanent Forest Openings for Wildlife

## Job Sheet

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)  
Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC)  
University Outreach and Extension – The School of Natural Resources

<b>Landowner:</b>	<b>Farm #:</b>
<b>Field(s):</b>	<b>Tract #:</b>
<b>Date:</b>	<b>County:</b>
<b>Contact:</b>	

### WHY DEVELOP FOREST OPENINGS FOR WILDLIFE?

#### PURPOSE:

Forest openings are areas within a stand of timber that are left in natural, early successional herbaceous vegetation or occasionally planted in annuals or perennials. These openings serve as a valuable source of food for wildlife especially compensating for seasonal fluctuations in mast production. Creating forest openings also improves habitat for forest edge species.



#### SPECIFICATIONS:

- Openings should be between one to three acres.
- Woodland sites less than 40 acres will generally not benefit from the creation of openings.
- A number of well-scattered openings are more beneficial than a single large opening of comparable size.
- **This site should have** \_\_\_\_\_ openings located \_\_\_\_\_.
- South facing slopes are preferred.
- Openings should be cleared of all woody vegetation including stumps. Consider using removed materials for downed tree structures or edge feathering. Stump removal is necessary so that proper vegetation planting/response can occur.
- Take into consideration the possibility of soil erosion. Avoid working on highly erosive sites and limit soil disturbance in areas of concentrated flow.
- Irregular shaped openings are preferred and provide great edge.
- Openings should be at least 30 feet wide.
- Manage for plant diversity. Plant permanent forest openings to annual grain food plots, green browse plots, wildlife-friendly grasses and forbs, or allow the area to naturally regenerate into native herbaceous vegetation.

#### MAINTENANCE:

- If trees and shrubs comprise 10 percent or more of the opening, the woody material needs to be controlled to help maintain desired vegetative components.
- Openings should be kept on a disturbance schedule to encourage new growth of desired vegetation. A three-year cycle is good.
- Light disking is a cost-effective method to encourage the desired plant community.

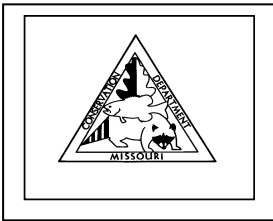
- Consider prescribed burning to help encourage herbaceous plant growth. Burn only under an approved burn plan from NRCS or MDC.
- Use herbicides to suppress invasive vegetation and to control noxious weeds.

**PRIMARY HABITAT CONSIDERATIONS:**

- Provide nesting and brood habitat for quail, turkey and other ground nesting wildlife.
- Provide natural food and cover for rabbits, deer, quail, and turkeys.

Consult with NRCS, MDC wildlife professionals, or University Extension for additional recommendations.

Comment:



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