

# 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:

Permanent forest openings are clearings within a stand of timber that are usually planted to perennial green browse plants such as clover mixes, or left in natural, early successional herbaceous vegetation. 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 permanent openings.
- A number of well-scattered openings are more beneficial than a single large opening of comparable size.
- **This site should have \_\_\_\_\_ openings located \_\_\_\_\_.**
- Ridgetops and gently south facing slopes with good soil conditions are preferred.
- Openings should be cleared of all woody vegetation including stumps. Consider using removed materials for downed tree structures. Stump removal is necessary so that proper vegetation planting/response can occur. Do not leave any standing trees within the opening. Windrow, burn, scatter, cut up or remove excess downed trees and brush. If piling this material, attempt to incorporate as little soil in with the woody debris as possible, as “dirty” brushpiles make great predator habitat.
- 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 habitat for wildlife.
- 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:**

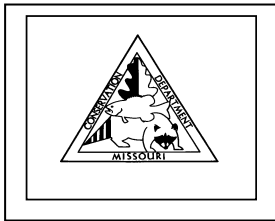
- If trees and shrubs comprise 10 percent or more of the opening, the woody material needs to be controlled to help maintain desired vegetative components.
- Openings should be kept on a disturbance schedule to encourage new growth of desired vegetation. A three-year cycle is good.
- Light disking is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