Brush Management

Iowa Job Sheet

United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
Des Moines, Iowa

Iowa Conservation Practice 314
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Definition

Brush management is the removal, reduction, or manipulation of woody trees and shrubs.

Purpose

Brush management may be used to restore desired vegetative cover to protect soil from erosion, reduce sediment, improve water quality, and enhance wildlife habitat and species diversity. It may also be used to improve grazing conditions so grazing animals can easily access forage of better quantity and quality. Brush management can also be used to protect property from wildfires.

Conditions Where Practice Applies

On native and naturalized pastures, hayland, and wildlife and other lands where trees and shrubs need to be removed to restore or create the natural or desired plant community.

General Specifications

Evaluate the trees and shrubs located in the treatment area and the woody vegetation to be removed to meet the target objectives.

Brush management can be accomplished by using one of the following alternatives. In many situations it may be preferable to use a combination of these alternatives. Soil disturbance shall be left to a minimum. Select the method(s) to be used.

1. Mechanical: This can include tree shearing, using a dozer, use of mechanical devices, mowing, or hand cutting.
   - » Shearing is best accomplished when ground is frozen or dry.
   - » Maximum regrowth (suckering), if desirable, is achieved when cut during the dormant season (October – March).
2. Prescribed Burning: Burning shall be conducted according to an approved burn plan that meets the NRCS Prescribed Burn (338) conservation practice standard.
3. Chemical/Herbicides: This includes broadcast, spot, cut stem or basal treatments. Due to cost and environmental considerations, herbicide treatment should be restricted to small manageable areas. Consult the local Iowa State University Extension office for herbicide recommendations and timing of application. Always follow label directions.
4. Biological: Goats are the species of choice for controlling brush in pastures and abandoned farmland. Goats may be used to reduce woody species such as oak, buckbrush, multiflora rose, locust, cedar and honeysuckle. There may be other biological agents available, such as the rose seed chalcid, a torymid wasp, that attacks the multiflora rose rosette.

A landowner removed invasive cedar trees and brush in the Loess Hills using a prescribed burn and shears.

Maintenance

Without continued management activities small shrubs and trees become large and overgrown. Maintenance activities need to be continued on a regular schedule to suppress the growth of woody vegetation.

Site Specific Comments and Recommendations*

Landowner _____ Farm # _____ Tract # _____

Objectives _____

_____

Undesirable Non-Herbaceous Species _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

Control Method _____Mechanical _____Chemical/Herbicides _____Biological _____Prescribed Burning

Treatment _____

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_____

Operation and Maintenance

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*Attach a conservation plan map