

**Animal Enhancement Activity – ANM15 - Forest stand improvement for wildlife habitat and soil quality**



**Enhancement Description**

This enhancement consists of the creation of snags, den trees, and coarse woody debris on the forest floor to a level optimum for native wildlife usage and long-term forest soil health. It may be implemented during thinning or harvesting or it can be implemented separately.

**Land Use Applicability**

Forestland

**Benefits**

The natural abundance and distribution of snags, den trees (trees with cavities) and coarse forest floor wood have been altered by decades of land conversion, fire suppression, and timber and firewood harvest. Creating an optimum level of such materials provides nesting and hiding cover and substrate for bird, mammal, reptile, and amphibian species while also providing the insects and detritus on which they feed. Downed wood is a preferred growing medium for various species of bryophytes, lichens, and fungi. Rotting wood found on the forest floor and later integrated in the soil surface layer by decomposition provides seedbeds for a variety of tree, shrub, and herbaceous species as well a rooting medium that retains moisture during dry periods.

**Criteria**

This enhancement requires:

1. Creation of snags
2. Downed wood
3. Suitable den/cavity trees distributed throughout the area being treated.

The levels and distribution of materials must be equal to levels found in similar natural community phases indicated in the correlated Ecological Site Description (ESD).

If a suitable ESD has not been developed, NRCS State Offices will develop an example site description that defines the number of snags, the amount of downed wood and number of den trees expected per acre.

This enhancement is implemented mainly by managing existing live trees, dead snags and woody debris. It may be implemented during thinning or harvesting operations or may be undertaken separately. Refer to Conservation Practice Standard Forest Stand Improvement (666) for criteria on the creation of snags, den/cavity trees, and downed wood.



United States Department of Agriculture  
Natural Resources Conservation Service

2010 Ranking Period 2

Producers who want to conduct prescribed burning for other purposes on their forest land should consider enhancement PLT04.

### **Documentation Requirements**

Following implementation of this activity, the landowner must document:

1. The average number of snags per acre
2. An estimate of percentage of the forest floor covered by downed wood.
3. The average number of den/cavity trees per acre
4. Delineations on a map or aerial photo of the areas having the distribution of snags per acre, percent cover downed wood, and/or den/cavity trees per acre
5. Representative digital pictures of snags, downed wood, and den/cavity trees