

Maintain Habitat Diversity While Reducing Fuels in Dry Forests



Washington's forests support more than 400 species of vertebrate wildlife, from hummingbirds to moose.

A healthy forest includes homes for this amazing wildlife. Managing for key habitat features can provide for many creatures during and after active management, such as fuels reduction.



◀ Down logs provide habitat for small mammals, amphibians and reptiles. They slowly release nutrients and water back into the soil and provide food in the form of insect larvae for woodpeckers and bears.

▼ Key habitat elements to maintain in fuels reduction thinning projects are represented by the acronym **SLLOPPS**:

SNAGS
LOGS
LEGACY
OPENINGS
PATCHES
PILES
SHRUBS

SHRUBS.
Retain fruit bearing shrubs such as: serviceberry, chokecherry, elderberry, unless they are ladder fuels.

Here, we outline a few key strategies to employ to help wildlife, while reducing fire risk and stand density.

LOGS provide ground level habitat complexity and cool, moist hiding cover. Retain all down wood logs greater than 12" diameter. Target 4–8 logs per acre.

LEGACY TREES. Large-diameter trees are upper-level habitats for squirrels and many birds. Keep all large overstory trees, especially those with clumpy branches or broken tops. Retain lower branches on approx. 5–10% of trees (i.e. don't prune) to provide perches and mid level habitat.

PILES provide cover for wildlife. Retain and create habitat piles by placing larger logs and branches on bottom of pile, at least 5 layers, creating hollows and hiding places for small wildlife. Layer fine branches on top, 2 feet deep or more. Retain or create 1–2 piles per acre, placed away from edge of tree canopies.

How to Maintain Habitat Diversity While Reducing Fuels in Dry Forests





Large wood won't easily catch or carry fire.

Most fire hazard is generated by finer fuels, those less than 3 inches in diameter. Remember that fuel reduction treatments require maintenance every few years.

PATCHES. Dense pockets of young conifers and shrubs provide quality habitat for many species. They are hiding and fawning cover for deer. When possible, mark areas to be "skipped" in fuels treatment with ribbon to avoid misunderstandings with operators.

Patches size should be from 30 to 100 ft. across, round or in linear patterns. These should break sight distances across treated areas. Target 10% of area in skips. Look for shrub patches and water to include.

SNAGS. Standing dead trees are outstanding habitat features, providing homes for woodpeckers and many other cavity dwelling species including flying squirrels and bats. Retain all snags greater than 12" diameter. Target leaving from 4 to 8 snags per acre. Utilize masticating machinery to reach up and create snags out of thinned trees 6" DBH or larger.

OPENINGS are prime habitats, growing shrubs and grasses for wildlife. 1/4 to 5 acres is good size range. Emphasize natural openings.



Learn More About Maintaining Habitat Diversity:
dnr.wa.gov/LandownerAssistancePortal



Wildlife Habitat and Forest Health

When you're taking steps to maintain the health of your forestland, don't forget that your land is also habitat for a wide variety of native animal species. Large-diameter dead trees are ideal habitat for woodpeckers and other birds, while decaying logs on the ground provide a home for insects, mollusks and amphibians.

DNR's Service Forestry Program is here to help and includes a statewide wildlife biologist who can consult with landowners on their habitats.

**Stewardship
Wildlife Biologist**
360-489-4802



ELK SILHOUETTE FROM PHOTO BY DIANA PARKHOUSE / UNSPLASH.COM

Contact a Forester

Contact a service forester or wildlife biologist to request a site visit.



Go to DNR's Landowner Assistance Portal at

dnr.wa.gov/LandownerAssistancePortal
and visit the Find Your Forester tool, or



Call:
1-800-523-TREE (8733), or



Email:
OneStopShop@dnr.wa.gov

DNR works closely with Washington State University Extension Forestry to provide events targeted to small forest landowners, including forest owner field days, Forest Stewardship Coached Planning courses and other learning opportunities.

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