

White Mountain National Forest
71 White Mountain Drive
Campton, NH

Wildlife Opening Maintenance Program

Bill Tarkulich, May 2017

The White Mountain National Forest (WMNF) has dozens of established wildlife openings throughout its 800,000 acres of land. These openings provide important feeding grounds for both mammals and birds. This document provides general guidance for opening maintenance.

An opening typically consists of several acres of grasses and forbs. It is cleared of all trees and provides low-height environment to forage and build nests. In the WMNF, openings are mowed occasionally. However, due to the speed in which brush and trees grow, it's likely that there will be bushes and trees growing quickly above the grasslands in between mowing. Trees and large bushes discourage undergrowth development and need to be removed.

GUIDELINES

Any bark-stemmed plant may be removed. Most removal can be handled with loppers and pruners. You may encounter the occasional tree which has grown to as much as 3-4". These can be removed with a bow or other handsaw.

Exceptions to pruning include any fruit-producing plant, which could include raspberry bushes and Apple trees. There are many historical sites in the WMNF in which prior settlers planted fruit trees. We want to continue to encourage and protect their growth. Apple trees in particular, should have the area around and under the tree cleared, to promote the continued growth of the tree.

The growth that you remove can either be left where it falls, or you can create piles of brush, which will serve as a terrific nesting place for birds and small mammals. Piles are not necessary and may not be practical in all locations. It's likely to take more than a day for one person to maintain a clearing.

We will have a volunteer logbook for you to record your work. This book serves two purposes. First, to report back to the Forest Service what work you accomplished. Second, any issues you encountered or other information you deem worthy. Volunteers are always the "Eyes and of the Forest". Hazards, work remaining, wildlife spotting and any other items of note can be noted.

It's also a good idea to make sure someone knows you are out there. Stop in at or call a ranger station to inform them of your work plans. This is useful should someone suspect you are unauthorized or should you need to be contacted. You are encouraged to work in teams of two or more, should an emergency arise. Fill out the logbook after your return. That is another way we are certain of your safe return.

Grasslands are tick land. Appropriate precautions must be taken. Use light colored clothing, long sleeve shirts and long pants. Tuck your pants into your socks. If you can, treat clothing with permethrin in advance of your work day. Read the Job Hazard Analysis document (see below) for a complete set of precautions. It's actually a very useful document.

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FOR 2017

2017 will be a pilot year for this program. We have selected two sites, one not far from North Conway, and a second along the Kancamagus Highway. Both have had maintenance not long ago and are easily accessible. You will be provided with a map and an aerial photo of the clearing and its boundaries. As a general rule, the clearing boundary is fairly obvious, surrounded by trees/forests.

There is the usual volunteer paperwork that needs to be completed before you can begin work. The Volunteer Service Agreement (VSA), and the Job Hazard Analysis (JHA) documents must be completed, signed and returned to the Forest Service.

I look forward to having you join us this season.

Regards,

Bill Tarkulich

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