



MANAGING STATE LANDS FOR WILDLIFE

Young Forest & Shrubland Management

Young forest is characterized by a diverse mix of shrubs or young trees with openings of grasses and wildflowers. They are critical wildlife habitats that are essential for the survival of many wildlife. The loss of these habitats through conversion to other land uses, development, or natural succession, combined with fewer natural disturbances that historically created them (e.g., seasonal flooding and ice scour), is resulting in the decline and disappearance of some wildlife dependent on these habitats. Fish and Game strives to maintain and enhance young forest and shrubland habitats on state lands either commercially through timber harvests, by hiring contractors with specialized mowers, or by using staff to hand cut shrubs and young trees to instigate vigorous stump sprouting.



Young forest and shrubland habitat is promoted on state lands to provide habitat for American woodcock and many other declining wildlife.

Some examples of young forest and shrubland projects that have occurred on WMA's include:



An excavator-mounted mower clears trees to reclaim an old field on the Farrar Marsh WMA in Hillsborough.

Farrar Marsh WMA (Hillsborough) - A 5-acre complex of old fields, initially restored in 1992, was reclaimed using a Denis mowing head attached to an excavator. This field will be similarly maintained every 8-10 years. Coupled with clearcuts on neighboring private land and additional cuts that will take place on the WMA, this project will provide young forest habitat in this area for many years.

Nash Stream State Forest (Odell) and Fox State Forest (Hillsborough) - Regenerating alder is especially important for American woodcock, a species of conservation concern in NH and regionally. Woodcock are birds of riparian thickets and bottomlands where dense cover provides diurnal foraging habitat. As alder grows older, stem densities decrease and so does the cover quality for woodcock. Regenerating alder stimulates new stem growth and higher stem densities required by woodcock.

Cascade Marsh WMA (Sutton) – An excavator with a Denis mowing head mowed back portions of an aspen and birch stand at the Cascade Marsh WMA. This treatment was a continuation of a habitat project first started in 2000/01. At that time, multiple strips were mowed in a pole-sized aspen/birch to enhance nesting and foraging cover for grouse and woodcock. The strips that were left uncut in 2000/01 were mowed in 2009 to accomplish the same purpose. Vegetation response will be monitored to determine when the next entry should occur. It is estimated that the project will need mowing every 7-9 years.

For more information on managing shrublands and young forests visit:

- [The Young Forest Project](#)
- [UNH Cooperative Extension's Shrubland page](#)
- [Managing Grasslands, Shrublands, and Young Forest Habitats for Wildlife: A Guide for the Northeast](#)