

Do You Have Problems With:

- Anxiety about protecting your home and property from potential wildfires
- Volatile fuels on lands around your property

Fuel Breaks and Firebreaks Can Solve These Problems

Firebreaks are strips of bare soil or fire retarding vegetation meant to stop or control fire.

Fuel Breaks are strips or blocks of vegetation that have been altered to slow or control a fire.

Purposes and Benefits of Fuel Breaks and Firebreaks:

- Wildfire hazards are reduced
- Greater safety to fire fighters by creating a defensible area
- Reduced intensity of wildfire
- If applied in a woodland, trees may respond to increased growing space with improved growth
- Improved access
- Improved visual quality



A home spared from a wildfire by creating a defensible area around it.



Property surrounded by highly volatile vegetation increases its vulnerability to wildfire.

Considerations:

The cost to apply these practices will depend on the type of material being treated, the extent of protection desired, and the methods used to apply them. These practices may be applied alone or in combination. They can be relatively inexpensive to perform and landowners can often do the work themselves.

The major costs involved may include:

- Clearing the firebreak strip
- Blading, disking or plowing a firebreak
- Hand tools to control vegetation
- Herbicides
- Hauling controlled vegetation
- Mowing
- Controlled burning

Fuel and Fire Breaks

The following describes the types of practices that may be needed depending on the current condition of the flammable materials and the objectives the landowner.

How to Install the Practice:

Firebreaks



Disked Firebreak

Often times, farm equipment can be used in install adequate firebreaks

- When possible take advantage of natural or man-made barriers such as roads, ponds, etc.
- Firebreaks may be temporary or permanent and can be fire-resistant vegetation, non-flammable materials, bare ground, or a combination of these.
- Make sure the firebreaks are of an adequate width. Usually a 10 ft. wide strip will stop creeping, ground fires.
- Take steps to avoid creating unwanted soil erosion.

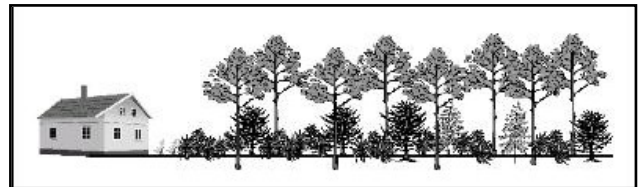
Fuel Breaks

Unlike firebreaks, fuel breaks may still burn. The key to remember is that these areas can slow the spread of a fire because they are managed to provide far less fuels to carry the flames.

- Generally reduce the fuel volume, break up the fuel continuity and eliminate the fuel chain between structures and surrounding forest vegetation
- If trees are involved, space the crowns to allow heat to escape. Prune dead lower limbs on larger trees and remove accumulations under them. Pruning also improves the visibility around your home and helps tree growth. Also, interrupt any connection between the ground and the

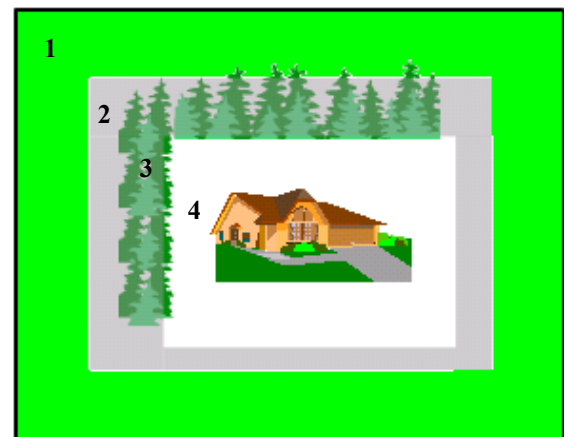
possible for a fire to “step-up” into the crowns. Adequately dispose of any slash created from installing this practice.

- When grasses are involved, control can be by mowing, grazing or prescribed burning. Planting cool-season grasses can expand the effectiveness of a fuel break, but will need to be treated when dead and dried. Perennial grasses should be mowed to a 3 inch height.
- Complete control or removal of all vegetation is not necessary as long as the continuity of the fuels is broken.



Example of both undesirable horizontal and vertical fuel continuity. This continuity should be disrupted with selective removal of some of the trees and shrubs.

Combination Fuel Breaks & Firebreaks



1. Fuel Break of mowed grass, thinned trees and shrubs, or both
2. Plowed or disked firebreak
3. Windbreaks with no debris, litter, downed limbs, or leaf buildup
4. Defensible Space - A safety zone cleared of combustible materials for at least 30 feet immediately adjacent to property needing fire protection.

SMALL SCALE SOLUTIONS FOR YOUR FARM

Technical Help Is Available

Your local Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) office has experienced conservationists that can assist you with a plan to improve your small woodlot. They can also help you develop a Conservation Plan to solve other problems you have identified on your farm.

There is no charge for our assistance. Simply call your local office at the number listed below to set up an appointment and we will come to your farm.

You may also be eligible to receive financial assistance, through a state or federal program. Your NRCS office will explain any programs that are available so you can make the best decision for your operation. All NRCS programs and services are voluntary.



Helping People Help the Land

For More Information Contact the:

Natural Resources Conservation Service

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or familial status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs). Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact the USDA's TARGET Center at 202-720-2600 (voice and TDD). To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326W, Whitten Building, 14th and Independence Ave., SW, Washington, D.C., 20250-9410, or call (202) 720-5964 (voice) or (202) 720-1127 (TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.