

# Retaining Dead and Down Wood



**Coarse woody debris (CWD) provides many valuable functions and services in forested lands!**

## TREE HEALTH

- **Provides a site for tree regeneration.** Tree seedlings, especially yellow birch and hemlock, frequently rely on fallen logs or stumps to germinate.
- **Provides protection for tree regeneration.** In some settings, blowdown and coarse woody debris can restrict deer access to regenerating saplings, providing protection from browse.
- **Provides habitat for decomposers and nutrients for plant growth.** Regular additions of CWD support populations of fungi, bacteria, and insects that digest downed wood and make nutrients more available to growing plants and trees.

## SOIL HEALTH

- **Contributes to soil formation, stabilization and health.** Long-term (large) sources of woody organic matter improve soil moisture and structure, reverse soil compaction, and provide a source of “slow-release” nutrients available to growing plants.
- **Conserves moisture during dry periods.** As coarse woody debris decays, it is incorporated into the soil and helps forest soils absorb and retain more moisture.

## WILDLIFE HEALTH

- **Provides important wildlife habitat.** Almost half of all vertebrate species make use of downed logs for cover, feeding, reproduction, nesting, preening, bedding, lookouts, drumming, sunning, roosting, and hibernating. This includes amphibians and reptiles, mammals, and birds. CWD is also important for many invertebrate species.
- **Provides structure, cover, and places for food to accumulate in aquatic environments.** Large woody debris that fall or are washed into aquatic systems influence channel dynamics and provide fish habitat.

