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FALL 2019 NEWSLETTER THE ECOFORESTER LANDSCAPE EDITION

Pisgah-Nantahala National Forest Management Draft Plan Being Assisted By EcoForesters

There is no better example of landscape level management than that which occurs on our National Forests. There are 154 in total that encompass over 188 million acres and are managed according to rules laid out in the National Forest Management Act. This planning process usually occurs every 15-20 years and is directed by the 2012 Planning Rule, whose "intent is to ensure an adaptive land management planning process that is inclusive, efficient, collaborative and science-based to promote healthy, resilient, diverse and productive national forests and grasslands." The result is a planning document that relies on community feedback and strives to reduce conflict between various user groups on National Forests.

As part of the collaborative group the Nantahala-Pisgah Forest Partnership (NPFP), EcoForesters is leading in that process now as the USFS writes the management plan for the Pisgah and Nantahala forests. The NPFP is a diverse group of stakeholders that represent conservation, wildlife, recreation, and forest product industry values to engage in a robust, public dialogue in parallel with the mandated planning process.

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Private Landowners: The Unsung Heroes of our Region

There is a disconnect between private woodland owners and forest management. In WNC, over 60% of forests are privately owned and less than 25% of NC woodland owners have management plans. The reasons for not having a plan are diverse and include landowner values and why they own the land in the first place. Some landowners are interested in the tax savings that come with the Present Use Value program, which gives tax incentives to landowners who manage their forests for timber harvesting. Conversely, there are landowners that choose not to take advantage of those tax savings because they are wary of a commitment to harvesting trees.

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Letter From The Director, Rob Lamb

I hope in this newsletter you will learn why community based and large scale approaches to forest restoration are so important. This is why EcoForesters is bringing forest landowners together, giving them the tools to create and implement a sustainable plan for their forest that also fosters economic success and social stability. We hope to use our Sandy Mush Forest Restoration Project as a model for other Appalachian communities.



EcoForesters is committed to long term results for the health of all our forests, and this requires sustained collaboration with communities and local leaders. But we and the landowners we work with need support to sustain the clean air and water, wildlife habitat, and many other benefits healthy forests provide. We hope you can commit to EcoForesters and support this work to conserve and restore Appalachian forests for future generations.

(Continued from front page)

Some consider not cutting trees equal to forest management, while others do not think management is necessary until they are ready to cut timber. The motivation for not having a plan are numerous, but whatever the reason, in the absence of planning forest health will decline and landowners will be less prepared to respond to changes in their forests.

But those who choose to have a forester write a management plan are taking a necessary step that improve the chances their forests will remain forested. Management plans provide woodland owners with a baseline of their forest health and gives them a playbook for improving the forest ecology. Even landowners that choose to harvest timber are better prepared to do so in a manner that does not degrade the long-term sustainability of their forests and all the benefits it provides.

As shown on our map (pg.3), privately owned forests make up over twice the acreage of our publicly held lands. This fact makes the management of private acres vital for maintaining high conservation values and for protecting the public lands they border. Ill conceived timber harvesting or the absence of management can exacerbate invasive species on neighboring parcels or further fragment intact forests. But through planning, private landowners can have considerable impact and provide the connective tissues between important conserved public land.

We call woodland landowners who plan "unsung heroes" because communities have long benefited from the clean water, wildlife habitat, scenic beauty and more provided by trees. Little does the public realize the commitment taken by some woodland owners could impact our quality of life in so many ways. If you would like to join the ranks of these unsung heroes, give EcoForesters a call to learn more about forest management.



SANDY MUSH FOREST RESTORATION



Photo courtesy EcoForesters

ENGAGING A COMMUNITY IN POSITIVE FOREST MANAGEMENT

For those of you that have driven into Sandy Mush, maybe to get a Christmas tree or just out for a drive, know that the views and landscape are spectacular. Mountains and coves are green and lush, rich farm lands dot the landscape and serve as a buffer for the French Broad River watershed. The specialness of this area was certainly known to the Southern Appalachian Highland Conservancy (SAHC) as they worked tirelessly to protect over 11,000 acres through land acquisition and conservation easements. They recognized the ecological and cultural importance of Sandy Mush and were able to keep farmland as farms while protecting scenic vistas from future development. But protection from development is only the first step towards assuring these valued lands keep their unique qualities on the landscape.

Oriental bittersweet and other invasive plants have infested much of this area and have degraded forest quality. This aggressive, shade tolerant vine can outcompete local vegetation, quickly spreading to the forest canopy. It also produces a vibrant red berry that birds love to eat and spread into other areas of the community. This invasive plant is found on conservation land, state game land and privately-owned land alike, strangling trees and changing the forest ecosystem.

SMFR PROJECT GOALS:

- Restore native species habitat
- Improve strategic planning
- Host a Forest Restoration Gathering
- Form the Sandy Mush Forest Restoration Coalition

The SMFR project is taking a unique, community-wide approach to forest management, looking for new ways to battle a real problem. By partnering with SAHC and the Forest Stewards Guild we have held community meetings and interviews, enlisted members of the community to help map where invasive plants are and learned more about what methods of control have been utilized within the community. We are also training landowners how to properly control bittersweet and what herbicides can be safely applied and how to do so. Other goals include organizing community workgroups that can team together for invasive remediation efforts on each others properties and perhaps to help neighbors find ways to get involved.

The project is ambitious, but will provide us with a pilot program that can be used in other communities. Stay tuned!

How Does EcoForesters Put Your Money to Work?

EcoForesters is proud of our fee-for-service work. It provides a needed service, but more importantly, it means we are making change happen. Whether writing plans or removing mountains of invasive plants from forests, EcoForesters helps landowners achieve the results that our advocacy has shown to be so vital. But while this work helps sustain our organization, it is not enough to sustain the mission and necessary education efforts that have inspired innovative solutions like the Sandy Mush Forest Restoration Project and seasonal landowner tours. Costs associated with our non-profit include:

- * **Outreach to landowners encouraging ecologically beneficial forest management**
- * **Hosting landowner tours each year**
- * **Training landowners in invasive species control**
- * **Speaking/Tabling at community events**
- * **Initiating and sustaining community forest restoration projects**

Help us reach our goal of \$30,000 that will enable us to continue necessary advocacy to address the broken model of how forests are managed.

All donations help move us closer to our goal!

How does each \$5,000 donated to EcoForesters impact local forests?

- * Restore over 20 acres of conserved forestland suffocated by invasive plants
- * Outreach to over 12,000 landowners in need of management assistance
- * Provide technical advice and education to over 80 landowners
- * Host 100 people on a forest stewardship tour that empowers them to manage their forests
- * Allow one year's active participation in the planning of our Pisgah and Nantahala National Forests
- * Map invasive species on over 40,000 acres to plan community based forest restoration.

ECOFORESTERS NEEDS YOUR HELP SHARING OUR MESSAGE

The story of forest management is a complicated one as the value of private forests means different things to different landowners. One common denominator rings true in that most landowners want to leave a positive **legacy** to the next generation of forest owners. This is achievable by practicing ecologically beneficial forestry and EcoForesters is leading the way. Please support our efforts as your donations will help us expand our educational efforts, implement positive stewardship practices on conservation properties, and realize large scale forest restoration. Here's how:

TO MAKE YOUR TAX DEDUCTIBLE DONATION, GO TO ECOFORESTERS.ORG & CLICK "DONATE NOW" TO MAKE A SECURE ONLINE GIFT, OR YOU MAY SEND A CHECK TO:
PO BOX 16007 ASHEVILLE, NC 28816

THANKS FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

EcoForester of the Year and Root Cause awards Announced at Annual Event

EcoForesters is excited to once again recognize good forestry when we see it. We are especially pleased this year to merge the Root Cause awards with our own. We look forward to celebrating with our winners on November 7th at our annual event at the Wedge Foundation. This years award winners are:

EcoForester of the Year

Given to a landowner or an organization that exemplifies good forest management, this year we award Ellis and Linda Fincher Jr. The Fincher's had EcoForesters develop a purely ecologically beneficial stewardship plan in 2017, focusing only on actions that could improve his forest for wildlife habitat, high water quality, biodiversity, forest health, and aesthetic beauty. He followed through on this plan by having EcoForesters implement important invasive plant control work and encouraged the local homeowner's association to treat the invasives growing on their common land. Finally, he owns a part of, and has protected from development, what is arguably the tallest waterfall in the east! Thank you Ellis and Linda for being EcoForesters!

Root Cause Sustainable Use of Forest Products

To highlight a non-timber forest product this year, EcoForesters recognizes Conservation Biologist Aimee Tomcho of Audubon NC. She has led a program in NC called Forestry for the Birds which aims to increase the amount, and improve the quality of habitat for many different kinds of birds, particularly those that are declining or at risk.

Root Cause Lifetime Achievement Award

John Palmer is the recipient of our Lifetime Achievement award. For over thirty years, John was the forest management instructor for Haywood Community College, enthusiastically teaching new students about the importance of sustainable forestry. A leader in his field, he started the Intercollegiate Woodsmen's Meet, which now bears his name. His dedication to forestry education and sustainable forest management is why we honor him with this years' award.

SAVE THE DATE

November 7th

Join us at our annual event at The Wedge Brewery at Foundation in Asheville

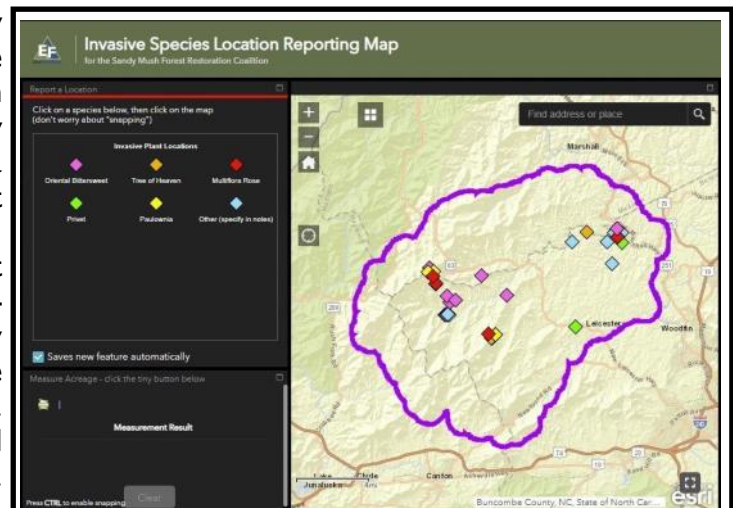
Celebrate our award winners and hear about what's happening in our forests!

More details to come!

Mapping Corner: New Program Helps Landowners Map Invasive Species

Threats to our forests don't respect property boundaries, making it difficult to determine their scope and severity. Crowd sourcing is a powerful tool which can make this daunting task much more manageable. By tapping into the local knowledge of entire communities, a large amount of information can be collected in a short amount of time.

EcoForesters has created a web mapping tool that allows landowners the ability to report locations of non-native invasive species. This new tool was tested by members of the Sandy Mush Coalition, giving us valuable data to use in our forest restoration prioritization model. They recorded location, species type and infestation level by utilizing the application on their phone or computer. This information will serve as a baseline to develop strategies for helping landowners control invasive species. When completed, this tool will be used with all landowners we work with to better inventory invasive species and prepare for controlling them in our region.





Our Mission

EcoForesters is a 501(c)(3) non-profit professional forestry organization dedicated to conserving and restoring our Appalachian forests.

**Please contact us
with any questions
about your forest
or our mission!**

How To Reach Us

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New Invasive Species Crew Making a Difference in WNC



Mary Vann Johnston

EcoForesters is pleased to now have a full-time invasive species crew to help landowners control their non-native invasive species (NNIS). For years, invasive plants and insect infestations have grown in scale, often degrading forests and property values. We believe that with proper planning, NNIS can be controlled and native species restored. Services we offer include:

- * Providing landowners information on how to identify and treat specific species
- * Teaching landowners how to treat certain species on their property through demonstration, if landowner is interested in completing the treatments themselves
- * Developing plans for treatments: when, how often, and where to begin
- * Overseeing and implementing all invasive species treatments on a property

For questions or more information, please contact our crew leader Mary Vann Johnston to find out how we can help you reduce the amount of invasive species in a forest near you! mvjohnston@ecoforesters.org

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