

Caring for forests like we care for each other *Rob Lamb*

We at EcoForesters hope you, your family and friends are all well, and continue to stay healthy during this unprecedented pandemic. Since the onset of stay-at-home orders I've been inspired to see so many citizens willing to make sacrifices for the common good: foremost, the front-line health care workers, but also business owners and employees staying home, and townspeople keeping a safe distance from one other when they must go out. Our sincere thanks to you all.

While as a parent I'm focused on human public health, as a forester I see parallels between the human world and the forest biota. Forests, like humans, can become sick, both from native pathogens, as well as the introduction of non-native invasive species. The most recent examples are the hemlock wooly adelgid and emerald ash borer - both nearly wiping out entire tree species from Appalachian forests. Likewise, the American chestnut was totally decimated by an imported parasitic fungus in the early 20th century. Today, our forests are increasingly vulnerable because of poor management practices, fragmentation, and changes in our global climate that facilitate the spread of disease vectors.

Like humans, forests need proactive care to both recover from illness and to maintain their good health. In this issue you'll read about a variety of threats to forests, and the ways EcoForesters helps landowners improve and restore forests through scientific planning and management.



Hemlock Wooly Adelgid

Photo courtesy savehemlocksn.org

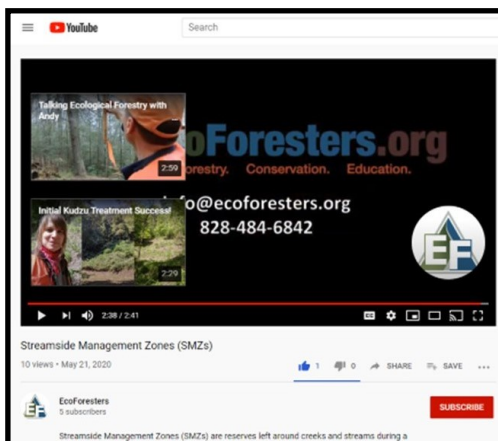
From 2019 to 2020: A lesson in adaptive management *Lang Hornthal*

EcoForesters finished 2019 in a strong manner. Year one of the Sandy Mush Forest Restoration project was a resounding success, and with funding secured we began implementing year two. Additionally we completed our first full season with a specialized invasive species control crew. Most importantly, we saw forest planning of both public and private lands incorporating more ecologically-beneficial forestry. But just when we were on a roll - things came to an abrupt halt with Covid-19.

Nevertheless, our mission focuses not simply on one calendar year or two, but on the long game, and on best practices in adaptive management. In the past two months we have quickly reworked how we reach landowners and assist them with information and skills to be good stewards of their forests. Because of the current risk from public gatherings we are creating virtual landowner tours and producing videos that showcase restorative management prescriptions. And by doing this we can reach far more landowners than ever before. While we still hope to offer in-person landowner tours in 2020, until they can be done safely we'll rely on the new virtual format.

Regardless of the pandemic EcoForesters will continue calling attention to the threats to our Appalachian forests while proactively providing smart solutions. And when necessary, as an organization, we will adapt. I hope you too will continue being our partners: by making a contribution, sharing what you've learned with others, and contacting us to help with your forestry needs.

While our primary focus in this period must be taking care of each other, with your help EcoForesters' work to conserve and restore forests will also continue. If we care for our forests the same way we care for one other, I have no doubt we will succeed in providing healthy forests for many future generations to enjoy.



EF is adapting with virtual field tours

STAFF

Andy Tait

EcoForestry Director | Asheville Area

Ian Anderson

Ecoforestry Director | Boone Area

Lang Hornthal

Development & Communications

Mary Vann Johnston

Invasive Crew Leader & Forestry Associate

Jon Shaffer

Forest Carbon Consultant

Gabby Hovis

GIS & Conservation Technician

Armin Weise

Forestry Associate

Dylan Edmonds

Invasive Control Associate

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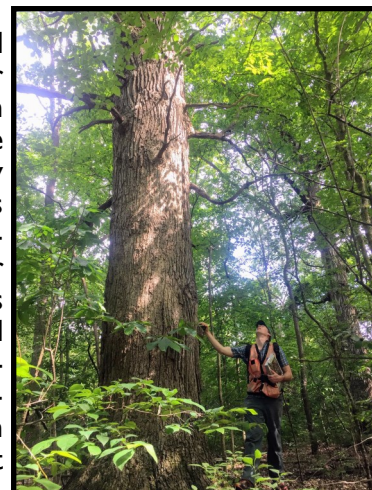
Doesn't Nature Manage the Forest for Me?

Andy Tait

Before big box retail existed families looked to nature to provide needed products: to build their homes, for food, and to provide everything from firewood to pitch. Consequently people spent time in the forest obtaining what they needed, and they could monitor the forests' status. As the country's population grew and demands increased, forests became primarily the source for commercial timber harvesting. This seemingly unlimited resource was used continually for economic development and growth. We now understand this approach was unsustainable and resulted in the forests we have today, that are less diverse, of lower quality and in need of restoration. We cannot go back in time, but we can regain the intentional way we use forests.

An understanding of forest sustainability requires landowners monitor and inventory what trees are growing, and their stages of life. Owners must identify the species present and know what species should be naturally occurring in the forest. Are invasive species out-competing native ones? Did past mismanagement create conditions that made it harder for cornerstone species like oak to thrive? Lastly, a clear picture of what benefits owners seek from their forest is necessary. Abundant wildlife? Merchantable timber? Or simply a resilient, healthy forest free of invading species that will one day be enjoyed by their grandchildren?

There is not a single silver bullet to forest management; all forests are not created equally. The one common denominator for all forests is that doing nothing will not make a forest stronger. In the face of past mismanagement, such as short-sighted timber harvesting or fire suppression, to deal with present emerging threats we must proactively work to restore forests so they can be conserved and enjoyed for future generations. Your forest is your investment and your legacy.



Oaks struggle to regenerate without management

What sets EcoForesters' Forest Management Plans apart?

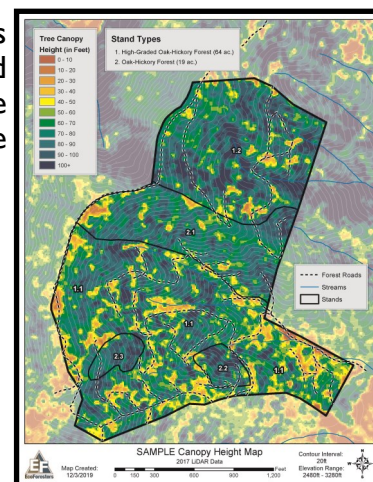
All forest plans are not created equally, but they should always have one thing in common: improving the long-term ecological health for future generations. All EcoForesters written plans consider:

- Forest composition and structure
- Species diversity
- Wildlife habitat
- Invasive Species
- Timber Stand Analysis
- Ecological restoration

The plan will be a living document that will adapt as your forest evolves. It should be read each year and updated with new findings as you spend time in the woods. Our plans are thorough and encourage implementation. These plan elements include:

- * Forest health assessment and current conditions
- * Management goals and objectives
- * Stewardship prescriptions
- * Invasive species control plan
- * Stand maps and Tree Canopy Height analysis

To see EcoForester sample plans, go to our website.



Landowner Reforestation Project: Leading by Example

Armin Weise

Last year, a landowner contacted us for help to return her 20 acres of abandoned pasture to an ecosystem that would naturally have occurred prior to being used for grazing and growing tobacco. We formulated a reforestation plan to restore the native naturally adaptive local forest community. Two months later, we were planting the first 7 acres of mixed white oak, chestnut oak, shortleaf pine, southern red oak, black oak, and pitch pine. Altogether, over 1300 trees were planted.

Planting a diverse mix of native site-adapted trees improves wildlife habitat, cools and cleans the air, and helps to mitigate climate change. But planting trees alone may not necessarily provide the above benefits and will still need some help to assure a healthy future forest. Once planted, proper management is required to have a successful reforestation planting. We plan to monitor the growth of this newly planted forest and are excited to see the trees leaf out.

Over the next several years, the landowner will need to manage for the invasive Chinese Silvergrass, which was found on adjoining parcels. Once the saplings have grown to a respectable height in a year or two, a prescribed burn can be considered. So no matter what a forest's age, proper management will help maintain the species composition as desired that in turn will provide the desired environmental, economic, cultural, and wildlife benefits we all hope to bring about.

Another reason for reforestation is that carbon sequestration in trees is a known mitigant to climate change. Whether by reforestation or by nurturing native trees in your established forests, promoting the growth of younger trees can provide the next generation of landowners a solid start that will lessen the impact of a changing climate.



EcoForesters crew planting oak saplings

Four different types of Woodland Owners requires diverse communication

The US Forest Service began taking the National Woodland Owners Survey in 1978 to better understand landowner reasons for owning forestland, in order to better serve them. Using the survey results, the Sustaining Family Forests Initiative identified four types of woodland owners, based on the relative importance of financial returns and desire for amenities: 1) **Woodland Retreat** owners are amenity focused and value aesthetics, privacy, and recreation. They are disinclined toward intervention and favor low-impact uses, and are willing to invest in their land if supportive of their priorities. 2) **Working the Lands** owners value both the amenities and financial

benefits of forests. They define stewardship as the judicious and sustainable use of the land, and are active managers of their woodlands. 3) **Supplemental Income** owners primarily think of forests as financial investment. They prioritize enhancing the value of their forest holdings. 4) **Uninvolved** owners tend to be disengaged from their woods and stewardship.

Having a diverse landowner base means that a one-size-fits-all message will not resonate with everyone. EcoForesters is finding ways to reach and serve the stewardship needs for all types of landowners. Our landowner tours and Sandy Mush Forest Restoration project provide the opportunity to speak directly with landowners and hear what *they* value. Helping landowners clarify their values regarding forest stewardship is best achieved through direct communication. Your support helps create these opportunities.



Andy Tait explains the benefits of a shelterwood cut

INVASIVE SPECIES: IN SEARCH OF LIGHT!



Oriental Bittersweet



Tree of Heaven



Multiflora Rose



Kudzu

WHY CONTROLLING INVASIVE PLANTS IS IMPORTANT TO FOREST HEALTH

Have you ever had a party where an early guest eats lots of the best food? This is akin to a forest with invasive species. The reason that dozens of non-native invasive plant species (NNIS) are becoming more common is because they quickly establish on disturbed ground. Whether it occurs naturally by a tree blowing over or after a timber harvest, when light is introduced to the forest floor, there is competition for it. Once established, these quick growing invasive plants will cover or strangle, anything that gets in their way, including trees. Some seeds are dispersed by birds while others have root systems that aggressively spread when cut.

This means landowners must be vigilant. By cataloging your stands and planning for future growth, you can monitor what NNIS are present while stewarding your forest to its desired condition. By planning which stands to treat first and active monitoring, landowners can prevent NNIS from dominating native species

Climate change must also be accounted for in forest planning. Changes in precipitation (drought and flood) and rising temperatures are altering ecosystems and exacerbating disturbances. There is also evidence that increased carbon dioxide levels further stimulate NNIS growth.

When forest fragmentation due to development is factored in, the stage is being set for reduced Appalachian forest health. While climate issues remain mostly out of landowner control, you can better prepare your forest for the pending threats with a robust forest management plan.

EcoForesters 7 P's should be considered when formulating a plan. **Protect** any special ecological areas first and **prevent** the spread of NNIS into the forest core. **Plan** for the long-term and **promote** your control efforts to encourage neighbors and communities to take this issue seriously. Lastly **prioritize** areas where forest regeneration is threatened. If your approach includes herbicides, consult **professional** advice regarding its use. **Perseverance** will be rewarded. Go to our [website](#) for landowner resources and tips for treating your NNIS. If you don't have NNIS on your property and want to help, call your local land trust and volunteer on their stewardship teams.

ECOFORESTERS SEVEN P'S

1. Protect
2. Prevent
3. Plan
4. Promote
5. Prioritize
6. Professional
7. Persevere



2019 EcoForesters Invasives Control Crew

Barriers to Forest Management: Innovative Funding Offered as Incentive

Why do over 75% of landowners choose not to manage their forest? The top two reasons identified by Ecoforesters are funding and education. Each year we help educate more landowners through our advocacy and outreach, helping the public see the connection between stewardship, healthy forests and quality of life. Included in our educational efforts are how the Present Use Value (PUV) tax program can save landowners money through tax abatements in exchange for management and planning. We also help landowners that are seeking “cost share funding” through the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). In both cases, there are requirements as to what landowners must do to get these financial benefits.

Clean water and a resilient forest resource should be priority number one for the Appalachians. Helping landowners with incentives for active stewardship has been a proven success of the NC Forest Stewardship Program. One way EcoForesters is also helping is through our Invasive Stewardship Fund. With a generous grant from the Community Foundation of Western NC, we established a matching program to help conservation lands double their stewardship. This initiative not only provides funding for invasive control, but also helps to publicize the need for forest restoration.



EcoForesters helped Marcela Huguleit obtain cost shared funding for invasive control

EcoForesters identifies creative solutions to the barriers that prevent forest stewardship. Our advocacy and education for landowners, policy makers and supporters help more people understand how incentivizing stewardship pay dividends for the prosperity of our region.

For more information on PUV and NRCS funding:

PUV: <https://content.ces.ncsu.edu/north-carolinas-forestry-present-use-valuation-puv-property-tax-program>

NRCS: <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/nc/programs/financial/eqip/>

Land Trust stewardship: Buying the Land is just the first step

Rebekah Robinson



Conserving Carolina has protected more than 45,000 acres of forests, farms, parks, and wetlands in western NC and Upstate SC since 1989. As a conservation organization it's important to us not only to legally protect land, but also to care for the natural resources on the lands we own and encourage the landowners we partner with to do the same. The first step is knowing what's on the property, but the next crucial step is developing a comprehensive plan for any management activities that may need to occur in order to safeguard the resources and the ecological integrity of the property. This can include treating invasive species, stopping or minimizing soil erosion, or undertaking timber management or prescribed burning, as just a few examples. Management planning directs how we can steward the conservation values that motivated the protection of the land in the first place. The plans create blueprints for what we should do and when we should do it to maximize the ecological function and guard against the loss of those conservation values.

Rebekah Robinson is the Assistant Program Director for Conserving Carolina and a Board Member of EcoForesters



Conserving Carolina Volunteers tackle a kudzu root

Many thanks to our supporters and partners

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WHY IS EcoFORESTERS A NON-PROFIT?

EcoForesters provides fee-based professional forest management services that make up a significant portion of our annual revenue. So why do we ask for donations? Because the need for proper forest management outweighs the public's understanding of the problem. The large majority of landowners do not have a management plan. In the absence of planning comes the loss of native habitat to invasive species, "high grading" timber harvests, and the risk of forest fragmentation when forestland is sold or inherited. EcoForesters educates landowners, advocates for landscape-level stewardship and engages with business leaders to assure healthy forests can continue to support the region. This advocacy drives our work in the forest and we will accomplish more with your support.

TO MAKE YOUR TAX DEDUCTIBLE DONATION, GO TO ECOFORRESTERS.ORG

Nantahala-Pisgah Planning Update

Comment period extended due to COVID19

The draft management plan is finally out after five years of hard work and EcoForesters is encouraged by what we see. By collaborating with user groups in recreation, conservation, wildlife, and forest products, we have helped reduce conflict associated with NF planning and advocated for FSC certification of the Pisgah and Nantahala forests.

The 90-day comment period has been extended until June 29 due to COVID19, so you still have time to read the draft and make comments to the Forest Service. You can find the draft plan, interactive maps and more at www.fs.usda.gov/goto/nfsnc/nprevision. You can also learn how to comment to the Forest Service about what you would like to see in the final plan. It is detailed, comprehensive plan but please reach out to us if you have any questions or concerns. EcoForesters is optimistic that the forests we love will be sustainably managed for future generations.

Your donation allows EcoForesters to participate in this long-term, but important process. By staying involved, we can help shape an all-lands approach to forest stewardship. Thank you for your support!



Sandy Mush Forest Restoration Project Update

Finding innovative ways to engage landowners has always been a priority for EcoForesters. By listening to landowners and connecting them to resources, a plan was developed to increase forest stewardship in Sandy Mush. EcoForesters was pleased to complete the first year of this multi-partner project that engaged landowners in Sandy Mush and treated over 50 acres of invasive species on 8 conservation properties. EcoForesters, the Southern Appalachian Highland Conservancy, the Forest Stewards Guild, community members, natural resource professionals and other stakeholders met to formulate a plan to assist landowners in the stewardship of their forests. Culminating with a Restoration Gathering in January, partners met and connected landowners with technical and financial resources to strengthen forest stewardship.

Year two funding for plan implementation was secured through a generous grant and we have already begun implementation of our action plan. Despite not meeting face to face this spring, we continue to engage landowners virtually through trainings on controlling invasive plants in Sandy Mush.

To learn more about this project or how to participate in the coalition, please contact us.



Andy Tait presents to the Sandy Mush Coalition at the annual gathering in January.



Armin "Spielberg" at work!

Landowner Tours in the age of COVID19: Virtual offerings

While the current pandemic has prevented us from hosting in-person landowners tours, we refuse to wait. This is the best way that we help landowners see why managing forests in an ecologically beneficial way is so important. Walking in the woods is an effective way to help landowners better understand their forest. In the absence of public gatherings, we have begun recording our field work to bring the tour to your house! This allows us to "walk" with you in different forest stands while explaining different management techniques. These videos will be available soon and some have been posted on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/EcoForesters). The videos will become archived on our website to serve as a technical resource for landowners.

We have not given up on a 2020 landowner tour and we are also planning a webinar series where landowners can watch and ask real time questions to staff. If you are interested in participating or would like to learn more about a particular topic, please let us know.



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

Mail: PO Box 16007
Asheville, NC 28816

Office: 167 Haywood Road
Asheville, NC 28806

Email: info@ecoforesters.org

Phone:
(828) 484-6842 | **Asheville**
(828) 263-6121 | **Boone**

Website:
www.ecoforesters.org

Facebook:
www.facebook.com/ecoforesters/

Instagram:
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EcoForesters' Invasive Species Crew Gearing up for 2020

EcoForesters' Invasive Species Crew is ramping up for another season! Have you noticed any non-native invasive species leafing out in your forest this spring? Unsure how to identify non-native invasive plants? EcoForesters is here to help! We are available to assist you and your forest in a variety of ways, from:



How many EcoForesters can you see?

- * Mapping out areas on your property of invasive species and their severity
- * Developing a plan of action and timeline for treatments
- * Providing you with the tools and knowledge to conduct treatments yourself
- * Utilizing the work of our Invasive Species Crew

Please contact crew leader Mary Vann with questions about your invasive species control at mvjohnston@ecoforesters.org or call our office at (828) 684-6842.

EcoForesters
PO Box 16007
Asheville, NC 28816

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