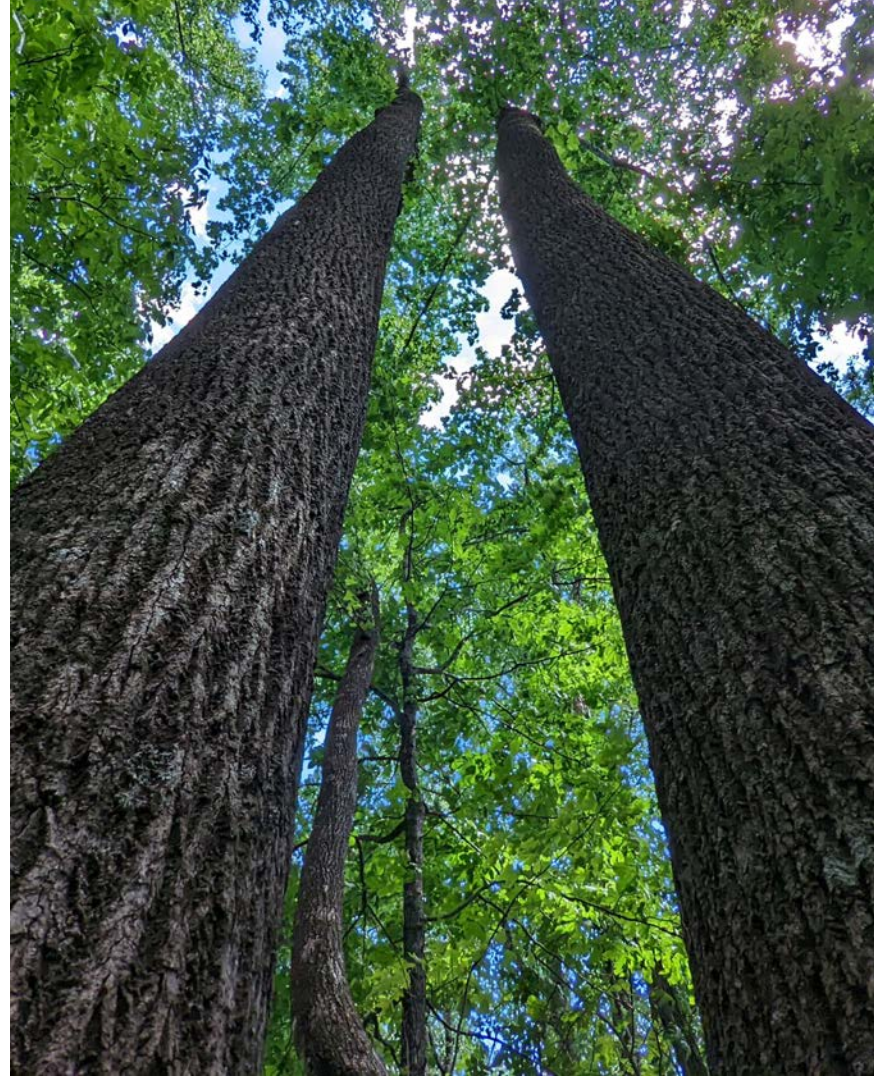


A person wearing a yellow fire jacket, orange hat, and black gloves is kneeling in a forest, working with a small tree sapling. The background shows a wooded area with bare trees and a grey sky.

THE EcoFORESTER

SUMMER 2023 NEWSLETTER





INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 4 PROJECT AREA HIGHLIGHT: SANDY MUSH
- 5 PROJECT AREA HIGHLIGHT: CHEROKEE
- 6 PROJECT AREA HIGHLIGHT: FOOTHILLS
- 7 LOSS OF PAPERMILL IS A LOSS FOR FORESTS TOO
- 8 MODERN FORESTRY REVISITED
- 10 SHOPE CREEK IS AN EXAMPLE OF THE PISGAH NANTAHALA PLAN IN ACTION
- 11 FOREST MANAGEMENT IN SANDY MUSH
- 12 BOARD PROSPECTIVE: THE TIME IS NOW
- 13 THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS
- 14 VIEW FROM THE CREW
- 15 TRIBUTE TO TOM RUANE

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Opportunity Is The Reward For Hard Work

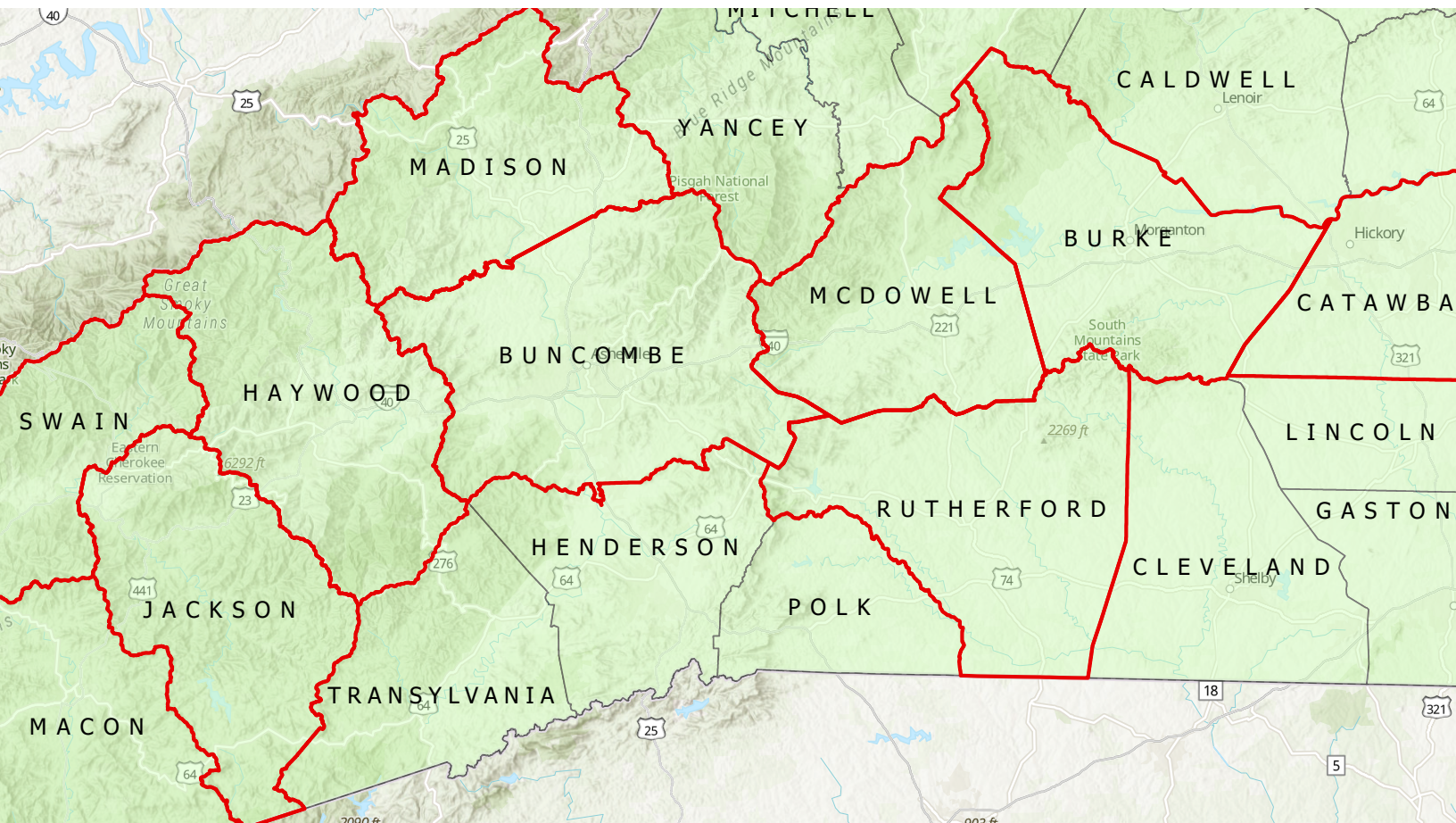
EcoForesters has been given the opportunity to expand its mission further into rural counties by partnering with agencies and nonprofits. By being a recipient of federal grant funding, we are providing free consulting and planning for landowners that need help stewarding their forest. Government spending is not always agreed upon, but in this instance at least we can solidly connect the dots between this investment and healthier future forests.

EcoForesters was chosen to be the first non-profit recipient of the USDA's [Landscape Scale Restoration \(LSR\)](#) project in North Carolina because our methods are effective. By meeting landowners through workshops, consultations, and videos, we are able to learn more about what they value and need in order to keep their forested land in forest. Forest planning is the gateway to the long term engagement necessary to connect the current generation of landowners with the next.

With an average age of 66, North Carolina landowners are preparing for one of the largest changes in land ownership in history. As this generation passes down the land through inheritance or sale, it is important

that they also hand down a stewardship ethic that best prepares the new owners for future threats and challenges. This land ethic should be one that actively considers what steps might be taken to assure the proper balance of species, age class, and resilience remains on the landscape. A healthy forest is the best strategy for climate change and the coming pests or weather that will impact local communities.

EcoForesters takes this opportunity given to us seriously as we implement this landscape scale project. We will be more successful with partners and supporters so we ask you to stay engaged with our work and look for opportunities for involvement. We are in this position because of your trust and belief in the conservation and restoration of forests. The next three years are important and we look forward to sharing how we plan to accomplish the goals and objectives laid out in this project. This federal funding often comes with strings attached in the form of a 1:1 match requirement that EcoForesters stands ready to provide. Please read on to learn how your support will double our impact across the region.



Private landowners own 70% of forests and must be engaged in order to make a meaningful difference on the landscape.



WHY IS FOREST RESTORATION NEEDED AND HOW IS IT ACHIEVED?

The advancements of our country and the prosperity we see today can be tied to manifest destiny and the Industrial Revolution. Our belief in hard work, innovation, and capitalism resulted in an expansion that has taken a toll on our natural resources. We are now seeing that taking the best genetics out of a system over a century has reduced the resilience of the remaining stock, leaving it vulnerable to extreme weather events and invasive pests. Just because our forests are green does not mean that they are healthy.

Thousands of private landowners have a limited understanding of how healthy their forest is or what can be done about it. This is why planning is at the center of our LSR project. In almost every instance, personal landowner engagement results in that landowner taking a step further towards their stewardship goals. By gaining a baseline assessment of past forest use's impact on current forest conditions, a landowner can begin to better understand what might be needed to promote desired conditions based on their values. Each landowner's needs are as different as their forest stands and therefore must be given the chance to share the legacy they would like to see in the future.

EcoForesters has learned the importance of community through our pilot Sandy Mush project. On the surface, that statement seems pretty obvious. But in implementing this program, we were shown the importance of neighbor networks, community centers, and the connection to the land. Rural communities are lumped together with common stereotypes but often with no consideration for challenges facing multi-generational landowners and the many newcomers that flood the region for a better way of life. Only through partnerships and personal connections can trust be gained and solutions be learned.

The Landscape Scale Restoration project expands the current Sandy Mush project and creates two new community focused areas west and east of Asheville. As development pressures increase, landowner assistance is needed now more than ever. This assistance comes in the form of free consulting and training, as well as planning and implementation. Our two new areas were chosen due to their high conservation values, existing conservation land, and the desire to restore forests that are connected to wildlife and future prosperity.



THE CHEROKEE PROJECT IS ADDING NATIVE KNOWLEDGE TO A GROWING LANDSCAPE

How do you engage landowners and convince them to be more intentional about their relationship with their land? Research has shown that landowners can benefit from having neighbors or peers that actively manage their forests. Learning from other's experiences can help demystify a complicated topic while giving real solutions to problem solving. By connecting like-minded landowners, we are able to broaden the resources available to help and connecting a long term relationship to stewardship. Similarly, our relationship with the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians has allowed for a similar learning exchange and created opportunities for disseminating stewardship beyond the Qualla Boundary.

Back in 2016, EcoForesters was enlisted to help EBCI develop a forest management and development plan that would help steward decision making across the Qualla Boundary. The Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians has a principle that any major decision must consider the impacts on the next seven generations. This is the epitome of intentional planning and gave us a clear understanding of how their values would drive their forest stewardship. Facing many of the same challenges of other rural communities, the Tribe wanted to prioritize stewardship in those areas most likely impacted by wildfire, invasive spe-

cies, and the ability to manage for cultural uses like basket making and non-timber forest products. Now we hope to bring that level of planning to surrounding communities.

As you travel further west into rural Western North Carolina, you encounter land owned by the same family for over one hundred years next door to parcels purchased new by someone looking for their slice of heaven. These two groups have similar challenges but different reasons for why they do not actively plan for the future. We are engaging these two distinct communities and providing them with resources needed to make good decisions and strengthen their land. Whether in support of vital wildlife corridors or restoring oak habitat, landowners only require the right tools and information to make wise choices.

Members of the Eastern Band are descendants of the estimated 800 original members that refused to leave along the Trail of Tears. Their resolve and determination allowed them to regain a small portion of their original territory to continue their intentional way of living and relationship with the landscape. EcoForesters is honored to partner with and learn from the original Natives and share in how they coexist with nature and a consistent increase in invasive species.



THE FOOTHILLS ARE THE GATEWAY TO WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA AND THE SOUTH'S WATER

All water runs downhill, and if you are a drop that begins its journey on the eastern side of the continental divide, you will likely move through the Catawba or Broad River basins. These two basins supply millions of residents and dozens of NC cities with clean and abundant drinking water, much of which can be attributed to the natural infrastructure of forests. Land conservancies, state agencies, and federal land managers all recognize the important role water management plays in this community and their efforts must be supported.

Foothills Conservancy is a conservation leader known for community involvement and land protection. They are responsible for over 65,000 acres being permanently protected and play an essential role in maintaining the conservation values found in the community. They accomplish this not only by conserving land, but also by their stewardship ethic. Their Oak Hill Community Forest is an example of land that can be restored and utilized for recreation and agriculture. We are proud to have written a comprehensive stewardship plan in support of their efforts and are actively seeking ways to help them accomplish their management goals.

The South Mountain game lands span four counties and were once part of the ancestral homelands of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians. The peaks and valleys were formed over hundreds of millions of years and are rich in minerals and wildlife. Game Lands are vital for wildlife hab-

itat as more and more private lands are developed and lost. Managing thousands of acres in support of a variety of habitats requires partnerships and expertise that this project will help provide.

The Pisgah National Forest covers over 500,000 acres of land that is utilized by the public and managed for the common good. The challenges facing National Forests are arguably more difficult as they face a Multiple Use/Sustainable Yield mandate and a growing number of visitors wishing to engage with the forest. Inadequate budgets for restoration such as controlled fire have made restoration efforts even more difficult. Fortunately, recent funding and collaborative efforts have secured funding and support for increased prescribed burning, invasive species control efforts, and watershed restoration.

This strong conservation network of permanently protected forests is why we must increase our efforts to reach private landowners in this region. Forest stewardship challenges cross over property boundaries and there are efficiencies to be had in improving forest health on private lands that are proximate to conservation land. Earlier this spring, EcoForesters hosted a workshop in Morganton that helped landowners better plan for their future management. Over 70 landowners have been engaged, impacting over 4000 acres. We plan to grow this impact over the next 3 years with concerted outreach and plenty of listening to landowners.

Loss Of Papermill Is A Loss For Forests Too

The Canton Paper Mill's Closing's Impact On Sustainable Forestry

By: Andy Tait *EcoForesters Director of Forestry*

The closing of the paper mill in Canton NC is a major loss for its 1,100 employees and a shock to the area's economy. The ripple effects also make it very bad news for sustainable forestry in the mountains.

For more than 100 years, timber harvests to supply forest products in southern Appalachia have shaped and created the forests we see today. The pending closure of the paper mill in Canton will now shape the future of our forests. While some of the supply chain demands necessary to support these industries negatively impact overall forest health, the paper mill's use of only low-grade and small-diameter wood created opportunities for sustainable and beneficial forest management. When timber harvests are done using sound ecological principles, forest health can be maintained - or even enhanced through an increase in species and structural (tree age/size) diversity. The closure of the paper mill in Canton will severely reduce demand for pulpwood, which comes from small diameter (<12") or poorly formed trees. Many of the restoration needs of our forests include reducing weedy, small trees that are often less desirable (economically and ecologically) and outcompete more desirable trees. The loss of demand for these lower value forest products will make it much less economically feasible for forestland owners to do improvement cuts to benefit wildlife, regenerate oaks, or to even sustainably harvest timber in western NC.

High costs were already leading loggers to cut only the larger and much more profitable sawtimber trees to make a short-term profit. This unsustainable "high-grading" has degraded forests for decades. Now, it will be almost impossible to sell the low-grade pulpwood, and even more high-grade sawtimber harvests will happen as a consequence. In these high-grade harvests, only the biggest and best trees (which are the best seed trees for future forests) are cut, leaving the smaller, poorly formed, or unhealthy trees. The smaller pulpwood already had such



Photo credit: Angeli Wright (Asheville Citizen Times)

low profit margins that many loggers would not cut it. High-grade harvests are usually implemented as a diameter-limit cut - i.e., cut all trees >16" in diameter, which is when trees have significant sawtimber value - leaving behind a degraded forest with much lower quality, usually slower-growing trees. Often a tree's economic value as sawtimber/pulp mirrors its ecological value for wildlife, carbon storage, or simple beauty.

Forests struggle to recover on their own from these unsustainable high-grade harvests due to the removal of better adapted trees and their genetics. A sustainable timber harvest usually has to remove lower quality trees too to let in enough sun so that a young stand of new trees can grow vigorously and compete in good conditions to develop into a healthy future forest. With no market for low quality trees, these less well adapted trees will now be left even more frequently and will become our future forests.

Rehabilitation forestry is already needed in many forests, usually where past high-grading has occurred, to improve their health, resilience to climate change, and diversity. Beneficial harvests remove lower quality, very common, less desirable trees to favor fitter trees and stronger forests. This can benefit plant and animal species of conservation concern that need our help to compete in the absence of historic disturbances like fire and sustainable timber harvesting - or natural mortality and succession in true

old-growth forests. In particular, habitat restoration for species in severe decline - like the golden-winged warbler - that depend on young regenerating forests or forest openings, do not get the habitat they need from high-grade harvests or development.

The closing of the FSC/SFI certified sustainable paper mill in Canton bodes very poorly for the future of sound and ecologically beneficial forestry in western NC. To make rehabilitation forestry projects economically feasible requires a market for low-quality pulpwood, so that loggers cut it to create diverse habitats and room for more desirable trees - like oaks, which need sun to regenerate and are the keystone species for wildlife from birds to bears. The losses from the mill closing extend from local to regional economic and social disruption to further degrading our forests and slowing needed restoration efforts.

EcoForesters will continue seeking solutions that incentivize restorative forest management by engaging with conservation partners, government agencies, and local communities. Western North Carolina benefits from sustainable and ecological forest management, but this will be a much taller order without the steady and significant demand for pulpwood supplied by the Canton Paper Mill.

MODERN FORESTRY REVISITED

Regional Land Managers Discuss Forestry Challenges

By: Pat Barcas *EcoForesters Crew Member*



Panel members (left to right), James Melonas (NC Forest Supervisor, USFS), Tommy Cabe (Forest Resource Specialist, EBCI), Hanni Muerdter (Conservation Director, SAHC), Andy Tait (Director of Forestry, EcoForesters), Michael Cheek (Assistant Regional Forester, NCFS), Rob Elliot (Procurement Forester, Pactiv-Evergreen Paper Mill,) and Alex Finkral (Eastwood Forests, Professor Duke Nicholas School).

There are about 4 million acres of forest in Western North Carolina, about 70 percent of which is privately owned. In addition to climate change, extreme weather, and development pressures, there's also the recent closure of the Canton paper mill, as well as species decline and invasive plants impacting landowners' ability to responsibly manage their forests.

EcoForesters held a panel discussion May 18 with forestry and land management professionals informing on the overarching threats to these forests, and what can be done to address them.

Panel members at the event at New Belgium Brewery in Asheville included James Melonas, NC Forest Supervisor, US Forest Service, Tommy Cabe, Forest Resource Specialist, Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, Hanni Muerdter, Conservation Director, Southern Appalachian Highland Conservancy, Andy Tait, Director of Forestry, EcoForesters, Michael Cheek, Assistant Regional Forester, NC Forest Service, Rob Elliot, Procurement Forester, Pactiv-Evergreen Paper Mill, and Alex Finkral, Eastwood Forests, Professor Duke Nicholas School.

It should come to the surprise of no one in the audience that climate change is impacting forests, and it was top of mind for the panelists as they vocalized their chief concerns moving forward. What they revealed, however, is that changing climate patterns are altering forests and forestry practices in surprising ways, both naturally and economically.

"What we're seeing is a change in species composition that is occurring and will continue to occur in our lifespans. It will be significant in terms of wildlife and other ecosystem services- watershed and water quality, and carbon sequestration. We're seeing a shifting forest type due to a lot of different variables," said Finkral.

"Things are changing and we need to take active steps," explained Tait.

Tait added that forest mismanagement has gone on for decades, and the closing of the Canton paper mill may exacerbate the problem. The mill had processed lower grade trees for pulp, creating demand for the lower tier trees in the nearby forests. While the Canton mill was operational, landowners could offset management costs by selling lower grade trees in need of removal. With the mill closed, landowners will be tempted to harvest the most valuable trees.

"Because of simple economic forces, the most valuable and fittest trees are the ones that are being cut, and the less desirable trees both economically and ecologically are being left behind. This high-grade harvesting- taking the best, leaving the rest, has degraded our forests," he said. "With no market for those low-grade trees, how are we going to make ecological forestry economically feasible again?"

Cabe had an inventive answer for low-grade white oak trees typically left as slash or pulp after a harvest. He said woven Cherokee baskets use white oak saplings of 4-6 inch diameter.

“ things are changing and we need to take active steps. ”

In the grander scale, the wet weather patterns such as a heavy, prolonged El Niño means that there will be reduced timber harvests locally, said Elliot. When the soil is wet in the mountains, timber needs to be procured from farther and farther away, reducing local yields and affecting business.

“It’s a big impact on the folks we rely on to harvest our timber. They operate on extremely thin margins, when we have prolonged weather events, it has a dramatic effect on those folks to stay in business.”

“how are we going to do the work necessary to keep forests healthy?”

The cascading effects of climate change include invasive pests moving into the region. While no one can truly predict the next devastating insect or plant, steps can be taken to lessen the impact when they do inevitably arrive. Tait explained that a diverse forest is a healthy forest.

“We never know what pest is next, so having as diverse a forest as possible makes it much more robust and likely to withstand the next invasive pest,” he said.

Cheek piggybacked on that, saying that WNC forests are actually overstocked since being logged 85-100 years ago.

“A healthy forest is key. If the trees are healthy and they’re growing fast, they’re not overstocked, they’re not being suppressed- healthy growing trees can fight off the pests easier than a suppressed tree or an unhealthy tree,” he said. “We could continue to do some tending practices. Thin them out, open them up, make them healthier, they are more likely to withstand pests of any sort.”

Midway through the discussion, emcee and EcoForesters Co-Executive Director Lang Hornthal anchored the crowd with talk of funding. “How are we going to do the work that’s necessary to keep forests healthy?” he asked.

Conservation is a route to bring funding to landowners in the absence of pulp wood demand, said Muerdter.



SAHC Conservation Director, Hanni Muerdter, discusses the important role of conservation easements protecting forests.

She said the Southern Appalachian Highland Conservancy is flexible on the type of help it can offer landowners. “Conservation and land trusts are there to help owners who may be land rich and cash poor. Sometimes we can bring grant money and private funds- there are private funders in this area that really want to see the forests protected long term,” she said. “Sometimes protection doesn’t mean keeping it untouched, it can mean active stewardship and an active relationship with the forest.”

Melonas said there’s more funding available now than the Forest Service has seen in a very long time. He reported that funds are coming from the Inflation Reduction Act, President Biden’s sweeping 2021 infrastructure bill, and the Pisgah Restoration Initiative, which provides 10 years of funding for prescribed burns and ecosystem repair. “We do have an opportunity with more funding available to do the right work on the ground,” said Melonas. “I think with the partnerships we have, we’re well situated to take advantage of that.”

Despite the monumental challenges that lie ahead, Finkral said he maintains a positive attitude for the future of WNC forests. “Foresters are extremely creative, hard-working, problem-solving people. In light of the challenges, forestry people are optimists and long term in the way they think,” he said.

Hornthal wrapped it up by saying there’s no easy solution, but our forests are in good hands. “If you’re looking for silver bullets to solve the problem of a new sustainable low value timber market or for funding challenges facing landowners, we’re out. Instead, we have to make informed decisions, and we have to monitor our results, then adapt as needed,” he said. “We as a community need to support the efforts of Non-Governmental Organizations and agencies as they do this hard work in the woods. I leave you here with hope for our future forests and with confidence that our region is filled with smart, caring, engaged professionals that are thinking about the future.”



Audience members asked questions and learned how land managers are adapting to new challenges.

*To hear the full discussion, please visit the EcoForesters YouTube page.
www.youtube.com/@ecoforesters6521*

Shope Creek Is An Example Of The New Pisgah-Nantahala Plan In Action

By: Lang Hornthal *EcoForesters Director of Development*

If there is a theme to the new Nantahala-Pisgah National Forest management plan, it is “Recreation and Restoration.” While not perfect, this plan provides an outline for how the US Forest Service and its partners will work together to face the challenges identified over the next 20-30 years. Particularly, how do we address sustainable recreation challenges while restoring forests to their natural range of variation. One example of how the new plan might look at the project level can be seen at Shope Creek, just outside of Asheville.

In 2008, the Shope Creek area of the Pisgah National Forests administered a timber harvest as part of the 1987 plan. The goals of the harvest were to support local saw mills and regenerate oaks in support of wildlife and hardwood stands. As a result, three inadvertent things happened: Oaks did not regenerate as expected, invasive plants utilized this new growing space, and the new roads and trails put in for the harvest were now being used for recreational purposes—so much so that a parking area was needed to accommodate increased traffic. Even though the USFS was aware of the active use, all of the trails were considered non-system and unable to be maintained per USFS regulations. Both conditions provided an opportunity for partnerships and more sustainable management.

A common issue in Appalachian forests is the inability for oaks and hickories to compete with faster growing poplar and maples. While the latter two tree species are desired, they can consume three-times more water than oaks and contribute less to insect and wildlife habitat. Therefore it is important to recognize the species most

likely to propagate into the future and plan accordingly. As a result, EcoForesters is currently thinning out the smaller, faster growing trees in support of the more desired oaks and hickories. We are also targeting invasive vines and trees to keep them from dominating and making room for native species.

Another non-profit partner, Wild South, is using the latest technology to heat map how trails are being used and which ones are best suited to be sustainably added to the USFS system. This work may irritate current users, but it is important to understand that public access can exacerbate forestry challenges and that responsible use requires intentional planning. EcoForesters will also be using this opportunity to educate the public about sustainable recreation and healthy forests. This serves as an example of nonprofits working hand in hand with federal partners towards good governance and it is a project that we are proud to help implement.



EcoForesters crew leader, Michael Kochinski, cuts down a beech tree to create growing room for nearby oak trees.

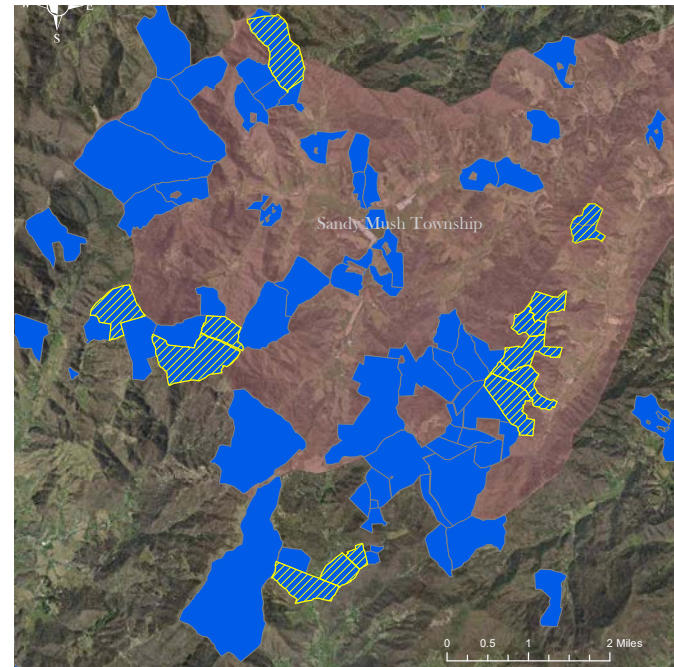
Forest Management in Sandy Mush: An EcoForesters and SAHC Collaboration

By: Corinna Mokotoff *AmeriCorps Stewardship & Volunteer Associate*

Sandy Mush - mountain ridges, low-lying farms, beautiful streams and forested hills coalesce into a quiet rural community in the corner where Buncombe, Haywood, and Madison Counties meet. Historic agricultural land, fertile farming soils, secluded coves, and ridges that make for excellent wildlife corridors are only some of the reasons for Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy's (SAHC) commitment to land protection and ecological forestry in Sandy Mush. This land is steeped in history, and families with long-standing connections to the area who have farmed here for generations — with names like Duckett, Wells, and Reeves — have worked with SAHC to permanently protect their land.

In March of 2019, The Sandy Mush Forest Restoration Coalition, a partnership between Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy (SAHC), the Forest Stewards Guild, and EcoForesters was born. This project hopes to restore native species habitat degraded by past land use practices and non-native invasive plants and to connect landowners with resources for responsible forest stewardship. "The Coalition is providing a means to connect landowners with the technical and financial resources they need in order to improve forest stewardship on their properties," explains SAHC Stewardship Director Sarah Sheeran.

Since 2019, SAHC has worked closely with EcoForesters to create sustainable and actionable forest management on SAHC-owned properties in Sandy Mush as well as other SAHC focus areas. In order for SAHC to ensure that the conservation values – the water resources, habitat, soils and space for farming, etc. – remain protected in perpetuity, SAHC is committed to long-term stewardship of



EcoForesters Invasive Plant Management on SAHC Preserves

- Yellow hatched box: EcoForesters Invasive Plant Management
- Blue box: SAHC Protected Properties
- Pink box: Sandy Mush Township

Map by Corinna Mokotoff
April 2023



Map shows all protected SAHC property near or within the Sandy Mush township and properties where EcoForesters conducted invasive plant management work.



Scenic overlook of a barn on an SAHC protected property in the Sandy Mush township.

protected lands. Aligned with this commitment, EcoForesters assists SAHC in prescribing management solutions that fit with SAHC's forest management goals; commonly, this begins with invasive management. Within the years of 2020 to 2022, EcoForesters treated many invasive plant species within Sandy Mush including oriental bittersweet, autumn olive, princess tree, multiflora rose, Japanese honeysuckle, Chinese privet, wineberry, grapevine, smokevine, kudzu, and Japanese knotweed.

"The work that EcoForesters does on SAHC-owned land in Sandy Mush helps us build capacity in acquiring and protecting more land within our priority areas throughout western North Carolina and eastern Tennessee," says Sheeran. SAHC-owned properties are managed pursuant to a Land Management Plan and often a Forest Stewardship Plan. Land Management Plans are used strategically to prioritize the needs and actions of each property, and invasive species management is usually high on the list. "We're trying to be good stewards of the land we own and fulfill our own commitment to management, while modeling these management practices for others," adds Sheeran.

Organizations like EcoForesters are pivotal for the endurance of SAHC and continued protection of land at-risk of development. For more information on SAHC please visit www.appalachian.org

Board Perspective: The Time Is Now

By: Linda Tatsapaugh

EcoForesters Board President

If you have ever served on a Board of Directors, you can appreciate the phrase, “seeing how the sausage is made.” You have a front row seat into how an organization is run, the importance of good people in the right positions, and how income generated drives your ability to continually re-invest in a mission or business practice. Now in my fourth year (starting my second as Board Chair), I have a good understanding of what is needed to make the EcoForesters brand of sausage!

Our ongoing work is, like many nonprofits, to effect a needed change through bringing knowledge and resources to those in need. For us that means providing landowners with the most up to date information and plans. We are filling this need during a vital time in the history of our region. With forestry challenges due to climate change and development pressures, an aging landowner base is handing over their properties to heirs and newcomers whose stewardship decisions will impact the next two to three generations. There is no better time than now to make sure that current and future landowners have the needed tools to make wise decisions.

It should come as no surprise that funding is the number one priority for our non-profit and landowners alike. This means our board must be intentional about how we raise funds for operations, as well as what we share with landowners to help them meet their objectives. As you are reading in this newsletter, we have several projects in place that target conservation-rich communities in order to keep special forested values on the landscape. EcoForesters is fortunate to have grant funding that supports these projects, but matched donations are also a requirement of these federal funds. While it is daunting as a board member to support raising half a million dollars over the next three years, we’re grateful that every dollar raised will be matched to double our impact.

The work accomplished in the forest is difficult and must be performed by trained staff with a passion for conservation and restoration of forests. To attract and keep talented people in a town with a high cost of living, we must pay competitive wages and benefits, which constitute the largest chunk of our budget. As a board member, I can assure you that we are approaching our mission strategically in a manner that is fiscally prudent and intentionally planned. The passion and know-how is in place. All that is needed is the consistent support of conservation minded individuals that care about our future forests. Are you one of those people?



We are thankful for all that trees give us.

WHY DONATE RIGHT NOW?

1. Your donation will be matched with federal dollars to double our impact
2. Our free workshops and consultations are resulting in landowner action
3. We are bringing funds to local land trusts to help with forest stewardship
4. Invasive species are getting worse and we are helping train landowners
5. With over 200,000 acres put under management plans there is more to do!

Our positive actions are getting results and our model for landowner engagement is working.

If you care about conservation and our future forests, please join us in making a difference.

TO MAKE YOUR TAX DEDUCTIBLE DONATION, GO TO: WWW.ECOFORESTERS.ORG

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Donations from 5/2022-5/2023

**Indicates repeated donor*

+Donation made in honor of

Tom Ruane

View From The Crew: Invasive Control Season Starts With A Vengeance

With warmer winters and spring appearing sooner, we are noticing that invasive plants are popping out a couple of weeks earlier. As you plan your attack for the coming year, knowing when to expect the coming of certain non-native invasive plants will assist in the prioritization of your integrated pest management approach.

Multiflora rose is one of the first to rear its ugly head and this year was no exception as the crew saw signs of it in early March. This aggressive first bloomer makes it easier to recognize, as well as to treat before risking any damage to native plants that begin to appear later.

Both Privet and Japanese Honeysuckle have semi-evergreen qualities, but also are showing a flush of new growth in April. This month is usually the busiest for non-native invasive plants as Oriental Bittersweet, Spirea, and Japanese Knotweed really show signs of aggressive growth. Non-native trees like Tree of Heaven and Princess Tree also begin to show new leaves and send up new shoots in April.

Last but not least, Kudzu begins another year of spreading in May, with leaves becoming fully expanded towards the end of the month. Like other invasive plants, the amount of new growth will vary depending on the coolness of the spring. By June, our crews are in full swing with all the usual suspects fighting for space and sunlight.

Paying attention to invasive plants growing habits will help you better plan your control methods and help give you a leg up. If our crews can also help you formulate a plan or get control of a particularly aggressive plant, please give us a call and we are happy to help!



Project Area Expanded In Nine Counties: Cost Share Funding Match Available To Landowners

The Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is the best cost share program available to landowners that are improving their forest health. To help forestland owners afford to do forest improvement work, the USDA NRCS offers cost share funding that pays about half of the average cost of these services in the mountains. Because this work can be costly to landowner, even with cost share funding, EcoForesters is offering an additional match to landowners out of pocket expenses (up to \$5,000). This money will go towards forestry practices found in your management plan, a requirement for access.

FOR THOSE INTERESTED IN SUBMITTING AN APPLICATION, YOU MUST:

1 REGISTER YOUR PROPERTY WITH THE LOCAL COUNTY USDA FARM SERVICE AGENCY

If your property is not already registered with the FSA (or you do not know if it is), it is best to just set up an appointment with the county FSA office. Usually, this meeting takes less than an hour.

2 CONTACT THE LOCAL COUNTY USDA-NRCS OFFICE

Once your farm is registered as a farm unit in the FSA system, then contact your NRCS county contacts about applying for NRCS-EQIP Funding.

3 YOU ARE MORE LIKELY TO GET FUNDING IF YOU APPLY FOR MULTIPLE PRACTICES

If you just apply for one practice (e.g., only invasives) your application gets less priority, and funding is competitive. There are more requests for funding than NRCS can meet. However, agricultural, forestry, and wildlife practices can all be combined on one application. Contact us to help maximize your chance of funding and have the biggest positive impact on your forest.

4 APPLICATIONS ARE DUE AT THE END OF OCTOBER

Applications are then awarded competitively by the following spring. You can't start the work you want to be reimbursed for until your application has been approved and the contract signed.

Please reach out to us if you have any questions or how we can help you apply for EQIP funding.



In memory of

Tom Ruane

(1975-2023)

Board member, entrepreneur, marketing guru, storyteller, and friend, Tom Ruane died too soon after a prolonged illness. The growth EcoForesters has experienced in the past three years can be attributed to Tom's dedication to our mission and responsible growth. Never one to mince words, Tom kept the staff honest and on our toes. His big ideas were matched by his big heart and love of the EcoForesters mission to restore and conserve Appalachian forests.

Tom joined EcoForesters' board in 2018 and became a hardcore advocate for our mission. Through his board and committee work, he spent much of his free time working to improve EcoForesters' marketing and outreach. He was a never ending source of ideas, energy and interesting stories to illustrate his points, with his humor and stories always adding some lightness and fun to our meetings. Tom brought new donors through his large net-

work of friends and relations. In addition to donors, Tom brought friends that were experts to volunteer time and advice on topics such as social media, website development, and marketing. A large donor himself, Tom helped us set up an investment account and earmarked funds for us to develop a forest restoration seminar and speaker series. Tom put together comprehensive written plans for EF, including a marketing plan and a summer educational program for college students that we hope to implement in the future. Since Tom joined us in 2018, EF has grown exponentially in our staff, resources and impact. It's been a team effort, but Tom was an important part of that team and our growth. EcoForesters lost not only a great advocate but also a great friend and he will be sorely missed.

For those that are interested in helping to continue Tom's legacy, please consider a donation in support of the Tom Ruane Fund.



EcoForesters.org

OUR MISSION

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

**CONTACT US WITH
QUESTIONS ABOUT
YOUR FOREST OR
OUR MISSION!**

HOW TO REACH US

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Asheville, NC 28816

EMAIL: info@ecoforesters.org

PHONE: 828-484-6842

WEBSITE: www.ecoforesters.org

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