



FORESTRY & WILDLIFE PROGRAM – 2004
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The forest resource of Cheshire County is significant with eighty-nine percent of the land base (405,100 acres) forested with 96% of that (389,000 acres) owned by an estimated 5600 private landowners. The annual 20 million board feet of sawmill capacity and the 50 or more logging operators in the County significantly contribute to the areas economy and certainly to the state's \$1.7 billion forest industry. The forests of Cheshire also provide the backdrop for a healthy tourism and recreation industry which statewide provides 1/3 of the total revenue to state government and generates an estimated five billion dollars.

The mission of the Extension Forestry and Wildlife program is to provide educational information and assistance so that landowners, businesses, policy makers and the general public can make informed decisions about maintaining a healthy forest resource while sustaining economic viability.

Information and assistance is provided to private woodland owners, primary processors, the general public, organizations and communities of Cheshire County. Supporting the Extension County Forester is a network of Extension Resource Specialists at UNH, specialists at the US Forest Service, NH Fish and Game and the NH Department of Resources and Economic Development including but not limited to the NH Division of Forests and Lands.

While the Forest Resource Educator serves on a number of committees that provides programs and assistance of State and Regional impact, a real strength of the program at the County level is the one on one assistance. While some contacts are by phone or mail, many require a personal consultation, field visit and examination. Others can be addressed through a public forum, meetings, field demonstrations or workshops and through newsletters, bulletins, news articles and radio.

In 2004, 187 individual assists were given to landowners representing 5248 acres of forest land in the areas of the planning and implementation of forest management activities such as forest improvement thinnings, planting, wildlife habitat improvement, protection, and best management practices.

An additional 184 assists were provided landowners in the utilization and marketing of forest products and 14 forest product processors (loggers, mills,) were helped.

Financial, economic and legal aspects of owning and managing forest land are important components of forest management with 74 individual assists provided last year in economics, taxes, regulations and legal issues.

332 assists were given to Cheshire County homeowners , landowners, communities and the general public last year in the areas of insects and diseases, pesticide use, water quality, environmental issues and community forestry. Individual assists for 2004 totaled 590.

Providing information to the 23 communities of Cheshire County is an important component of the program. All communities receive Extension's bi-monthly newsletter, and other mailings of pertinent information relating to the forest resource. Last year 19 towns were individually assisted with issues such as community forestry, timber harvest regulations and taxes, current use assessment, harvest laws and land protection. 19 schools were provided free tree seedlings from the NH State Nursery as part of Arbor Day recognition through the program.

Natural resource management assistance to the Cheshire County property in Westmoreland and Chesterfield is provided with general forest land management, long range planning, wildlife habitat improvement, and timber and fuelwood production.

In addition to management assistance, UNH Cooperative Extension has an ongoing natural resource awareness and public education project at the Cheshire County Complex in Westmoreland.. More than 6000 feet of river and woodland trails have been developed and maintained on the property. With assistance from a Conservation License Plate (Moose Plate) grant administered by the NH State Conservation Committee (NH SCC) program a 2100 foot limited mobility/handicap accessibility river trail was constructed this past year. Coordinating maintenance of woods and river nature trails, education materials for trails, and invasive plant control is also part of our responsibility. Five public workshops/events including "Cheshire Outdoors" were held at the property involving about 550 people. Many others use the river and woodland trails on their own. An invasive plant removal project continues in cooperation with volunteers, inmates, NH Department of Agriculture and NRCS.

Information and educational efforts (news articles, radio, TV, group presentations) are critical to keep landowners, decision makers and the general public informed about the protection, management and benefits of a healthy forest resource.

Last year 12 public presentations were made to 851 people, covering topics such as current use assessment, estate planning, logger training, wildlife habitat, Christmas tree management, woodland management, community forestry and permanent land protection. In addition there were 25 local, regional and national media contacts (news articles, newsletter, radio, etc) on a wide range of topics. Prepared a Current Use fact sheet and assessment range matrix, produced the "2004 New England Guide to Weed and Brush Control in Christmas Trees".

In order to prevent duplication of effort and dilution of resources, the Extension Forestry and Wildlife Program has working relationships with other private and public groups and agencies such as the Farm Service Agency, Conservation District, Natural Resource Conservation Service, NH Division of Forest and Lands, NH Fish and Game, US Fish and Wildlife Service, N.H. Timberland Owners Association, NH Timber Harvest Council, Society for the Protection of N.H. Forests, Monadnock Conservancy, NH Audubon, the N.H. Tree Farm Program, forest industry and private licensed forestry consultants. Referrals and assistance to the private sector and encouragement of its development are important. Last year 43 referrals were made to the private sector.

The Extension Forestry and Wildlife program has been providing unbiased, research-based forest resource education and information since 1925. The multiplier effects and benefits of the program continue to insure a sustainable and economically viable resource.