



## **Forest Stewardship**

### **Situation:**

There are approximately 284,000 acres of forest in Sullivan County, 80 percent of the county's total land base. These mostly private forestlands provide many public benefits such as water quality protection, recreation, wildlife habitat and forest products.

### **UNH Cooperative Extension's Public Value:**

Educational programs and technical support to land owners and community-owned forestland improve the health and aesthetic value of forested lands and provides financial resources to the industry. In turn, property values, tax revenues and opportunities to promote tourism increases, providing a stronger economy and quality of life for people who live and visit the county.

### **UNH Cooperative Extension's Response:**

The primary goal of Sullivan County UNH Cooperative Extension's Forestry and Wildlife Program is to sustain the many values that originate from forestland through a variety of educational activities and partnerships. Chuck Hersey, Sullivan County Extension Educator, Forest Resources, working with other Extension Forestry and Wildlife Program Forest Resource educators and specialists, and partner organizations, developed, coordinated and conducted 89 forest-related workshops and presentations for 3,287 people from 2005 to 2008. Audiences included landowners, natural resource professionals and the public.

Educational topics included current use, timber harvesting, land conservation, long-term forest stewardship, GPS, invasive plant control, wildlife habitat management, forest roads and trails, map and compass training, forest history and ecology, silviculture, stand dynamics, maple sugaring, forest soils, selling timber, and choosing which trees to cut.

Individual landowner assistance in the form of woodlot exams and cost-share program administration are core components of Sullivan County UNH Cooperative Extension's Forestry and Wildlife Program. Individual visits with landowners are an effective way to educate them about the different aspects of forest management in the context of their own property. These visits help enhance/maintain the landowners' long-term relationships with their land that result in good stewardship practices.

Examples of landowner assistance provided by Sullivan County UNH Cooperative Extension's Forest Resources Educator from 2005 to 2008 include:

- Examination of 55,565 acres of forestland and expert advice to 205 landowners on management practices that enhance and sustain the timber, wildlife, water, recreation and biodiversity values of their forestland.
- Provided referrals from 169 landowners owning 43,757 acres to licensed New Hampshire foresters.

The Community Tree Steward Program educates volunteers in community and urban forestry. The goals are to strengthen communities, promote social change, and enhance urban ecosystems. In return for their 11 weeks of training, Tree Stewards spend 40 hours volunteering in their communities, although most volunteer many more hours than the required 40.

The NH Coverts Project trains volunteers to promote wildlife habitat conservation and forest stewardship. The goals are to enhance, restore and conserve habitat for its rich diversity, and to increase the amount of New Hampshire's public and private land managed with a stewardship ethic. Almost half of all Coverts volunteers serve on their town's Conservation Commission, bringing knowledge of wildlife and habitat to these local decision-making bodies. Coverts volunteers are asked to share what they've learned at the Coverts training workshop to other landowners, community members, and the public. There are currently 14 active Coverts Cooperatives in Sullivan County involved in presenting programs in their communities, serving on boards and conservation commissions.

### **How We Make a Difference:**

- Sullivan County Extension's Forest Resources Educator, in partnership with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Sullivan County Conservation District, implements the NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and Wildlife Habitat Improvement Program (WHIP) in Sullivan County. These federal programs provide cost-share dollars for practices that improve and protect forestland, wildlife habitat and water quality.
- Sullivan County landowners received over \$500,000 in cost-share dollars from EQIP and WHIP from 2005 through 2008 to implement conservation practices on their forestland. These practices include long-term stewardship plans, timber stand improvement, wildlife habitat improvement projects, access roads, invasive plant control and water quality improvement projects.
- Under Chuck Hersey's leadership, Sullivan County received \$16,240 in cost-share funds to implement wildlife habitat improvement projects on the Sullivan County Farm including:
  - \$11,295 from NRCS Wildlife Habitat Improvement Program
  - \$2,000 from the Wildlife Management Institute
  - \$3,125 from N.H. Fish and Game Habitat Improvement Program
- UNH Cooperative Extension provides extensive training to Community Tree Steward volunteers and Coverts Cooperators, in return for their continued involvement in local projects. Sullivan County Community Tree Stewards and Coverts Cooperators devoted a total of 912 hours last year, presenting workshops, serving on conservation commissions, landscaping at public facilities, and volunteering at local exhibits. Their time, when calculated at the 2007 value of \$19.51/hour for volunteer time (independentsector.org) represents \$17,793 in contributions to local programs.

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