

New Hampshire Coverts Project

Volunteers Working for Wildlife



2006 Annual Report

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UNIVERSITY of NEW HAMPSHIRE
COOPERATIVE EXTENSION



The New Hampshire Coverts Project is sponsored by UNH Cooperative Extension, New Hampshire Fish & Game, New Hampshire Division of Forests and Lands, and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.



Summary of 2006 Projects

The New Hampshire Coverts Project is a program that trains volunteers to promote wildlife and habitat conservation and forest stewardship. This report details Coverts Project programs in 2006, along with the substantial efforts made by our dedicated and accomplished group of Coverts volunteers, bringing the wildlife stewardship message to a wide range of people across the state of New Hampshire.

The New Hampshire Coverts Project continues to be one of the most effective ways to broaden the outreach efforts of UNH Cooperative Extension and its partners. The NH Coverts Project is a flagship program for Extension that expands with each year's trained class of Cooperators.

A summary of accomplishments in 2006 include:

- Organized the 12th annual Coverts Training Workshop and trained 25 new Coverts Cooperators from 21 different communities ("Class of 2006"), bringing the statewide total to 258 active volunteers working in 128 different communities. [Click here](#) for a map showing a summary of Coverts Cooperators' statewide distribution and land stewardship distribution to date.
- Held 14 continuing education programs targeted for Coverts alumni.
- Promoted participation by Coverts Cooperators in dozens of educational workshops organized by UNH Cooperative Extension and project partners, including workshops on threatened and endangered species, the new NH Wildlife Action Plan, and the ecology of invasive plants.
- Continued to manage email discussion forum ("listserv") for 166 participating Coverts Cooperators and natural resource professionals.
- Continued updates to Coverts web page as part of the UNH Cooperative Extension website, adding new publications. Improved the ability of the public to locate the NH Coverts website by purchasing a new domain name: **NHCoverts.org**
- Published two editions of *Making Tracks* newsletter (March, October), with a goal of inspiring and encouraging creative and exciting new outreach projects.
- Showcased traveling Coverts exhibit at nine (9) different venues in 2006, using both staff and volunteer exhibitors.
- For the third year in a row, the Outstanding NH Tree Farm (2006) was awarded to a Coverts Cooperator. The award went to landowner Jerry Langdon, who has been an active Cooperator since participating in the 1999 Coverts training workshop.
- Continued monitoring of listserv forum for discussion among Coverts Programs from other states.
- Attended 2nd annual conference of "Alliance of Natural Resource Outreach & Service Programs," a new organization that brings together different kinds of programs that train adults to do outreach in natural resources fields (e.g. Master Naturalists, Watershed Stewards, etc.).
- Solicited renewed commitment from alumni Coverts volunteers about their interest in continuing with the Coverts Project, in order to ensure that our list of "active" Coverts Cooperators reflects a real commitment on the part of those listed. A copy of the "reply card" used in this effort is included in the Appendix.



Coverts Project Background

Since 1995, the New Hampshire Coverts Project has promoted wildlife habitat conservation and forest stewardship through volunteer education and outreach. The goal of the NH Coverts Project is to enhance, maintain, and conserve habitat for the rich diversity of native wildlife in NH through sound land stewardship.

Funding support and sponsorship of the New Hampshire Coverts Project comes from UNH Cooperative Extension (UNHCE), NH Division of Forests and Lands, and New Hampshire Fish and Game Department including funds from the US Fish and Wildlife Service Landowner Incentive Program. A half-time staff person coordinates the program, while the UNHCE wildlife specialist oversees the project. The project also receives assistance from a network of 10 county foresters and the Extension specialist in forest resources.

Each spring, applications are sent to prospective participants for the fall Coverts training workshop. Potential applicants are recruited by Extension staff, project partner staff, existing Coverts Cooperators, letters to town decision-makers, press releases, and through Coverts-related events. The major selection criteria are the applicant's enthusiasm for wildlife and natural resources, a willingness to commit to outreach, and a recognized leadership role within their community. A copy of the 2006 application form is included in the Appendix.

Summary of Coverts Applications - 2006

Number of Applicants	34
Number Accepted for Training	26
Number Attending Training	25



Annual Coverts Training Workshop

Boston University's Sargent Center, located in Hancock, NH, continues to provide an ideal setting for the annual Coverts training workshop, held on September 13-16, 2006. This site has become a tradition for the Coverts workshop, as it offers both reliable facilities and excellent and diverse field sites to public, private, and non-profit owned lands. The Appendix includes a copy of the 2006 workshop agenda, which includes a list of instructors and field trip hosts who assisted with the 3 ½-day training workshop. Upon completion of the workshop, each Cooperator completes an evaluation of the workshop, used to gain feedback on both the workshop as a whole and on topics, materials, and speakers during the 3 ½ day training. A copy of the workshop evaluation form is included in the Appendix.

The cost of the workshop, including food, lodging, transportation, and reference materials, is entirely funded by grants from our partners. This “debt” encourages strong allegiance and commitment by the volunteers: in exchange for the workshop opportunity, participants agree to become Coverts volunteers and spend 40+ hours volunteering on behalf of the program during the following year. Each Cooperator develops an outreach plan on how they will share their experiences and motivate others in their community. Cooperators become part of a volunteer network connected through newsletters, the internet, field tours, and continuing education workshops. After some attrition (due to dropouts, relocations, deaths, etc.), we have 258 active volunteers today, working in 128 communities around the state. A list of all active Coverts volunteers (by County) is included in the Appendix. A yearly summary is as follows:

Total Coverts Trained: 1995 – 2006

	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	total
Number of Coverts Cooperators trained	23	23	22	26	28	23	23	26	25	23	26	25	293



2006 Coverts Events and Continuing Education Programs

Coverts Cooperators are encouraged and invited to events and workshops throughout the year which help them build on their knowledge of natural resource topics, often with more in-depth material and presentations than is possible at the Coverts training workshop. The programs and events provide an opportunity for Coverts volunteers to meet with program partners, natural resource professionals, and to reunite with other Coverts Cooperators. Several programs this year were co-sponsored with the NH Community Tree Stewards program and several other natural resource volunteer programs, thereby broadening our training audience and offering more workshop opportunities to all of our natural resource volunteers.

2006 Events and Workshops

Winter Tree & Shrub ID – January 17

Sponsored by UNH Cooperative Extension, this workshop targeted Coverts Cooperators and other natural resources volunteers.

Oyster River Watershed Association – January 27

Coverts staff presented program about the NH Coverts Project, role of volunteers, and how watershed associations can contribute to raising awareness about stewardship and wildlife habitat.

Farm and Forest Exposition – February 3-4

Seven (7) Coverts volunteers conducted educational activities using the Wildlife Kit materials and staffed the UNH Cooperative Extension booth over the course of two days.

Caring for Urban Trees – February 3

Creating Successful Wildlife Food Plots – February 3

Coverts volunteers were invited to these workshops at the Farm & Forest Expo, designed and delivered by UNH Cooperative Extension Forestry & Wildlife Program staff.

Coverts Advisory Committee Meeting – February 3

Ten members of the Advisory Committee (includes both partners and volunteers) met to review projects associated with the Coverts Program including new programs, the issue of stewardship on public lands, and the status of our partnership with the Ruffed Grouse Society (regional biologist Ron Karczmarczyk attended the Committee meeting). All notes from Coverts Advisory Committee meetings are posted on the Coverts website annually.

Invasive Species ID Workshop – February 9

Sponsored by Society for the Protection of NH Forests; Coverts Cooperators invited to attend in-depth sessions on invasive plant species identification.

A Place You Call Home: Landowner Forum – March 1

Coverts Cooperators helped staff a booth at this landowner forum, focusing on a new publication for landowners in the Upper Valley of NH and VT, focused on good forest stewardship, wildlife habitat, and natural history.

Nature in Winter – March 10

Held at a Coverts Cooperator's property, this field tour showcased wildlife habitat improvements and natural history identification. Audience included UNH Cooperative Extension natural resource volunteers, including Coverts Cooperators.

NH Outside – Writing Collaborative Training – March 13 & March 16

A training workshop for writing volunteers focused on natural resources (see end of list, “On-Going projects.”)

Ruffed Grouse Society Annual Banquet – March 25

Coverts staff brought a booth and gave a short introduction to the NH Coverts Project at the inaugural RGS Sportsmen’s Banquet of Northern NH/VT.

NH Land Conservation Conference: Saving Special Places – April 1

A great many Coverts Cooperators (>50) attend this annual conference focused on NH land conservation. The event is also an important recruiting venue for new Coverts trainees. Coverts staff presented a workshop on “Inventorying and Monitoring Wildlife on your Land” this year.

4-H Spaces Conference – April 8

Coverts staff presented program on Mammals and Wildlife Habitats at this annual youth (ages 9+) conference.

Threatened & Endangered Species: Coos Mud Season Breakfast – April 20

Coverts Cooperators are a special audience at this forestry-oriented annual event, with the focus this year on threatened & endangered wildlife and their habitat requirements.

Discover Wild New Hampshire – April 22

Staffed by Coverts volunteers and staff, the Coverts exhibit and accompanying wildlife activities were on land at this large-scale family event sponsored by NH Fish & Game.

Summer Conservation Workshop Series:

Wildlife Habitat Management – June 2

Inventorying Biodiversity – June 9

The Life Aquatic – June 23

Landscape History of Pawtuckaway State Park – July 7

Navigating and Mapping Conservation Lands: GPS & Compasses – July 21

Forestry Ecology – August 4

Understanding Wetlands: Ecology & Evaluation – August 18

Coverts Cooperators are one of the key audiences for this UNH Cooperative Extension-sponsored workshop series, held at different field locations in southern NH. Coverts staff served as instructors at several of the workshops.

Exeter Alewife Festival – June 3

Coverts volunteers staffed the Coverts stewardship & habitat booth at this large festival in southeast NH.

NH Audubon Annual Meeting – June 3

Coverts staff and volunteers staffed the NH Coverts Project booth at this annual gathering of the NH Audubon Society.

Introduction to Planting Wildlife Food Plots - June 17

Hosted by a Coverts Cooperator, this workshop was co-sponsored by UNH Cooperative Extension and targeted at landowners and Coverts volunteers.

Watershed Weekend – July 22

Coverts staff and volunteers staffed the Coverts display at this annual event sponsored by the Green Mountain Conservation Group, an organization run by several active Coverts Cooperators.

Reading the Forested Landscape – August 3

Through a partnership with NH Community Tree Stewards & NH Master Gardeners, a large number of Coverts volunteers were able to attend this popular workshop at a reduced cost.

12th Annual NH Coverts Project Training Workshop – September 13-16

(see previous section for full description)

NH Tree Farm Field Day – September 23

The 2006 NH Tree Farmer of the Year award was awarded to Coverts Cooperator Jerry Langdon (the 3rd year in a row that this honor has gone to a Coverts Project volunteer). The Coverts Project sponsored a booth, helped lead field tours, and with the help of Coverts volunteers, sponsored a “field quiz” for all participants in the day-long event.

Introduction to Invasive Plant Ecology & Control in the CT River Valley – Oct. 13

Co-sponsored by UNH Cooperative Extension, this intensive workshop was attended by Coverts Cooperators and resource professionals.

Guided Field Walks of Canterbury Shaker Village – October (Sundays)

Sponsored by a newly-trained Coverts Cooperator, all Coverts Cooperators were invited to attend this series of (free) field walks focused on natural and cultural history.

Big Tree Bus Tour – October 15

Coverts Cooperators were included in this event, sponsored by the NH Big Tree Program, UNH Cooperative Extension, and the NH Division of Forests and Lands Urban Forestry Center.

Early Successional Habitat Project, UNH Lands – October 16

A Coverts volunteer helped organized a press conference focused on a new habitat management project on UNH lands, resulting in press coverage focused on the importance of early-successional habitat (see press article, “UNH in thicket of things to make room for rabbits”).

Estate Planning for Family Lands – November 8

Co-sponsored by UNH Cooperative Extension, this program for landowners involved several Coverts Cooperators (both planning the workshop and attending).

Taking Action for Wildlife – December 2

A program focused on the NH Wildlife Action Plan and the new Landowner Incentive Program, this workshop targeted Coverts Cooperators and other landowners interested in wildlife habitat management and conservation.

NH Outside Writers Collaborative – On-going

An outreach opportunity for Coverts Cooperators interested in writing as part of a writer’s collaborative. Writers have been submitting articles on natural resource topics for statewide media distribution of “NH Outside” weekly column, coordinated and edited by UNHCE.

Coverts Listserv Forum – On-going

Initiated in 2001, the listserv is an email-based discussion forum open to all Coverts Cooperators, project partners, and staff (166 Cooperators subscribing). It is particularly useful in rapidly announcing events, meetings, workshops, and media programs among volunteers (not just those announcements coming from the Coverts Project office).



Summary of NH Coverts Activities in 2006

Coverts Cooperators are selected into the program based on their commitment and enthusiasm for wildlife conservation and forest stewardship. It is therefore no surprise that Coverts volunteers are involved in a wide range of natural resource-related activities, putting the knowledge and skills gained or refined at the annual training workshop to work in their communities.

We present the following summary of Coverts volunteer accomplishments for 2006 as a compilation developed from annual surveys that Cooperators are asked to complete each year (a copy is included in the Appendix). Coverts Cooperators also sent in over 50 written updates and articles for inclusion in our program newsletter, *Making Tracks* (see copies included in the Appendix).

Survey responses in 2006 are summarized as follows:

	1st year Coverts (Class of 2005)	Alumni (95-2004)	Total Responses 2006 Survey
# Cooperators surveyed	26	208	234
# Cooperators returning surveys	26 (100%)	114 (55%)	140 (60%)*
Total Volunteer Hours in past 12 months ("on behalf of forest stewardship or wildlife habitat issues")	2,777 hours (avg. 106 hours each)	9,599 hours (avg. 84 hours each)	12,376 hours (avg. 88 hours each)

*This year's 60% response rate is above our average (since 1995) annual survey response rate of 47%.

2006 Coverts Accomplishments: Land Stewardship

Many Coverts Cooperators own or manage land and incorporate wildlife habitat management and good forest stewardship into their land management. One veteran Coverts Cooperator writes of their property in northern NH:

“On my own land I designed and cut for a woods access road and created wildlife opening of 1-acre under a Small Projects Grant from NH Fish & Game. Twelve apple trees were planted along with several Winterberry and similar wildlife shrubs in several areas of the parcel. A plan was developed with advice from [Cooperative Extension Wildlife Specialist] to enhance selected habitat areas for white tail deer, woodcock and grouse. Woods roads affected by the heavy rains were repaired and planted with conservation/wild flower mixes.

A newly-trained Cooperator wrote of his stewardship efforts on public lands:

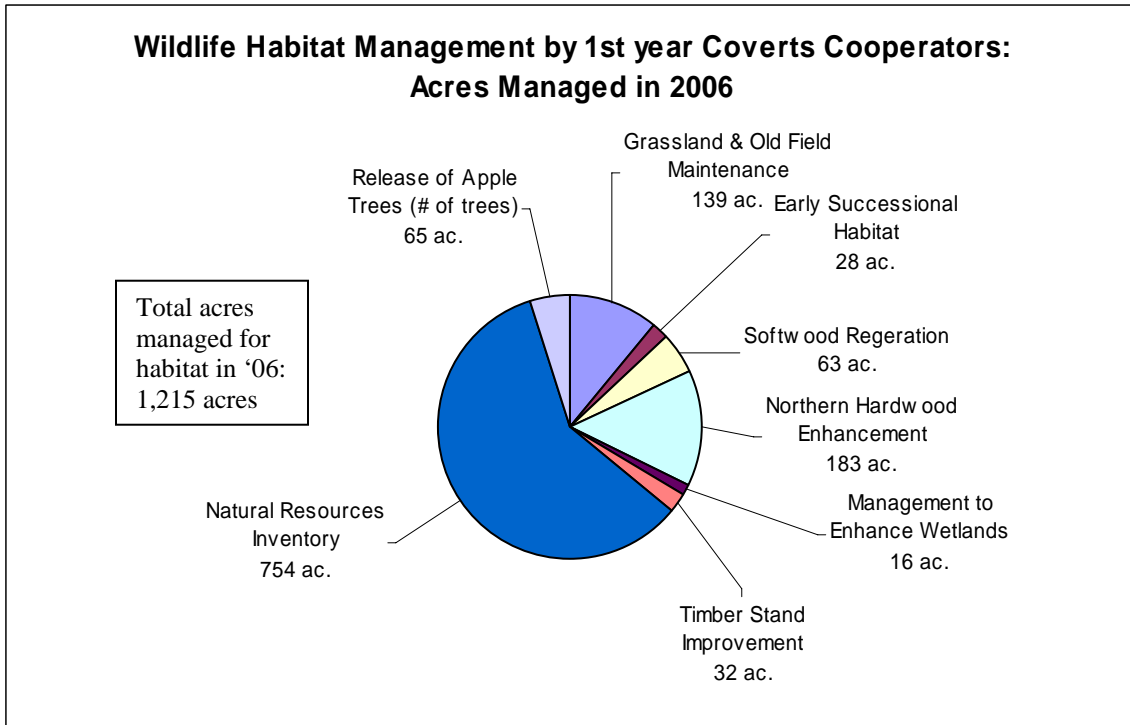
“It took 6 months to find anyone in [my town] who knew anything about our Town Forests. Suddenly in August of this year, I got a call from a forester "who had heard from someone" that I was interested in the Town Forests. We met, and I discovered that [my town] has an abundance of Town Forests, dispersed all over, and only one is managed. The Conservation Commission will be meeting with this forester, and we will be entering into management one piece at a time.”

Land Stewardship Statistics:

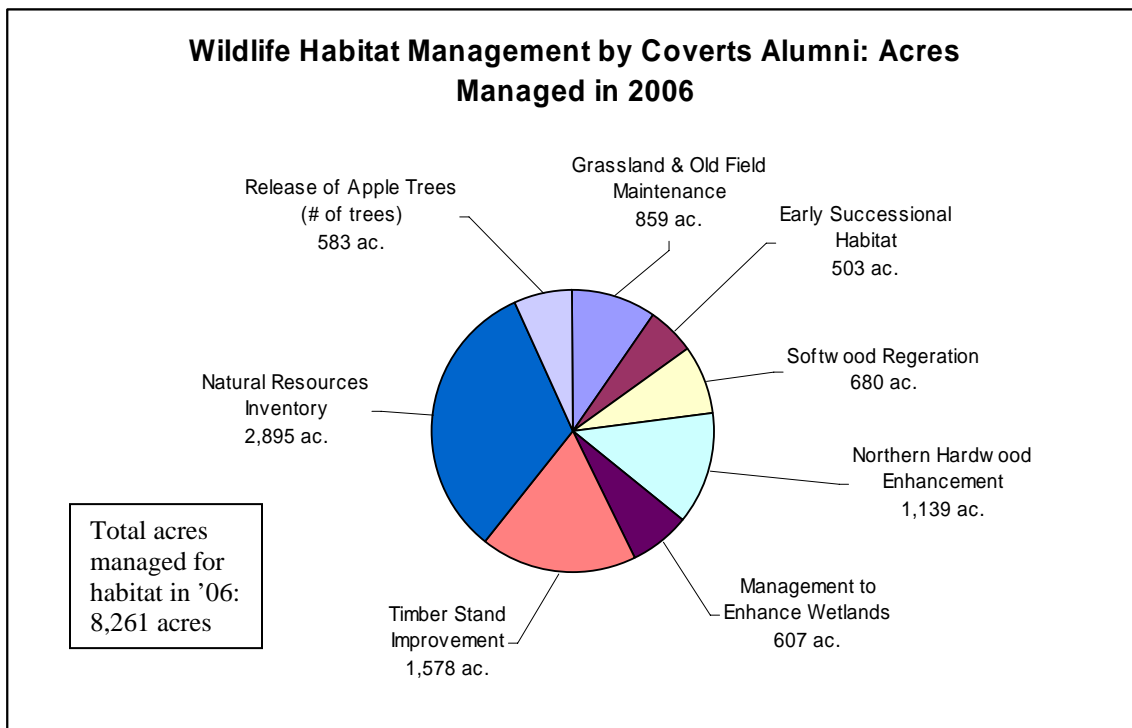
	1st year Coverts (Class of 2005) Respondents	Alumni (95-2004) Survey Respondents	Total 2006 Survey Respondents
Total Acres Owned	1,631	28,220	29,851
Total Acres Responsible for Managing	6,737	31,677	38,414
# Landowners Implementing habitat management in the last 12 months	17 (65%)	62 (53%)	79 (60%)

Total land owned by ALL Coverts (not just those responding to the survey this year) has reached over 45,000 acres. Total land managed by ALL Coverts (not just those responding to the survey this year) has reached over 56,000 acres. [Click here](#) to see a map showing the geographical distribution of Coverts Cooperator’s land stewardship.

The chart below shows the habitat activities and acres of land managed by the 1st year Coverts Cooperators (2005 trainees) who responded to the survey this year.



The chart below shows the habitat management activities and acres of land managed by the Coverts alumni (1995-2004 trainees) who responded to the survey this year.



2006 Coverts Accomplishments: Community Conservation

Many Coverts Cooperators serve as local decision-makers and help initiate or implement conservation actions in their communities. This has become a critical role for Coverts volunteers, as more and more towns in southern and central New Hampshire face threats to wildlife through urban sprawl, habitat loss, and forest fragmentation. Coverts Cooperators wrote this year:

“This past year we completed a 320+ acre conservation easement [in my town]. It was a conservation project that I conceived during the Coverts Training Workshop in 2001. I also just love participating in the Farm & Forest Expo and the Friday afternoon conservation workshops during the summer.”

Community Conservation Statistics:

Number of Coverts Cooperators	1 st year Coverts (Class of 2005) Respondents	Alumni (95-2004) Survey Respondents	Total 2006 Survey Respondents
Serving on Conservation Commissioners	14	43	57 (43%)
Serving on town planning, zoning, board of selectmen, watershed, or open space board	1	15	16 (12%)
Helped complete a town natural resource inventory or habitat inventory	7	31	38 (29%)
Helped manage town or Conservation Land	12	43	55 (42%)
Served on open space, land trust or conservation group board	7	39	46 (35%)
Involved in watershed association/river coalition or other water resources group	8	25	33 (25%)
# of acres Coverts respondents helped conserve in 2006	4,654 acres (avg. 179 acres per volunteer)	15,742 acres (avg. 136 ac. per volunteer)	20,396 acres (avg. 155 ac. per volunteer)

[Click here](#) to view a map showing the relationship between NH towns with Coverts Cooperators and towns that have passed land conservation funding in recent years. Towns with active Coverts volunteers are almost twice as likely to have passed conservation measures as towns without Coverts volunteers.

2006 Coverts Accomplishments: Raising Public Awareness

Coverts Cooperators engage in many activities that promote forest stewardship and wildlife conservation to their families, friends, peers, and community members. One newly-trained Coverts Cooperator writes:

“For the second consecutive year, we led a hike on our property in collaboration with the [a local] Greenway Coalition. At the start of the hike, we displayed a copy of our survey and a large aerial photo with an outline of the property. [We] also prepared a flier with a map indicating points of interest -- archaeological sites; explanation of timber management methods; wildlife sightings; mountain views, etc. Our surveyor accompanied us on the hike and discussed the survey process. We discussed the importance of conservation easements, managing the land to benefit wildlife (the trail was heavily traveled by moose and deer, so their tracks were evident). [Since our timber harvest] this is the first year we have seen woodcock and turkey on the property...also indigo bunting and other songbirds not evident before timber was cut; managing the land as a working forest; and allowing the land to be open for passive uses -- hiking, fishing, snowshoeing and cross-country skiing, and hunting.”

Public Awareness Statistics:

Raising Public Awareness: Practices Instigated in 2006 by Coverts Volunteers	1st year Coverts (Class of 2005) Respondents	Alumni (95-2004) Survey Respondents	Total 2006 Survey Respondents
Led field tours on their own land	4	15	19
Hosted or presented public programs in their communities	7	32	39
Involved in media interviews related to stewardship or wildlife, including newspaper articles, local TV broadcasts, or regular columns	8	29	37
Staffed natural resources exhibits	7	21	28
Held personal conversations with neighbors or friends about stewardship	22	79	101
Distributed written materials to others on wildlife or stewardship topics	10	36	46
Participate in the Tree Farm, Community Tree Stewards, Master Gardener, or Backyard Tree Farmer programs	17	78	95
Volunteer for other conservation organizations	12 (46%)	42 (36%)	54 (41%)
Estimate of # of people reached with stewardship message through outreach efforts, including through direct contact, media, etc.	2,427 people (avg. 93 each)	36,125 (avg. 311 each)	38,552 (avg. 292 each)



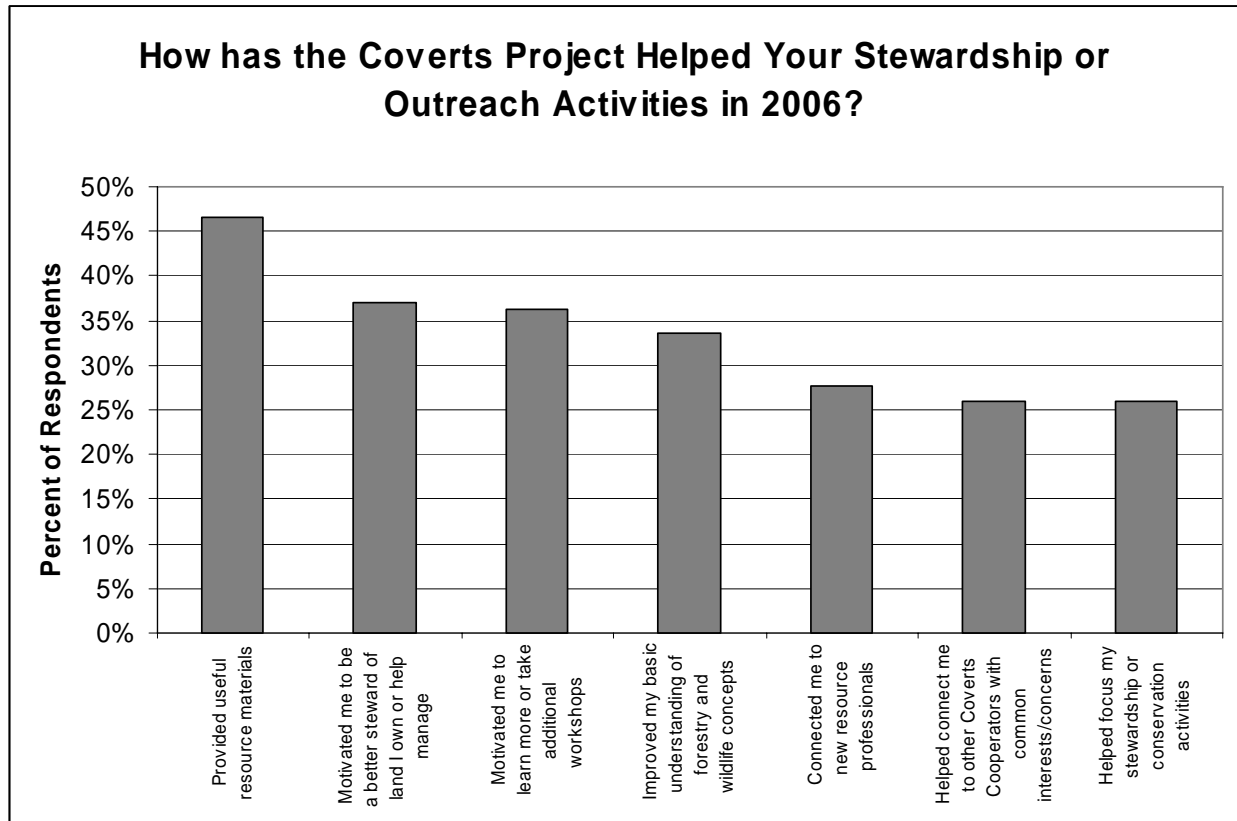
How the Coverts Project Assists in Stewardship & Wildlife Outreach

For the third time, the annual survey of Coverts Cooperators included a question asking Coverts volunteers to reflect on the Coverts Project itself. We asked volunteers how the program helped them during the past year, listing as choices the “program benefits” that derived from the results of our 2001 Coverts Program Evaluation. The question asked in this year’s survey read:

In the past year, has the NH Coverts Project helped your stewardship or outreach activities in any of these ways? (Check all that apply).

- Provided useful resource materials*
- Motivated me to learn more or take additional workshops*
- Helped connect me to other Coverts Cooperators with common interests/concerns*
- Improved my basic understanding of forestry & wildlife concepts*
- Connected me to new resource professionals*
- Motivated me to be a better steward of land I own or help manage*
- Helped focus my stewardship or conservation activities*
- Other (please describe):*

Results show that Coverts volunteers value different aspects of the program. All categories received significant responses, with provision of resource materials rating highest (for the 3rd year in a row).





Promoting the NH Coverts Project

The focus of the NH Coverts Project is on spreading the message of wildlife habitat conservation and sound forest stewardship to as many listeners as possible. By training volunteers who are already well-connected in their communities, the program capitalizes on the existing enthusiasm, knowledge, and energy of this relatively small group of dedicated citizens. In recent years, we have revamped the promotional materials of the NH Coverts Project to focus less on the recruitment of new volunteers (we usually have many more applications than spaces in the program) and more on the messages of habitat conservation and land stewardship. In this way, for Coverts volunteers and program staff, promotion of the program is most important as an avenue into discussion of these key messages. We use several different promotional tools, including:

- Name tags for each Cooperator to use during public presentations, events, and tours
- NH Coverts Project promotional brochure (see Appendix)
- A website describing the program in detail, including information on the annual training workshop, volunteer opportunities, profiles of Coverts volunteers, copies of the Coverts Project annual report and other reports, and information about the Coverts Advisory Committee.
- Press releases on the fall training, to recruit new volunteers, to recognize Cooperators at continuing education events, and to announce other events
- Cooperators are encouraged to contact the local media when hosting an event (and staff helped draft press statements). See Appendix for several examples of news articles resulting from Coverts activities in 2006.
- The NH Coverts Project display and a variety of Wildlife Activity Kits are available for loan by Coverts volunteers



Coverts Project Initiatives for 2007

Communication – Email and the Coverts listserv are increasingly important to our communication, both from the Coverts Project office *to* Coverts volunteers, and *among* volunteers through the listserv and email connections. Plans for 2007 include the development of a new web-based network (“Alliance of NH Natural Resource Volunteers”) to better connect volunteers with new training opportunities and with meaningful volunteer opportunities.

Making Tracks Newsletter – The Coverts Project newsletter will continue to be issued 2-3 times a year. The newsletter is an effective method of keeping our statewide volunteers, including those without access to the internet, connected to each other. Back issues of the newsletter are also available on the Coverts web site.

Updates – The Project Coordinator will continue yearly updates to all project partners, according to reporting guidelines issued by each. The report is promoted and made available to Coverts Cooperators on the Coverts webpage, www.NHCoverts.org.

Advisory Committee – The Coverts Advisory Committee meets once a year to discuss emerging issues and new ideas for the continued success of the program. Committee meeting notes are available on the Coverts webpage.

Continuing Education - In 2007, we will be offering a variety of new workshops, including a planned workshop on black bears and their habitat requirements, offered in collaboration with NH Community Tree Stewards. In addition, Coverts Cooperators will be a key audience for a planned series of nine (9) workshops, each focused on a different critical habitat (as identified in the NH Wildlife Action Plan). The focus of the workshops will be on stewardship recommendations for private landowners and land managers, and what they can do to help species and habitats of conservation concern in the state.

Annual Training Workshop – We will continue to use Sargent Center in 2007 for the workshop training site, as it offers reliable facilities and is located near excellent field sites.

Appendix

(not included in web-based report; see other areas of website for information or contact the Coverts Project office for copies of original appendix documents).

NH Coverts Project Annual Report 2006

Includes:

- Program Brochure
- Reply Card: Coverts Participation Status
- 2006 Coverts Application Form
- List of Active Coverts Cooperators by County
- 2006 Annual Workshop Agenda
- 2006 Coverts Workshop Evaluation Form
- Annual Coverts Activities Survey form
- Making Tracks Newsletters
- Coverts Cooperators In The News – Examples from 2006