

# INTO THE WOODS

NEW ENGLAND FORESTRY FOUNDATION | WINTER 2020

## NEFF Protects 5,700 Acres

OF DOWNEAST MAINE SONGBIRD HABITAT

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**FORESTRY**  
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## Dear Members and Friends,

How can the forests of New England help us in a time of climate emergency? After 76 years, that is the operative question for the New England Forestry Foundation (NEFF).

While we remain laser-focused on doing our job to describe how forest management is key to a climate solution, we also acknowledge and embrace the creation of reserve areas where no timber harvesting takes place. This concept of a balanced landscape composed of both well-managed forests and reserve forestlands is embodied in the Wildlands and Woodlands vision; the vision calls for protecting 70 percent of our remaining forests, with 90 percent of those acres well-managed and 10 percent in reserves. In NEFF's Hersey Mountain Forest, 2,100 acres of the property's total 3,200 are designated as a no-harvesting 'Hersey Mountain Wilderness' reserve, and portions of many of our other 150 Community Forests are also designated as no-harvest. We value our ongoing partnership with Northeast Wilderness Trust, and at the last Land Trust Alliance Rally, I had the pleasure of presenting a joint session with their Executive Director called, "Say Yes to Wilderness and Forestry."

We need this kind of mutual support to accomplish both the managed and wild portions of our collective visions for New England. If we are going to win on climate change, we are going to win together, because the real political power doesn't lie within either of our sectors; it lies elsewhere in our growth-oriented global economy.

For these reasons it has been disheartening to witness a small group of wildland-loving advocates coin and misuse a new term: "proforestation." It ostensibly refers to caring for a forest in a way that increases in-forest carbon stocks. In that sense it aligns perfectly with NEFF's Exemplary Forestry standards and the way we have nurtured our forests to higher stocking over 76 years. It is also exactly what NEFF has suggested in a new paper we presented to the Society of American Foresters conference in October. We are calling for a re-definition of sustainable forestry that focuses on increasing carbon storage in the forest.

So what is the problem? The problem is that some advocates have used the term in political settings to only apply to forests that are left completely unmanaged—as if managed forests can't also increase carbon stocking. And then they make the mistake of insisting that leaving forests alone is the best way to mitigate climate change. That just isn't true, and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) agrees in its 2007 report (Nabuurs et al. 2007):

"In the long term, a sustainable forest management strategy aimed at maintaining or increasing forest carbon stocks, while producing an annual sustained yield of timber, fiber, or energy from the forest, will generate the largest sustained mitigation benefit."

We shouldn't be battling over who is better when it is clear both forest approaches are necessary. To win the battle against climate change, we'll need a team approach that includes lovers of wild places, forest managers, forest activists, climate activists, policy makers, the wood products industry, family forest owners, industrial forest owners, and urban dwellers who can benefit from new engineered wood buildings. Now isn't the time to cook up ways to divide us, it is time to bring us together in a unified front. And that is exactly what NEFF is doing with our new Forest-to-Cities Climate Challenge outreach effort, which you can learn about and join at [foresttocities.org](http://foresttocities.org)

Robert Perschel  
Executive Director

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THE CARES ACT AND YOU



## Setting a Global Example

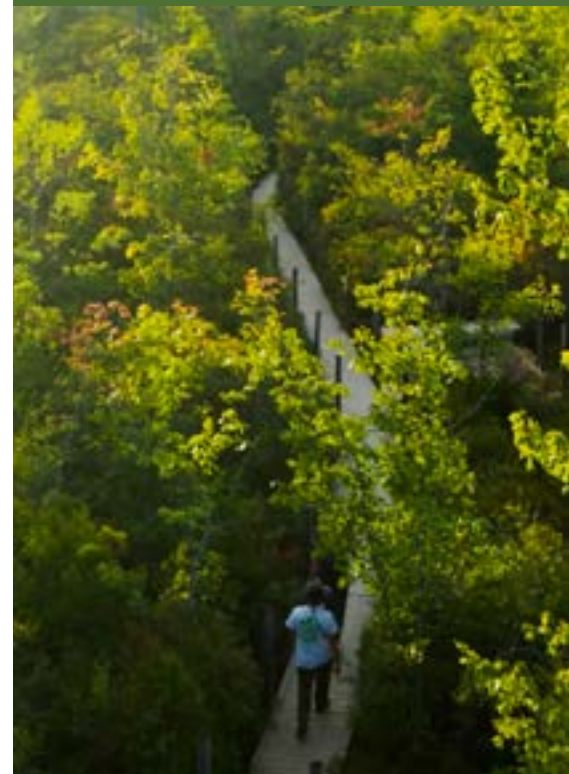
New England Forestry Foundation (NEFF) has gone global! In support of the Sustainable Markets Initiative, His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales launched a video platform called RE:TV in September 2020 that showcases inspiring stories of sustainability innovation and ingenuity from around the globe, including NEFF's Exemplary Forestry™ work. While our Exemplary Forestry standards are tailored to specific regions, the concept behind them—top-notch sustainable forestry that maximizes forests' ability to mitigate climate change, produce wood products and support wildlife—is one that can be applied worldwide. See our video at [re-tv.org/rebalance/restoring-woodlands](https://re-tv.org/rebalance/restoring-woodlands)

Portions of NEFF's RE:TV video were filmed at Chamberlain Reynolds Memorial Forest, as shown in the video screenshots above and to the right.

## Join Our Upcoming Webinar Series

Massachusetts Woodlands Institute, Northern Woodlands and NEFF present the Local Wood: Grow, Build, Live webinar series. Join us as we explore examples of how to grow, build, and live with beautiful and sustainable local wood products at different scales—from furniture to homes to institutional buildings. We will hear from presenters about their experiences working with local and regional wood, what role the material and forestry can play in a sustainable economy, and new technologies and applications for wood products that can help mitigate global climate change and spur innovation.

Three 90-minute webinars in January, February, and March of 2021 will explore these themes through conversations between the presenters and staff leaders at Massachusetts Woodlands Institute and NEFF. We hope you will join us in these engaging discussions on the beauty and benefits of this local resource for communities across Massachusetts and New England. Detailed dates and timing at [newenglandforestry.org/connect/events](https://newenglandforestry.org/connect/events)





# NEFF PROTECTS 5,700 ACRES OF DOWNEAST MAINE SONGBIRD HABITAT

WRITING BY NEFF Communications Manager Tinsley Hunsdorfer

Michael Perlman photo provided by Frenchman Bay Conservancy

## Another 2,200 Downeast Maine acres are on track for NEFF protection by year-end

When the New England Forestry Foundation's Downeast Woods and Wildlife project came to a successful conclusion this fall, it shifted the geography of our conservation legacy: Downeast Maine, with its fog-wreathed coastlines and deep green-and-grey forests, is currently home to most of this century's large-scale NEFF conservation work.

NEFF ultimately reached three times the original conservation goal for the project, which means 2020 is shaping up to add more acreage to NEFF's network of Community Forests than any previous year. This would be an impressive accomplishment at any time, but

to pull it off during this tumultuous, stressful and grief-ridden year? That's a staggering accomplishment made possible only by the unswerving support of NEFF's donors and partners, and by the talent and hard work of NEFF's staff and Board of Directors. Our thanks.

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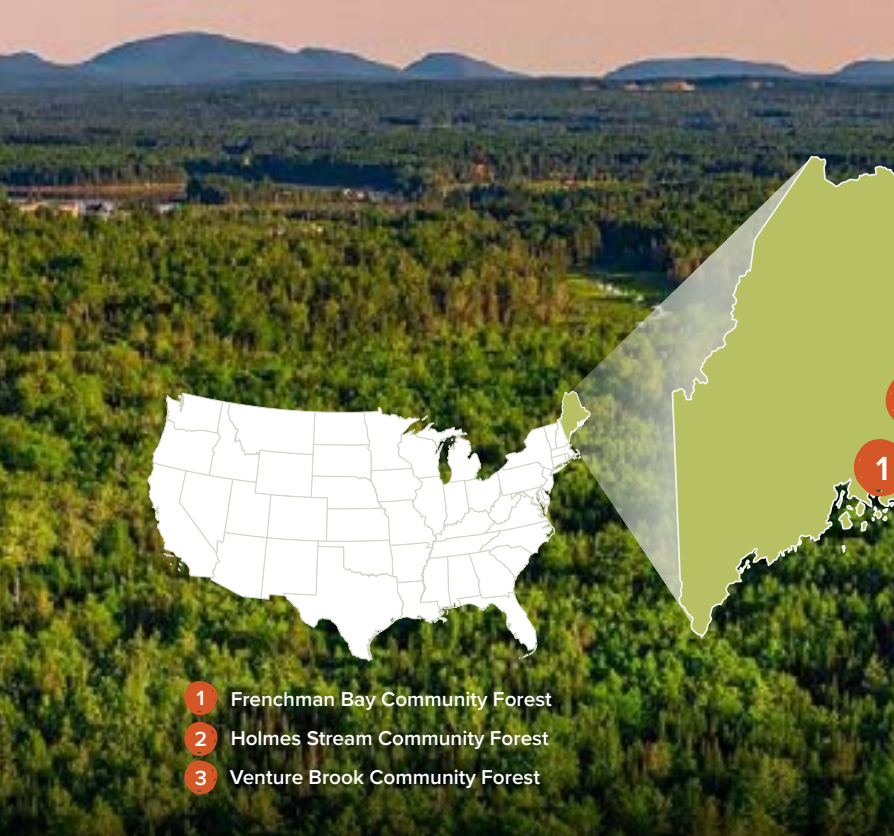
The initial aim of NEFF's Downeast Woods and Wildlife project was to purchase and protect forestlands along the winding and sun-dappled Denny's River, whose waters—kept cool and clean by riverside forests—provide critical habitat to Maine's endangered Atlantic Salmon population and other cold-water fish.

The project had its first major success in summer 2018 when NEFF purchased the

1,160-acre Reynolds Family Forest, and NEFF is now on track to take ownership of the 2,200-acre Venture Brook Community Forest in December 2020—and may be closing on the property even as this newsletter reaches your home.

This alone would have been enough to call the project a success, but in October, NEFF received two donated Downeast Maine properties totaling 5,700 acres that also stand to benefit wild animals, just ones with feathers rather than fins. This truly transformative gift will soon allow NEFF to model Exemplary Forestry at scale on more than 9,000 Downeast Maine acres.

"This donation stands as the largest land gift in NEFF's history and creates our second and third largest Community Forests in one fell swoop," said NEFF Chief Conservation Officer Will Brune. "These lands will be a treasure, not just for NEFF but for New Englanders."



- 1 Frenchman Bay Community Forest
- 2 Holmes Stream Community Forest
- 3 Venture Brook Community Forest

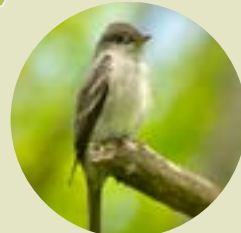
## PRIORITY SPECIES



Veery  
*Catharus fuscescens*



Wood Thrush  
*Hylocichla mustelina*



Eastern Wood-Pewee  
*Contopus virens*



Bay-breasted Warbler  
*Setophaga castanea*



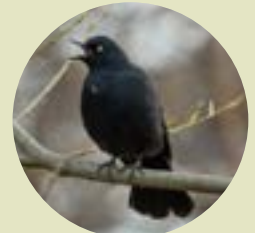
Canada Warbler  
*Cardellina canadensis*



Chestnut-sided Warbler  
*Setophaga pensylvanica*



Olive-sided Flycatcher  
*Contopus cooperi*



Rusty Blackbird  
*Euphagus carolinus*



Black-throated Blue Warbler  
*Setophaga caerulescens*



American Redstart  
*Setophaga ruticilla*

## Frenchman Bay and Holmes Stream

The story of these two donated properties begins in 2003 when the Maine Wind Energy Act first passed (it has since been updated). The law was strongly influenced by NEFF’s Maine Representative and Senior Advisor, Alec Giffen, then the State Forester of Maine and chair of the Governor’s task force on wind power siting. Under the law, wind energy developers often are required to mitigate the ecological and scenic impact of their installations.

In keeping with the Maine Wind Energy Act, Weaver Wind LLC set out in 2019 to mitigate their Maine-based wind project by purchasing two Downeast parcels of songbird habitat: a 2,690-acre parcel along Holmes Bay in Washington County, and a 3,100-acre parcel near Egypt Bay in Hancock County.

Two teams of habitat and biodiversity experts crafted Songbird Habitat Management Plans for the forestlands that ended up calling for the kinds of intensive management activities required to create and improve large habitat blocks; Weaver Wind then looked for conservation organizations qualified to take over both ownership and intensive management of the parcels, and NEFF was deemed the best fit given its more than 75 years of forestry and stewardship experience on its own lands.

“NEFF is pleased to be part of this forward-looking approach to maintaining songbird populations in Downeast Maine,” said NEFF Chief Operating Officer Frank Lowenstein. “We’re also thrilled to build on Alec’s past work on wind mitigation, and NEFF Chief Conservation Officer Will Brune did his usual superb work on bringing the lands into permanent conservation.”

By creating and protecting habitat for these species, many other wild animals stand to benefit, including the Eastern Screech Owl (pictured on front cover), a Species of Special Concern in Maine, and the Black-and-white Warbler, a Species of Greatest Conservation Need in Maine.

NEFF has named the first property Holmes Stream Community Forest, and it includes intact blocks of contiguous forestland as well as important wetland features like tidal estuarine habitat, found where Holmes Stream flows into the bay. The Holmes property abuts the State of Maine's popular Cutler Coast Public Lands, a 12,234-acre expanse known for steep cliffs that plunge into the ocean as well as its blueberry barrens, woodlands and peatlands with 4.5 miles of headlands that overlook the Bay of Fundy.

In collaboration with the Frenchman Bay Conservancy, NEFF has made the second parcel part of the existing Frenchman Bay Community Forest, bringing this beautiful woodland to 4,530 total acres. This parcel also offers important and interesting habitat features—like waterways and wetlands extensive enough to support inland wading birds—and the overall Community Forest intersects with the 87-mile Down East Sunrise Trail.

Through management of Holmes Stream and Frenchman Bay Community Forests, NEFF's goal is to create and support stop-over and nesting habitat for migratory songbirds within the framework of Exemplary Forestry standards, with a particular emphasis on the needs of ten priority species highlighted in the Songbird Habitat Management Plans.

This means the properties need to provide water, species-specific food and species-specific shelter for birds making mid-migration pitstops as well as birds who plan to set up shop for the summer and join Maine's immense population of breeding birds. Once the habitat work is complete on these properties, Holmes Stream and Frenchman Bay should be full of the bright sights and cacophonous sounds of breeding birds and their babies every spring and summer.

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**To achieve these results across both properties, NEFF will:**

- Create and maintain young northern hardwood habitat, a type of crucial early successional habitat in short supply in Maine
- Conserve, enhance and restore both old northern mixed wood habitat and old northern softwood habitat, which can both be managed to provide old-growth characteristics
- Conserve and protect wetlands
- Protect and promote broadly useful habitat features like snags, cavity trees, native plant biodiversity, and mast plants that produce nutritious fruits, nuts and seeds

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"I'm excited to see what we can do with parcels of this size, as they provide unique opportunities to not only apply management practices at a different

scale, but also allow for a wide range of habitat conditions on one property," said Chris Pryor, NEFF Director of Forest Stewardship. "Usually, NEFF either broadly manages for all wildlife by simply creating diverse forest structures and protecting important features like vernal pools, or manages for a single priority species like the New England Cottontail at one or two locations."

While wildlife habitat creation and restoration will be a major feature of NEFF's work on these properties, like all NEFF Community Forests, both will be open to the public and allow traditional recreational activities.

The Frenchman Bay Conservancy (FBC) has played a key role in working with nearby communities to identify how the Frenchman Bay Community Forest addresses local recreational needs. FBC and NEFF are drafting an inclusive, forest-wide stewardship plan that will provide a full array of recreational uses, wildlife habitat protection, and support for the Sunrise Trail.

**SALLY STOCKWELL,**

Director of Conservation for Maine Audubon:

"Maine Audubon is excited to learn that NEFF has accepted two Downeast Maine forest properties that will be managed specifically to enhance habitat for breeding and migratory songbirds as mitigation for real and potential impacts from the nearby Weaver Wind project.

"NEFF will apply their Exemplary Forestry principles to managing these lands with a specific emphasis on enhancing and retaining three key habitat features—mature forests with both vertical and horizontal structural diversity, which most of our forest birds depend upon to nest and raise their young, as well as the properties' wetlands and riparian habitat. These lands could become a model for managing Maine forestlands for both birds and board feet, with added benefits of storing carbon and producing high quality sawtimber."





Fishing in the Dennys River. Photo by Lauren Owens Lambert

## Venture Brook

While on their way to an early morning walkthrough of Venture Brook Community Forest in 2018, NEFF staff members spotted an adult Bald Eagle perched high on a riverside snag as well as a juvenile River Otter frolicking in a roadside pond. Both of these large fish-eating predators were just a few miles away from Venture Brook's property line, which seemed auspicious, as both were also indicators that efforts to restore and protect the area's aquatic habitat were succeeding. You can't have large fish-eating predators without reliable populations of fish.

Venture Brook demonstrates in miniature the features that make Downeast Maine's interlaced network of forests and waterways ideal for cold-water fish. Streams and wetlands weave through Venture Brook's almost entirely forested 2,200 acres, and the forestland purifies and filters this water as it makes its way into the nearby Dennys River; trees in the riparian zone then shade the Dennys, and the end result is the kind of cool, clean river young Atlantic Salmon need to thrive.

The Dennys River is one of the wild Atlantic Salmon's last footholds in the United States, where it has otherwise nearly vanished. While Atlantic Salmon

are common in restaurants and grocery stores, those fish are almost entirely farm-raised. Wild Atlantic Salmon—which were critical to the Wabanaki way of life and once played a role in the ecosystems of almost all of the nation's northeast coastal rivers—are now found only in Maine, in at least eight rivers.

NEFF's conservation efforts are helping to bolster one of those rivers on a systemic scale. With the addition of the acres protected by Venture Brook Community Forest and Reynolds Family Forest, fully 20 percent of the 84,000-acre Dennys River watershed will be conserved by a variety of partners, with NEFF responsible for more than 6,400 acres. NEFF protected half of its acres via easement in 2005, and the Downeast Woods and Wildlife project's Dennys parcels account for the rest.

This joint protection of the Dennys watershed isn't Venture Brook's only tie to collaborative conservation, as NEFF is acquiring the parcel itself through a Maine Coastal Forest Partnership effort to protect a suite of working forests across the Downeast region. In May 2018, The Conservation Fund purchased 17,000 acres split over three properties to provide partnership members with

conservation opportunities and time to fundraise. NEFF, Blue Hill Heritage Trust and The Nature Conservancy—who are joined in the partnership by The Conservation Fund, Maine Coast Heritage Trust and Downeast Salmon Federation—each committed to raising the funds for and purchasing one of the properties. The Conservation Fund will transfer ownership of Venture Brook to NEFF this December.

## A Downeast Legacy

By the time the days have grown dark and this year draws to a close, New England Forestry Foundation will have conserved 346,000 total acres in Downeast Maine, with 312,000 acres protected by NEFF's 2004 Downeast Lakes Forestry Partnership easement, 25,000 acres protected by additional easements, and 9,150 acres protected through ownership. The legacy NEFF is building in this beautiful place, however, isn't just one of acreage—it is also one of cooperation and connection.

NEFF's Downeast successes have been relationship-building, collaborative efforts, with a range of participants that have included partner organizations, community representatives, state and local governments, financial supporters, outdoor recreation groups, Downeast-based tribes, conservation-minded landowners and more. NEFF's Downeast successes have also all been about building region-wide ecosystem connections that will help salmon rebound, songbirds soar, and forests thrive.

Together, piece-by-piece, we are stitching together a whole and healthy landscape that will benefit people and the natural world for generations to come. 🌿

# WINTER HARVESTS

Why does NEFF harvest in winter, and what does climate change mean for the future of forestry?

**WRITING BY** NEFF Director of Forest Stewardship Chris Pryor and Chief Operating Officer Frank Lowenstein

Winter in New England. Hard ground, blanketed by cushioning snow. For generations, these conditions have made winter the time to harvest timber. The snow cushions falling trunks—protecting the quality of the wood—and together with the rock-hard ground, provides protection against ruts and erosion caused by logging equipment. Winter harvests also avoid disrupting rare wildlife, reduce the chance of insects or fungi spoiling cut timber, and in the past, allowed New England timber harvests to fit in with other seasonal industries such as farming. But climate change is already making winter harvesting a more uncertain proposition. How will that affect New England's forests and forest management? Read on.

Protecting soil structure has always been one of the primary reasons to harvest in the colder months of the year. Skidders, harvesters, and logging trucks may leave ruts in soft soils, causing productive soils to erode away during storms, which both can pollute streams and rivers and slow future growth. Frozen soil, particularly when covered by a layer of snow, is protected from rutting or compaction by heavy equipment. Frozen ground also offers access to sites with wetter soils that can't be accessed any other time of the year without causing excessive damage to soils and vegetation.

Protecting rare wildlife is another reason timber harvesting is often carried out in winter. For example, the Blanding's Turtle, a threatened species in Massachusetts, likes to spend its winters burrowed into the mud or silt at the bottom of wetlands, ponds, and vernal pools in a state of dormancy from November to March. The rest of the year, Blanding's Turtles can be found in upland habitats traveling between wetlands to feed, mate, and nest. For this reason, timber harvesting in areas of known Blanding's Turtle habitat is restricted by state law to the winter months when the turtles are inactive. Combine this with proper buffers around wetlands and vernal pools, and upland forests can be harvested and managed properly within the Blanding's Turtle's habitat.





The timing of nesting and fledgling of certain bird species offers a similar motivation. Northern Goshawks are one example. Although listed as rare or threatened in only some New England states, they are legally protected on a federal level by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. NEFF avoids active timber harvesting during their nesting season of April to July to protect both birds and forest workers. Goshawks are fierce defenders of their nests, and have been known to swoop down at intruders and slash at them with their talons.

Finally, winter harvests help prevent spoilage. Cut logs of most tree species are more susceptible to damage by insects and disease when harvested in the summer. Trees cut during the growing season will have more nutrients in them from sugary sap flowing between leaves and roots. This makes them more vulnerable to spoiling. They will not spoil like milk left out on the counter on a hot summer day, but their value can be reduced if not trucked to a mill, sawed, and dried swiftly. For some species, logs cut in the summer and left too long at a log landing or in the woods will start to stain; the stain is caused by fungal spores that reach cut logs either via insects or on the wind.

As climate change disrupts weather patterns moving forward, we will need to find new ways to accomplish our forest management objectives while still protecting forest resources like soil, water and wildlife.

Climate change is already reducing the amount of time forestry operations can take advantage of frozen ground. Since the middle of last century, the season of frozen ground has declined by about two weeks on average—about a 15 percent reduction—and the ability of loggers to count on frozen ground has greatly decreased. This makes it harder to get equipment in and out of sites, and to take on larger winter logging jobs.

Loggers will need to become more flexible to take advantage of smaller, more unpredictable windows of favorable weather and ground conditions. This will likely have wide ranging impacts on the frequency of harvesting operations as well as the economics of forestry and forest products in our region. Crews with more technologically advanced equipment that can enter and leave a site quickly will have an advantage. Equipment may have to be equipped with wider treads or balloon tires to reduce rutting and the potential for erosion.

Climate change already affects New England winters in three ways relevant to forestry. First, nights are warming faster than days. This limits nighttime freezing of the soil and wetland areas, which reduces the number of days suitable for winter logging. Warmer winter nights also allow insects that attack trees to survive in greater numbers, increasing tree mortality and slowing growth.

Second, frozen soils arrive later in the fall and leave earlier in the spring. This again reduces the time available for winter harvesting.

Third, more of our current precipitation falls as winter rain, instead of snow. If the rain falls on bare, frozen ground, it is likely to immediately run off into streams and rivers, and be long gone by the time the growing season returns. As a



Snow on frozen ground protects the soils against erosion from heavy equipment like forwarders (opposite page). The padding of the snow also protects the logs from damage during felling.

result, trees may experience less water availability in spring, and the forest may dry out earlier in the summer, reducing growth and increasing the risk of wildfire.

Over time, these changes and others associated with climate change will transform the forest, favoring some tree species over others. Forests will also see an increase in blowdowns caused by stronger hurricane winds and more frequent powerful thunderstorms, and more of our annual precipitation coming as heavy downpours will result in more strongly alternating dry periods and floods.

Scientists predict that bastions of the New England landscape, such as the Sugar Maple, may cease to thrive in much or possibly all of the region within the century. More southerly species such as oaks and pines will increase their dominance into new terrain, and perhaps even entirely new species of trees currently found exclusively south of New England will come to colonize the region's hills. The full effects of these changes on our forests—and the ways we manage and harvest them—are still not fully known, but change and disruption are likely the watchwords of the future. 🌿

# WOODLAND NARRATIVES

The stories behind John Serafin, Jr.'s family land, and the lifetime of stewardship that saved it.

WRITING BY Lisa Hayden, NEFF Landowner Outreach Manager

A good day for John A. Serafin, Jr. is one when he can get into his truck and out to his woods in Stafford, Connecticut, perhaps firing up the chain saw to cut some downed trees for firewood. He knows every corner of the more than 350 acres of land he inherited from his father—from each pipe and stone boundary to the dense Mountain Laurel thicket, the White Cedar swamp near the Ellington town line and the pond where migrating waterfowl visit each spring and fall.

John, age 82, likes to head from his home in Tolland to the Stafford woodlands early in the morning to cut and split wood for 2-3 hours in fall and winter for his wood boiler.

One thing he's found very important in life, is "the need for a daily routine of exercise and activity. It clears your mind and helps you put things in focus, and just makes you feel much better."

He can't see bicycling or doing exercises: "When I'm getting exercise, I'm also gaining the benefit of a warm wood stove in the winter months and not spending the money on fuel oil."

John's dedication to the family forest may have grown from his love of being outdoors. Over the years, he took many backpacking trips in the United States and Europe, and made annual pilgrimages to the Adirondacks and White Mountains with his son David.

"I was born and grew up on the farm in Stafford. That's rooted in me," says John, who has generously donated a conservation easement to New England Forestry Foundation to preserve the land as forested open space for future generations.

Photo by Andrew Bentley

He recalls going out with his parents to pick blueberries. “We relied to some extent on the woods for food,” he recalls. Too small to help much, he and his sister didn’t like the mosquitos and the understory was dense, and a bit “forbidding” to a child.

Later in life, after a year in the military and attendance at UConn and Cornell, he worked as a nutritionist for a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service program attempting captive breeding of endangered species like the Whooping Crane and California Condor. Around 1983, John moved back from Maryland to Connecticut with his son David and (now ex-) wife Phyllis to take over the forest and greenhouse business from his aunt and uncle. He found a house to purchase in Tolland, Connecticut, but never considered moving to the Stafford land, perhaps because he considers himself a steward of the place.

“It never crossed my mind to build a house on the land in Stafford. At that point, I already determined we were going to keep it as long as possible,” he said.

His family history is tied to the land, but his ancestors were living in a different economic age. “My grandfather purchased the land and cut timber off it,” John said, noting that his grandfather’s name shows up frequently in Town Hall deed transfers. Some early farmers would buy up land with the goal of harvesting the trees to provide income, and then sell the parcels afterwards—at a time when cleared land was valuable for agriculture. When it came to the parcels on Charter Road, “for some reason he held onto it,” says John.

John hoped for many years that he would someday be able to conserve his forest. But the high estimate for a property survey of four separate parcels was a barrier. After returning a post card for a free visit with a land protection specialist in 2015, he met with NEFF staff and attended an estate planning forum sponsored by the MassConn Woods partnership. A MassConn conservation small grant helped offset the survey and other costs. Part of the land abuts property in Ellington conserved by the Northern Connecticut Land Trust, which was also supportive of the project.

Despite some health challenges, John’s goal finally became a reality with the recording of the conservation easement to NEFF in December 2019, permanently protecting 365 acres of Stafford, Connecticut, woodland from development while maintaining it in private ownership.

“It took me much longer than I anticipated. For me, it is such a relief to know the land is protected and will not be developed,” John said. “That part is so reassuring.”

When he’s in the woods, sometimes sounds from the community around him encroach—the roar of motorcycles on Route 140 or nearby Stafford Speedway—and John might drown them out with his own chain saw.

“Other times it’s perfectly quiet—very, very quiet,” he says, recalling times hunting. “You can sit there for an hour or two on an autumn afternoon just enjoying the silence. See an occasional bird or squirrel... studying nature and just observing nature, has always been interesting to me.”

One sunny, early December day when he was still operating the greenhouse business, John was in the thickets intent on pruning and gathering Mountain Laurel branches as bases for the weekend funeral arrangements they prepared in advance. The greenest, lushest stems were always on the edge where they get more light.

“I reached up as high as I could,” to grab more branches, “and all of a sudden a huge buck was there watching me. I never expected to be standing so close to a big buck like that.” He was startled, but in a moment, the deer bounded off into the woods, leaving John to his work. 🍃

“We weren’t going to develop the property any further than those house lots my father sold in the 1950s... We wanted to try to keep the land and expand it as opposed to selling off building lots.”

John Serafin on his land in Stafford, CT, with NEFF Conservation Easement Manager Andrew Bentley. Photo by Lisa Hayden



# BUILDING LANDOWNER RELATIONSHIPS WORKS IN WESTERN MAINE

## NEFF's Western Maine Habitat Restoration initiative is seeing success in its landowner outreach efforts

In late 2019, a small newspaper ad in the Rumford Falls Times caught Kim Kavanagh's eye during a break at her job at a local credit union in Western Maine. It showed the face of a furry marten peeking up from the snow and announced an opportunity for woodland owners to receive assistance in improving wildlife habitat through forestry.

"I thought, this looks cool," Kim said. "It looks like something we could do." She immediately sent the ad to her husband, Tim Davis.

The couple had moved from Chicago 16 years earlier to help an aging parent and had not looked back. They bought

a wooded property in Weld near Mount Blue State Park and made a home. Their discovery of the wildlife on their property was a continual source of joy—and sometimes embarrassment.

"One day early on, I saw this strange animal come out of the woods. It raised up on its haunches and looked at me and I had absolutely no idea what it was," said Kim. It was a porcupine.

**They saw hawks, bear, deer, moose and woodland birds and knew their woods were important to wildlife.**

They were willing to make their land an even better fit for local wild animals, but didn't really know how. They took a local forestry course and learned how to identify trees and manage for timber, but still were not clear how to focus on their core value: improving wildlife habitat.

"As transplants from the suburbs we didn't have a life-long connection to the woods. It was all new," said Tim. "We thought the best thing to do for wildlife was just leave it alone."

That started to change when they called in response to the newspaper ad—which highlighted NEFF's Western Maine Habitat Restoration initiative.



## Western Maine Habitat Restoration Initiative

The initiative's project area in the Mountains of the Dawn stretches 200 miles from the White Mountains at the New Hampshire border to Baxter State Park in Maine's north woods. Still almost 98 percent forested, it is home to the biggest remaining block of undeveloped forest left east of the Mississippi and provides critical habitat to a range of species. But as the northeast region faces climate-related problems and becomes more fragmented by development, the Western Maine forest faces local threats too. It is being carved up for recreation lots near lakes and is under increasing pressure to show short-term economic returns on large blocks of industrial forest.

To help build and restore habitat property-by-property across the landscape, the NEFF Western Maine

project team works with owners of family woodlots and other non-industrial woodlands to assess the property and develop 10-year habitat restoration plans based on the NEFF Acadian Forest Exemplary Forestry standards. The habitat restoration plans provide the basis for landowners to be considered for reimbursement for recommended forest practices through NEFF's funding partners, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. To be eligible to participate, landowners must also make an ethical pledge to embrace long-term Exemplary Forestry stewardship goals for 30 years to ensure that the early investment to create a well-stocked woodland that balances wildlife, climate and timber values yields continuing ecological and timber values in the long term.

Photo of the Davis-Kavanagh property canopy by Kim Kavanagh



NEFF Ecologist Carla Fenner, the technical expert on the Western Maine project, offers habitat guidance to a landowner. Photo by Christine Parrish

Tim Davis spoke to Christine Parrish, the NEFF Western Maine Project Coordinator. This first conversation allowed her to assess landowner and ownership suitability while further introducing the project to Tim. Many conversations followed. In the process, the Davises were introduced to the local NRCS field office staff in Franklin County, who worked with NEFF and the landowners to assist in cost-share under an unrelated program for a forest management plan with a timber inventory—an essential step for coordinating forestry and wildlife habitat improvements.

Moving forward, NEFF's Western Maine staff will coordinate efforts on the Davis-Kavanagh property with the forester who carries out this forest management plan.

"The real change in understanding about how forestry could work to improve habitat for wildlife is when Carla did a field visit and showed us how removing trees could allow other trees to grow better," said Tim, referring to NEFF Ecologist Carla Fenner's on-site discussion of different forest practices, including crop tree release and the value of snags and mast-producing trees. "That was the first time I really had a sense of what trees to cut to help wildlife and what to leave," said Tim.

With 14 months of work under her belt, Christine Parrish reports the outreach methods used to identify suitable landowners—like Kim and Tim—and then move them from interest to action are working.

After conducting an initial analysis of the initiative’s demographic, Christine chose outreach methods suitable to a sparsely settled rural region with an older population and deep community identity; a strong hunting, fishing, forestry and outdoor recreation culture; and a population that includes a significant number of non-resident landowners. Methods that resulted in inquiries include newspaper ads,

flyers, articles in publications read by target audiences, presentations to town select boards, and presentations to hunting, trapping and snowmobile groups. The landowner assessment process then weeded out candidates who were unlikely to make a 30-year pledge to Exemplary Forestry and focused efforts on those who could. All of this intensive outreach and assessment has paid off, as by fall 2020, 16 landowners representing just under 10,000 acres had applied and were actively engaged in the Western Maine Habitat Restoration initiative.

Tim Davis and Kim Kavanagh have said the reimbursements for the cost

of habitat work will allow them to soon implement forest practices that support wildlife, but program benefits beyond financial reimbursement have proven even more important to them: the one-on-one assessment of habitat values on and around their property, the action plan with specific forest practices that will be provided in the NEFF habitat restoration plan, and meeting people, including their new forester and NEFF and NRCS staff.

“We’re excited to know that we are not only learning about what to do but that it won’t stop there,” said Tim. “We will be taking action, too, with good guidance.” 🌿



Kim Kavanagh on her Maine property

## What’s Next? Neighbors Team Up

Neighbors cooperating on forest management has proven to be a benefit of NEFF’s one-on-one relationship-building approach to outreach. When a Western Maine Habitat Restoration initiative participant collaborates with adjacent landowners, it leads to connecting more habitat across property boundaries and coordinated on-the-ground work. This makes management work more efficient and is financially attractive to local foresters and loggers/operators. It also expands Exemplary Forestry across more acres.

To date, four landowner neighborhood-networks representing nine landowners and more than 4,000 acres are in development in Western Maine.

# THE CARES ACT AND YOU

## New options for supporting New England Forestry Foundation

The coronavirus epidemic has impacted the lives of most Americans; hundreds of thousands of families are grieving new losses, and nearly all of us have had to change the way we shop, work, and spend our free time. A silver lining for some has been finding solace and inspiration in renewed connection to nature and the outdoors, and New England Forestry Foundation's 150 Community Forests have experienced a significant uptick in recreational use.

Meanwhile, NEFF staff members have worked from home since March, using videoconferencing, phones, email, and online collaboration tools to continue our efforts on behalf of New England's forests and their benefits to all. For example, during the last year, forestry and climate leaders have come to NEFF with new recognition of the positive synergy of bringing together Exemplary Forestry, land conservation, and tall wood construction toward solving the climate crisis and improving housing equity. We can't solve the climate crisis if we continue to build with concrete and steel—both of which are made by burning fossil fuels, particularly coal. Engineered wood from New England forests managed to Exemplary Forestry standards can replace steel and concrete, creating a truly green way to build large buildings. **We need your help to sustain this critical work in support of a livable climate, and our continuing land conservation initiatives.**

And the benefits of charitable giving were expanded by the federal coronavirus stimulus bill—the CARES Act. These temporary incentives are designed to encourage more charitable giving in 2020 by providing additional tax relief for donors, which makes it easier to give to your favorite charity and save at the same time.

### Charitable Giving Incentives include:

#### TEMPORARY UNIVERSAL CHARITABLE DEDUCTION:

Taxpayers who do not itemize their deductions can take a one-time deduction of up to \$300 for gifts made to charitable organizations. The deduction is only for gifts of cash made in calendar year 2020 to public charities, like NEFF.

#### FOR THOSE WHO ITEMIZE

their taxes, the CARES Act suspends the 60 percent adjusted gross income (AGI) limitation for individuals' charitable cash contributions for the year 2020. In a typical year, this limits how much individuals can deduct, no matter how much they give. For 2020, a donor can deduct up to 100 percent of AGI for donations to public charities.

#### INCREASED CAP

on how much corporations may deduct for charitable gifts from 10 percent of taxable income to 25 percent.

You also may be able to contribute from your IRA or other tax-deferred savings account for further tax benefits, or donate appreciated stock to NEFF, avoiding taxes on capital gains and receiving a charitable deduction. Please consult

your tax or legal advisor to see which options might suit your circumstances best. NEFF also offers a number of planned giving options, including our Pooled Timber Income Fund (PTIF). This year for the first time, NEFF is inviting donors to participate in the PTIF by donating cash, in addition to accepting donations of timber. Cash donations to the PTIF entitle the donor to a charitable gift deduction, and to a proportion of future harvest revenue from timber in the fund; that revenue can be designated to benefit the donor, a spouse, or children, or even to benefit a charity. Funds donated to the PTIF will be used to permanently protect additional forestlands, expanding NEFF's land ownership and the reach of Exemplary Forestry. 🌿

For more information about any of these giving options, please contact Penny Flynn via email at [pflynn@newenglandforestry.org](mailto:pflynn@newenglandforestry.org) or by phone at 978-952-6856, x101.



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