

INTO THE WOODS

NEW ENGLAND FORESTRY FOUNDATION | SUMMER 2023

Meet Ten Key Downeast Songbirds

PAGE 3

NEFF ADDS 855 ACRES
TO ITS NETWORK OF
CONSERVED FORESTS

PAGE 7

INTERNATIONAL MASS
TIMBER MOMENTUM

PAGE 9

NEFF AT NESAF

PAGE 11

SAVING FORESTLANDS WELL INTO THE FUTURE

PAGE 14



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Dear Supporters and Friends,

On May 1, New England Forestry Foundation (NEFF) began work under our new five-year, \$30 million USDA Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities award. We are extending our scientific, forest management and outreach expertise through expanded collaborations and by growing NEFF's staff to accomplish our 30 Percent Solution, and in coming newsletter issues, we will introduce you to these new specialists and explain what part of the Climate-Smart Commodities work they are engaged in.

Even as we begin this five-year journey, we are looking ahead and asking important questions. How can we move faster than this pilot funding cycle to fully engage our forests on climate mitigation? Scientists are telling us we are running out of time. We have to get forests growing faster and producing climate-smart products as soon as possible. And, how can NEFF use this exceptional opportunity to help the biodiversity crisis as well as the climate crisis?

One of the answers to moving faster may be found in the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund, a new pot of \$27 billion assigned in the Inflation Reduction Act to fight climate change. We are making the case that some of the money could fund low-interest loans from a potential new national climate bank or state Green Banks to New England forest landowners that would allow them to switch to climate-smart forestry. We're lucky to have Andi Colnes, one of the world's experts in establishing Green Banks, already on staff. This will be an uphill fight, because there is a lot of competition for these funds, but we will keep you updated on the possibilities.

The biodiversity crisis is another large intergenerational problem, which means we find ourselves in the midst of dual crises—climate and biodiversity—that are interrelated and must be systematically resolved. While it is true that NEFF's current funding is focused on forestry, forest products and climate mitigation, we are designing our forest practices to address both issues. When forests hold more carbon, they generally do a better job of supporting biodiversity, but our Exemplary Forestry™ practices are specifically designed to improve wildlife habitat at the local, forest-stand level.

Eighty percent of New England is forested, and most of those lands are private and either being managed currently or are likely to be brought under management. Improving forestry across this vast matrix of managed lands will yield huge dividends for both climate change and biodiversity, but improved forest management can't do it all. We also need a robust system of forest reserves where nature is left to take its course undisturbed by development or harvesting.

NEFF is pleased to be a co-author of the recent *Wildlands in New England: Past, Present, and Future* report, alongside primary authors Harvard Forest, Highstead Foundation and Northeast Wilderness Trust; the report identifies all the currently protected wildlands in New England and reveals that only 3.3 percent of New England forests are left permanently "untrammelled." That's not enough. We need at least 10 percent of the landscape—and probably more—in this condition. As NEFF moves forward with our Climate-Smart Commodities work, we will be continuing to partner with other organizations like the Northeast Wilderness Trust to ensure that a complete vision for the New England forest is achieved—one that has a robust system of protected reserves embedded in a matrix of climate-smart forest management.

Robert Perschel
Executive Director

3

MEET TEN KEY DOWNEAST SONGBIRDS

7

NEFF ADDS 855 ACRES TO ITS NETWORK
OF CONSERVED FORESTS

9

INTERNATIONAL MASS TIMBER MOMENTUM

11

NEFF AT NESAF

14

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News and Notes

NEFF IS SEEKING PUBLIC COMMENT

New England Forestry Foundation (NEFF) is applying for national land trust accreditation!

Stakeholders are invited to comment on how NEFF complies with land trust national quality standards. Comments are most useful by Friday, July 21. Learn about the standards and how to comment at newenglandforestry.org/accreditation

WATCH OUR CLIMATE-SMART COMMODITIES KICK-OFF WEBINAR

If you missed our April 26 webinar—*Introducing NEFF's Climate-Smart Forestry Partnership: A Win for the Forests, Climate, and Communities of New England*—a recording is now available at newenglandforestry.org/learn/initiatives/climate-smart-commodities

NEFF was thrilled to have more than 270 registrants for the webinar with engaged and thoughtful participation in the Q&A session. We are grateful to the partners who joined us to speak about the project and why they believe this ambitious effort is positioned to make a profound impact on climate mitigation across New England. We encourage you to watch the recording to learn more about this exciting initiative!

Front cover songbird photo taken by Lauren Owens Lambert on NEFF's Holmes Stream Community Forest in Downeast Maine.

Camille Lizzcano





MEET 10 KEY DOWNEAST SONGBIRDS

WRITING BY
NEFF Communications Manager Tinsley Hunsdorfer

For many years to come, 10 fascinating songbird species that migrate along the Atlantic flyway are going to be part of the NEFF community. A flyway is a migratory superhighway that birds travel year after year, and Maine forests—including NEFF properties—serve as a crucial migratory resting spot for these 10 species as they journey up and down the flyway.

Rediscover why these birds are joining the NEFF team, as it were, and then learn about the birds themselves: the American Redstart, Bay-breasted Warbler, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Canada Warbler, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Rusty Blackbird, Veery and Wood Thrush.

A Songbird’s Home Base or a Stopover Resting Place

In 2019, NEFF was approached to take ownership of two Downeast Maine properties explicitly so we could practice Exemplary Forestry on them to benefit migratory songbirds in keeping with the Maine Wind Energy Act (see page 7 for more information).

After careful consideration, NEFF decided to cap off our Downeast Woods and Wildlife conservation project by accepting these lands in 2020: a 2,690-acre parcel along Holmes Stream in Washington County and a 3,100-acre parcel near Egypt Bay in Hancock County.

Habitat and biodiversity experts crafted Songbird Habitat Management Plans for the forestlands that called for management activities to create and

improve large habitat blocks; NEFF has contracted a Maine-based forester to evaluate the properties and then fold the Songbird Habitat Management Plans into an overarching Forest Management Plan based in Exemplary Forestry.

Through management of what we now call Holmes Stream and Frenchman Bay Community Forests, NEFF’s goal is to create and support stopover and nesting habitat for migratory songbirds within the framework of Exemplary Forestry standards, with a particular emphasis on the needs of the Songbird Habitat Management Plans’ ten priority species—the true stars of this article.

The last time NEFF wrote about its goals for these properties in any detail, we weren’t able to spend much time on the bird species themselves. We’ll be checking in on the implementation of Holmes Stream and Frenchman Bay’s specialty management plan in a future newsletter, but for now, on to the birds.

Works Consulted

Direct quotes and some general information in this section come from Cornell University’s allaboutbirds.com. This section also draws on information from these texts by way of NEFF’s Songbird Habitat Management Plans: M.L. Avery’s Rusty Blackbird entry in *The Birds of North America*, version 2.0; R.M. DeGraaf and M. Yamasaki’s *New England Wildlife: Habitat, Natural History, and Distribution*; R. Dettmers’ “A Blueprint for the Design and Delivery of Bird Conservation in the Atlantic Northern Forest;” and Maine Audubon’s *Forestry for Maine Birds: A Guidebook for Foresters Managing Woodlots “With Birds in Mind.”*

Priority Species

All 10 priority songbird species have been identified at a state or international level as at-risk to varying degrees, and have been observed on or near Holmes Stream Community Forest, Frenchman Bay Community Forest, or both properties.

AMERICAN REDSTART

Setophaga ruticilla

Adult male and female American Redstarts have colored patches on their sides, wings and tail in the same places, but where male birds have bright orange patches, female birds have yellow. Male birds are otherwise mostly black, while females have a gray head and an olive back. Their song consists of variable high notes, ending with a down-slurred note.

American Redstarts' bright colors serve a purpose when hunting insects: they use their long, agile tails to startle prey by flashing color patches at them.

CONSERVATION STATUS

Species of Greatest Conservation Need in Maine, High Priority



HABITAT

American Redstarts breed in early successional hardwood forests; this means young forests of about 1-20 years in age. Their specific preferred conditions include moist forest edge habitat, partially open canopy cover and a thick understory of saplings.

BAY-BREASTED WARBLER

Setophaga castanea

Both males and females of this long-winged warbler have striking white wingbars. During the summer breeding season, the males are "highlighted with rich red-brown and creamy buff," and females maintain similar patterning in more subtle colors. Their song is a fast and high-pitched *seetzy, seetzy, seetzy*.

CONSERVATION STATUS

- Species of Special Concern in Maine
- Species of Greatest Conservation Need in Maine, Moderate Priority

HABITAT

Bay-breasted Warblers breed in boreal forests and mature northern coniferous or mixed forests. While they tend to prefer older forest stands, they may still breed in younger mixed-wood stands during spruce budworm outbreaks, as they are "voracious predators" of spruce budworms.



BLACK-THROATED BLUE WARBLER

Setophaga caerulescens

This large and uniquely colored warbler is so striking that even long-time birders can't help but feel pleased to see one. Breeding males have a black face and dark blue head and body. The females are most often described as "grayish" and "olive," and males and females share a distinguishing white square on their wings. Their song is an assertive *please-please-please squееееее*.

CONSERVATION STATUS

Species of Greatest Conservation Need in Maine, Moderate Priority

HABITAT

Black-throated Blue Warblers generally and during breeding prefer large, contiguous tracts of mature forest with a dense understory of shrubs and small saplings where they forage, as well as a high canopy that provides 50-80 percent cover.

Want to Help Birds on Your Maine Lands?

NEFF'S WESTERN MAINE HABITAT RESTORATION INITIATIVE

Free technical assistance and funding for forest management plans with a focus on fish, bird, and wildlife habitat restoration and climate adaptation is available to family and other non-commercial landowners with more than 75 acres of forest through a partnership with the Natural Resources Conservation Service. Land must be located in Oxford, Franklin, Somerset, and Piscataquis counties. Project participation is based on a free assessment of how a property can contribute to improving habitat across the greater landscape. Details: newenglandforestry.org/maine-habitat

MAINE AUDUBON'S FORESTRY FOR MAINE BIRDS PROGRAM

Maine Audubon provides a forestry guide and other resources to landowners who have the potential to create high-quality bird habitat on their woodlands. Details: maineaudubon.org/projects/forestry-for-maine-birds

CANADA WARBLER

Cardellina canadensis

As one of the last woodland songbirds to arrive in Maine and Canada during late spring, Canada Warblers only stay on the breeding grounds for a brief two months. Their song is a musical warble that starts with an emphatic *chip* note.

CONSERVATION STATUS

- Species of Special Concern in Maine
- Species of Greatest Conservation Need in Maine, High Priority
- Listed as Yellow Watch List Species (declining populations) by Partners in Flight

HABITAT

Canada Warblers use moist hardwood and mixed-wood forests with dense understories. They are particularly interested in damp places such as swamps, riparian areas, bogs, upland forests with mossy hummocks, and dense undergrowth in cool, moist mature forests.

CHESTNUT-SIDED WARBLER

Setophaga pensylvanica

One of the male Chestnut-sided Warbler's songs sounds like *pleased, pleased, pleased to meetcha!* Breeding males have a yellow crown, black around the eyes, white cheeks, and bold chestnut strips down their sides. Breeding females have similar patterns to males, but have light grey cheeks and are paler with less streaking on the back.

CONSERVATION STATUS

Species of Greatest Conservation Need in Maine, High Priority

HABITAT

Chestnut-sided Warblers are true early successional specialists, and are usually found in young hardwood forests with dense thickets and saplings, and an open canopy.

Photos of Bay-breasted Warbler, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Canada Warbler, Olive-sided Flycatcher and Rusty Blackbird by Judd Patterson.



EASTERN WOOD-PEWEE

Contopus virens

The Eastern Wood-Pewee may not be as flashy as some of the other birds in this article, but that crest gives it a jaunty look, and its *pee-a-wee!* call is common along the eastern seaboard and may make for a fond summertime memory.

CONSERVATION STATUS

- Species of Special Concern in Maine
- Species of Greatest Conservation Need in Maine, High Priority

HABITAT

The Eastern Wood-Pewee prefers open, hardwood or mixed forests, and is particularly associated with small gaps, openings and edges within hardwood forests with moderate canopy cover and an open midstory.



OLIVE-SIDED FLYCATCHER

Contopus cooperi

Flycatchers tend to have drab coloring, but Olive-sided Flycatchers set themselves apart by being larger and stronger than other flycatchers, and having dark waistcoat-like markings on their sides. Their song is a recognizable *quick, three beers* with a quiet *quick* and an accented second syllable.

CONSERVATION STATUS

- Species of Special Concern in Maine
- Species of Greatest Conservation Need in Maine, High Priority
- Listed as Yellow Watch List Species (declining populations) by Partners in Flight

HABITAT

Olive-sided Flycatchers use bog and spruce-fir habitats with tall, open stands; forests that have prominent perch locations; and forest edges.



RIGHT: This Rusty Blackbird was photographed in Vermont, part of its exclusively migratory range, so the edges of some of its feathers still have a bit of their nonbreeding rust-colored edges.



RUSTY BLACKBIRD

Euphagus carolinus

This species gets its name from nonbreeding males' plumage. Breeding males are a glossy black; nonbreeding males are dark brown with rust-colored edges on their feathers. Their most recognizable song is a creaky *chugalasqueek*.

Rusty Blackbirds have seen a precipitous decline in numbers—approaching 90 percent—in recent decades, and despite increased research efforts, scientists haven't been able to pinpoint the specific cause of this population decline. Habitat loss and fragmentation do seem to be impacting Rusty Blackbirds' survival.

CONSERVATION STATUS

- Species of Greatest Conservation Need in Maine, Highest Priority
- Species of Special Concern in Maine
- Categorized as vulnerable on the International Union for Conservation of Nature's Red List of Threatened Species

HABITAT

In summer, Rusty Blackbirds generally use wet coniferous and mixed forests, and frequent fens, bogs, muskeg, conifer swamps, beaver ponds, and swampy shores along lakes and streams.



VEERY

Catharus fuscescens

This thrush's name comes from the series of *veer* notes that composes its call, and its song is an ethereal, descending spiral of flutelike notes created through its unique divided syrinx—it sings two notes at a time in a duet with itself. It's well adapted to moving around on leafy forest floors in search of food, and can work its way from ants, spiders, and flies all the way up to the occasional small frog and salamander.

CONSERVATION STATUS

Species of Greatest Conservation Need in Maine, High Priority

HABITAT

Veeries typically inhabit moist hardwood or mixed woods with intermediate canopy cover and a dense understory. They prefer dense areas of early hardwood second growth and are frequently found in riparian areas, regenerating forests, wooded swamps and damp ravines.

WOOD THRUSH

Hylocichla mustelina

Every bird on this list eats insects, but the Wood Thrush and the above Veery are the best camouflaged of them all when it comes to rustling through leaf litter for bugs. The Wood Thrush forages for beetles, caterpillars, spiders, millipedes and other such delicacies. The Wood Thrush is known for an *ee-oh-lay* song.

CONSERVATION STATUS

Species of Greatest Conservation Need in Maine, Highest Priority

HABITAT

Mature interior forest stands of moist hardwood or mixed forest with closed canopies greater than 50 feet high. Optimal conditions include a diversity of hardwood tree species, a shrub sub-canopy layer with moderate density, and a fairly open floor.



The Big Picture

Creating the right habitat types on our lands will provide crucial support to these birds, but if we want to ensure they thrive, NEFF also needs to address the systemic issues that threaten songbirds in the first place. For example, these 10 priority species all eat bugs, and the biodiversity crisis has hit insects hard.

So, how is NEFF making a big-picture difference?

Our Exemplary Forestry standards are designed to work in balance with ecological reserves and to meet diverse habitat needs at a landscape scale, and they improve forest biodiversity while simultaneously mitigating climate change and producing more sustainable wood.

We have plans to take these benefits region-wide: Over the next 30 years, NEFF will work to significantly expand the use of Exemplary Forestry across the managed portion of New England's 32 million forestland acres as part of our 30 Percent Solution.

Here's to a future full of birdsong. 🌿

NEFF ADDS 855 ACRES TO ITS NETWORK OF CONSERVED FORESTS

Get to know Shirley Bog—a forest complete with miles of sweeping river frontage and a mysterious Tall Sedge Fen—and Gardner Brook, an addition to NEFF’s Luce Memorial Forest and a critical piece of a mosaic of conservation land. Before we get into the details of these remarkable places, however, we first need a little backstory.

Exemplary Forestry made this conservation of habitat-rich land possible

WRITING BY NEFF Communications Manager Tinsley Hunsdorfer

For decades now, New England Forestry Foundation has been delivering remarkable conservation results to the tune of 1.2 million acres, but NEFF Chief Conservation Officer Will Brune has of late found himself approached about land protection projects in an unprecedented manner: as a purveyor of large-scale Exemplary Forestry.

In 2019, NEFF was approached to take ownership of two Downeast Maine properties explicitly so we use NEFF’s Exemplary Forestry to benefit migratory song birds—the same Exemplary Forestry at the heart of our 30 Percent Solution—and this method seems to be catching on.

When the Maine Wind Energy Act first passed in 2003 (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.

NEFF has been asked to manage special lands “for the birds” because of our acumen for forestry. By working collaboratively with the conservation community in Maine, NEFF has received two more Maine forests in keeping with the Maine Wind Energy Act, this time from Longroad Energy, LLC.

NEFF is committed to doing our best by the birds that currently use and will someday make their way to our new lands, and to honoring the work of those who championed the Act. This means keeping a portion of the landscape as early successional habitat that provides high-energy food sources, such as seeds and berries, for migrating songbirds.

While the context is unusual, it’s exciting to see NEFF conservation and Exemplary Forestry come full circle. Where was Exemplary Forestry developed, after all? On NEFF’s Community Forests, by NEFF foresters. And where will we continue to develop these game-changing forestry standards? On our growing base of NEFF-owned lands, which currently clock in at 40,000 acres. And to our surprise, it’s Exemplary Forestry that’s bringing in some of that new land—along with all of the hard work of NEFF’s conservation staff, or course.

Shirley Bog | Shirley, ME | 531 Acres

Bounded to the east by two miles of the West Branch of the Piscataquis River and cut through by Birch Brook from northwest to southeast before it enters the Piscataquis River itself, this Community Forest is a property run through with water. Its gently rolling terrain is filled with wet runs and brooks, most of which drain into the river.

The property's wetlands and early successional habitat make for spectacular wildlife habitat. The property was recently harvested by a previous landowner, so it will take some time for the forest—dominated by mixed softwoods—to fully regenerate. In the interim, NEFF will manage Shirley Bog in a way that ensures a robust future forest with high-value habitat. In keeping with NEFF's Exemplary Forestry standards, when forestry is conducted on-site, it will be done with the utmost care so as to ensure biodiversity and forest health are protected.

Shirley Bog has 263 acres of significant inland waterfowl and wading bird habitat along the bog portion of the river, which is also critical to its Tall Sedge Fen, located specifically in the West Shirley Bog. A June 2020 letter from the Maine Natural Areas Program (MNAP) explains the fen's importance:

“Large, high quality examples of this wetland type are uncommon in Maine and provide important habitat for a wide variety of plants and animals. Where possible, MNAP recommends leaving an uncut forested buffer around the wetlands mapped as part of the Tall Sedge Fen.”

The river, a true ecological hotspot, also provides critical habitat for Atlantic Salmon and has a high density of natural brook trout. The area may even provide habitat for Canada Lynx.



Gardner Brook

Gardner Brook Readfield, ME 324 Acres

Gardner Brook forest was a great fit for NEFF because it abuts the existing 78-acre NEFF Luce Memorial Forest, as well as an adjacent 424 acres owned by the Kennebec Land Trust and the 110-acre Readfield Town Forest. By taking ownership of this large “hole in the doughnut,” we have created a new 402-acre NEFF forest in Readfield as well as an overarching, connected habitat block of 936 conserved acres.

Even standing on its own, NEFF's new Readfield parcel is nothing to sneeze at: more than 82 percent of the property can support productive forestry, its forests are stocked with mixed hardwoods at over 30 cords per acre (that's a lot), and it still hosts 57 acres of wetlands and inland waterfowl and wading bird habitat, as well as supports 170 acres of deer wintering habitat.

Trek through its woodlands on the established trails and you'll see Beech, Balsam Fir, Hemlock, Paper Birch, Red Maple Red Oak, White Ash, White Pine, Yellow Birch and Sugar Maple. Given how high the forest's stocking is, visitors are also likely to hear a lot of bird song and perhaps catch glimpses of birds on the wing. 🌿



Shirley Bog. Photo by Credere Associates, LLC

This summer field season, NEFF will have boots on the ground as we develop a forest management plan for these properties that meets the needs of wildlife—especially migrating songbirds!



INTERNATIONAL MASS

NEFF Launches New Bioeconomy Initiative to Connect

WRITING BY NEFF Bioeconomy Initiative Director Jennifer Shakun

In late March, I joined attendees from nearly 40 countries to immerse myself in all-things mass timber at the International Mass Timber Conference in Portland, Oregon. The momentum of the mass timber movement was palpable, and I left energized, hopeful, and genuinely excited.

This conference has grown since its inception in 2016 with 500 attendees to more than 3,000 attendees this year. It's a mark of the rising interest in this biobased building material. Concern about sustainability is far from an afterthought these days—it is driving demand—and there were multiple sessions on that topic, from calculating the carbon footprint of building materials to the sustainability of the wood supply for mass timber.

My week began with visits to innovative timber structures and a local, family-owned glulam manufacturer; it was filled with informative presentations and opportunities to interact with colleagues new and old. The exhibit hall featured tangible examples of different mass timber products, including several small structures erected right in the hall. How often are you greeted with the wonderful, earthy smell of wood when you walk into a conference expo?

I also met fellow forest-sector folks at this building-sector conference, including a woman from the Yakama Nation who sees mass timber as a market for wood harvested from wildfire fuel treatments, a friend and colleague from the

Georgia Forestry Foundation, and partners from the like-minded nonprofit Sustainable Northwest.

NEFF's foundational forestry work and our efforts to build a broad coalition around locally grown, sustainable mass timber are why I was invited to speak on a panel about strategies for boosting mass timber's growth. My fellow panelists talked about financing for manufacturing facilities, opportunities to monetize the carbon stored in structures, and government-led incentive programs. I made the case that building a community of support along the entire supply chain and linking mass timber buildings with climate-smart forestry are key to accelerating the use of mass timber. The session

was packed, with a large contingent viewing from an overflow room.

It was another opportunity to describe the holistic, systems approach to forest-based climate solutions NEFF has been promoting for several years. And the message really resonated with people, as evidenced by the number of folks who came up to me after the presentation and in the ensuing days, even in the elevator on my way down to breakfast the following morning.

The concept of a systems approach is starting to click, and our new Climate-Smart Commodities project is an example of how NEFF can pilot this vision on a regional scale. The program will help New England forest landowners implement



Jennifer Shakun

TIMBER MOMENTUM

Mass Timber to Larger Global Systems



Jen toured the University of Oregon's Hayward Field to see its beautiful glulam elements made from Doug Fir. Glulam is a type of mass timber.

climate-smart forest practices and build regional markets for climate-smart forest products, with a focus on using mass timber in affordable housing. Ours is one of a handful of forest-focused USDA Climate-Smart Commodities Partnership awards, a point that touches on another takeaway—we are not alone in this.

We are joined by organizations throughout the country who are also thinking deeply about how we can build a truly sustainable and climate-friendly supply chain for this mass-timber building boom we would all like to see happen. This kind of thinking is part and parcel of the leading idea in sustainability these days—transitioning from a linear take-make-waste economy to a circular, biobased economy.

The Circular, Biobased Economy

A circular economy is one in which materials and products are kept at their highest and best use for as long as possible with little waste generation via several strategies, including efficient design and manufacturing processes, sharing or reuse, as well as refurbishing, repairing, and remanufacturing to extend the lifespan of products.

Once they reach the end of their usable life, component materials are recycled or broken down through composting and other processes. A bioeconomy is one that runs on materials and services derived from renewable

biological resources like plants. As noted in a recent publication from the Congressional Research Service, “Some predict that the future economy will be primarily a bioeconomy. According to the McKinsey Global Institute (MGI), ‘as much as 60 percent of the physical inputs to the global economy could, in principle, be produced biologically.’”*

Taken together, these concepts of circularity and using biobased materials form the foundation of a lasting solution to many societal challenges. Mass timber is an exciting focal point because it is such a great fit for a circular bioeconomy—a natural material that can be designed for disassembly, as well as recycled and biodegraded.

NEFF has also taken on this mantle with our new Bioeconomy Initiative, which includes all our work to accelerate the thoughtful use of wood products, including mass timber, as part of a regional bioeconomy sourced from—and in support of—excellent forest management. It's worth noting that some of the terminology is new, but the basic principles are old as dirt. Think of the adage, “waste not want not”—we place a high value on our forests, and rightly so. Let's see the resources they produce for us used efficiently, judiciously, and for the maximum benefit of people and the environment. 🌱

*“The Bioeconomy: A Primer” | crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R46881



NEFF at NESAF: Bioeconomy Initiative Director Jen Shakun, Forest Scientist Colleen Ryan, Conservation Project Manager Sophie Anthony, Senior Forest Science and Policy Fellow Alec Giffen, Deputy Director and Climate Fellow Andi Colnes, Conservation Easement Director Andrew Bentley, Stewardship Associate Corey Wrinn

NEFF AT NESAF

Reporting in on the eventful, educational 2023 New England meeting of the Society of American Foresters

WRITING BY NEFF Forest Scientist Colleen Ryan

In March, seven intrepid staffers braved a blizzard to represent New England Forestry Foundation (NEFF) at the New England meeting of the Society of American Foresters (NESAF), held over three days in Nashua, New Hampshire.

The Society of American Foresters is the leading organization for the forestry profession, and each year, it hosts national and regional meetings that allow foresters and people in related professions to keep up with current developments in the field and share best practices and emerging knowledge. With a wide array of attendees, from boots-on-the-ground foresters to students and researchers, these events offer NEFF a way to stay engaged in current discussions about forest management and to share our groundbreaking work with the forestry community.

NEFF Senior Forest Science and Policy Fellow Alec Giffen and I both presented on NEFF's recent work, while NEFF Stewardship Associate Corey Wrinn and NEFF Conservation Project Manager Sophie Anthony fielded questions and handed out information at the NEFF booth. NEFF Deputy Director and Climate Fellow Andi Colnes, Conservation

Easement Director Andrew Bentley, and Bioeconomy Initiative Director Jen Shakun were there to cheer us on, make connections, and learn from various sessions.

Alec's presentation covered the need to manage forests for carbon and the full range of other values, with a focus on the role of harvested wood products in fighting climate change. I gave a flash talk on a paper we published in the fall that estimated the potential for storing additional carbon in the Acadian Forest of New England by spreading Exemplary Forestry. Despite timing challenges—my presentation was in an 8 a.m. session and Alec's was at 5 p.m. on the last day of the meeting—both talks were well-received and generated many thoughtful questions.

A throughline in the meeting was the concern that we as foresters are not doing a good enough job explaining how good forest management is important for values other than timber production.



Gabe Roxby

This tour took place following a surprise March blizzard that left two feet of snow on the ground, but the participants took it in stride to explore the 1,492-acre site.

Alec's talk, in particular, generated a lot of interest and a lively discussion about how to ensure carbon benefits from forestry are real and lasting.

Overall, I was inspired by the number of bright, creative people who came to the meeting to share their ideas and experiences despite the challenging weather. This reflects the true commitment many forestry professionals have to the forest and the people who depend on it—or, in other words, all of us.

The meeting's highlights included discussions about the social contract that allows us to do our work managing forests, and how we can better communicate the value of good forestry to the interested public. A throughline in the meeting was the concern that we as foresters are not doing a good enough job explaining what we do, especially how good forest management is

important for values other than timber production. This came up in sessions on old-growth management and the role of forests in providing pollinator habitat, as well as in Alec's presentation.

The theme of improving how we communicate about forestry continued during a field trip the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests led on one of their forests in the southern part of the state.

This tour took place following a surprise March blizzard that left two feet of snow on the ground, but the participants took it in stride, donning snowshoes and, in one case, skis, to explore the 1,492-acre site.

Like NEFF, the Forest Society approaches management from a landscape perspective, and considers what important features might be lacking in the surrounding area that

A great benefit of events like the NESAF field trip is the chance to hear the diverse perspectives of different natural resource professionals who might not interact in their typical day-to-day work.

could be provided by a given parcel. In a landscape that's highly fragmented, the best strategy might be to leave large forest blocks unharvested. However, the forest we toured was adjacent to some other conservation land that's managed as a forest reserve, which means that blocks of mature forest will likely persist on the landscape into the future.

What was lacking in this area was early successional habitat: open fields, shrubs, and very young forest. As a result, the Forest Society decided to manage a portion of the land in open meadow and another portion in

shrubs to benefit wildlife species that depend on early successional habitat, including songbirds and pollinators. In the surrounding managed forest, they are enhancing late successional features by creating snags—standing dead trees that provide habitat for many wildlife species, including bats—and large downed logs, and by leaving some large trees, especially those with wildlife features like cavities or canopy structure favored by nesting raptors.

The tour group, which included working foresters, wildlife biologists and stewardship managers, discussed the challenges of balancing different

objectives, such as improving habitat for different types of wildlife, managing invasive species, and providing recreational access to local people. Though many of these objectives are complementary, they can also compete with each other. On this site, the removal of invasive shrubs actually reduced wildlife food sources in the short term, but with the goal of creating a healthier ecosystem in the long run.

A great benefit of events like the NESAF field trip is the chance to hear the diverse perspectives of different natural resource professionals who might not interact in their typical day-to-day work. Attendees shared ideas about the challenges and opportunities the site presented and compared how they would approach managing each stand. Everyone learned something from this thoughtful discussion, and we all enjoyed a beautiful day in the sparkling fresh snow. 🌿

The field trip participants included foresters from the public and private sectors, wildlife biologists, land stewards, and even a pollinator biologist.



Colleen Ryan



NEFF's Holmes Stream Community Forest in Downeast Maine. Photo by Michael Perlman.

SAVING FORESTLANDS WELL INTO THE FUTURE

Help protect New England's forests by making a legacy gift to New England Forestry Foundation

Together, we've saved more than 1.2 million acres of forestland from land-changing development—the equivalent of nearly two times the size of Rhode Island.

For the last 79 years, NEFF has conserved forestland using a variety of tools, including conservation easements, conservation restrictions, and land ownership. We're grateful to our landowner partners, forest stewards, and fellow conservation organizations that help make this happen. There's another type of vehicle, a giving one, that can ensure this work continues.

Legacy giving, which traditionally comes in the form of a simple will or complex trust, can help a non-profit like NEFF immensely. A commitment of assets in the form of cash, stock, or tangible personal property aids in long-

term organizational planning, including the acquisition of new lands. When it comes to NEFF, individuals interested in legacy giving have the power to change the New England landscape in a real and lasting manner. But the options for conservation don't stop there.

Landowners can conserve their forestland as a straightforward gift to NEFF or in the form of a conservation easement. Gifts of land are established as NEFF Community Forests named in honor of the donor or their family at their choosing. Conservation easements prohibit development in perpetuity, but the landowner maintains ownership of the land.

Other opportunities for legacy giving include bargain sales of forestland at a price below market value or enrollment in our Pooled Timber

Income Fund (PTIF). The tax benefits are numerous, and in the case of the PTIF, participants receive a stream of lifetime income. What's not to like?

We won't stop conserving the New England forests we all love. Though there are many ways to save forestland, none of them can be accomplished without your support. Please consider legacy giving as an option to conserve forestlands well into the future—it's one of the simplest and most impactful ways to improve our world. 🌿

Legacy giving is highly personal. To discuss options available to you, please contact Penny Flynn at pflynn@newenglandforestry.org or 978-952-6856 ext. 101. You can also visit our website at newenglandforestry.org/support/leave-a-legacy



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