

# INTO THE WOODS

NEW ENGLAND FORESTRY FOUNDATION | WINTER NEWSLETTER 2023

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**NEW ENGLAND  
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32 Foster Street | P.O. Box 1346

Littleton, MA 01460

978.952.6856 | [newenglandforestry.org](http://newenglandforestry.org)

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## Dear Supporters and Friends,

The people of New England love their forests. We celebrate the chance to see them ablaze in the autumn and returned to them en masse during the recent peaks of the pandemic. We understand how essential forests are to our way of life for both spiritual and economic reasons. In this issue of *Into the Woods*, New England Forestry Foundation (NEFF) presents an article that explains how important one particular tree—the Brown Ash—is to the Wabanaki. I didn't know that the Brown Ash is fundamental in an origin story of the Wabanaki Tribes of Maine and Eastern Canada. I do now. I think you will enjoy reading Christine Parrish's article, "Basket Trees of the Dawnland: The Wabanaki Fight to Save a Tribal Tree of Life."

Our entire staff is looking forward to working with the Tribes of the Wabanaki in Maine through our Climate-Smart Commodities grant over the next five years. One of our focus points will be the Brown Ash. Together we will seek ways to protect this culturally significant tree from the Emerald Ash Borer, which has devastated ash species in New England. All partners need to identify where Brown Ash exists and implement best practices to protect current trees while we work with the Wabanaki and other nations to ensure seed sources and regeneration for the future. I am particularly interested in how we might be able to blend NEFF's forest management approach and accepted scientific knowledge with Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) to not only protect this tree species but to learn how to better manage all our forests.

Several years ago, NEFF codified Exemplary Forestry™ standards, and this work has allowed us to sharpen our management on our own lands, advise other landowners, model climate change mitigation possibilities across the region, and garner a five-year pilot grant to provide incentives for landowners to implement climate-smart practices. We always view our standards as both aspirational and open to revision as we learn more about forests and how to manage them. As you will read in upcoming pages, Climate-Smart Commodities partners like University of Maine professor John Daigle, of the Penobscot nation of the Wabanaki, bring invaluable expertise to the table on topics like the prevention of, detection of, and response to the Emerald Ash Borer. Now we have a chance to take a fresh look at Exemplary Forestry with our broad range of Climate-Smart Commodities partners.

We can do this together and we can make forestry better. There is a lot riding on our success.

Robert Perschel  
Executive Director

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## NEFF's New Digital Tools

### WEBSITE

New England Forestry Foundation (NEFF) has launched an expanded and visually rich website full of insightful information and fun features, and we're thrilled with how it's turned out. Explore the site: [newenglandforestry.org](http://newenglandforestry.org)

### ANIMATED VIDEO

We have also released a professionally animated video titled "Building a Sustainable Future With Mass Timber" that illustrates the important role New England-sourced mass timber can play in the fight against climate change. Thanks to its approachable narration and bright, engaging animation, the video serves as a great introduction to mass timber and its climate benefits. Watch the video: [vimeo.com/newenglandforestry/masstimber](https://vimeo.com/newenglandforestry/masstimber)







# BASKET TREES OF THE DAWNLAND

## THE WABANAKI FIGHT TO SAVE A TRIBAL TREE OF LIFE

WRITING BY NEFF Western Maine Project Specialist Christine Parrish

Bowdoin College students in Brunswick, Maine work with Wabanaki basketmakers to complete a potato basket. Photo by Wabanaki Mi'kmaq Basketmaker Richard Silliboy.

A Wabanaki basketmaker follows a Maine stream into wet bottomland woods thick with ostrich ferns. With axe in hand, he is looking for a Brown Ash tree, *Fraxinus nigra*, also known as Black Ash. There is no other tree like it in the northern forest.

He stops to assess one tree, then another. Rubbing a hand down the spongy, cork-like bark can confirm if it is a Brown Ash tree. It's not any Brown Ash he's hunting. It's a straight one, free of knots, a true basket tree.

He moves deeper into the woods, repeating a journey taken by generations of Tribal basketmakers before him.

Newly harvested Brown Ash bends beyond a believable breaking point and is as pliable as leather and as slippery as a slug. The wood is perfectly supple and light, allowing for inventive basket

designs. More than raw material, Brown Ash trees figure in one of the creation stories of the Eastern Wabanaki, the People of the Dawnland, which includes the Maine-based Passamaquoddy, Penobscot, Maliseet and Mi'kmaq Nations. It is from the Brown Ash that the People came into the world, dancing and singing, according to the story.

And it is *Fraxinus nigra*, along with the other *Fraxinus* species, including White Ash and Green Ash, that is threatened by a tiny, shiny bright green insect. The Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) arrived in the U.S. by ship two decades ago. It's lethal to ash and has no North American predators to keep it in check. Researchers predict eight billion ash trees are at risk in the United States, and 99 percent of all *Fraxinus* species will die in the most heavily infested areas across eastern North America by mid-century. For the Wabanaki, who have been here at least 100 centuries, the loss of Brown Ash can't be measured in dollars or board feet. It's a fundamental cultural loss.

He finds a straight tree about 8 inches in diameter (as big around as a large salad plate), chops a small chunk out of the trunk and sniffs the wood.

Brown Ash grows across the state, often clustering along stream corridors in mixed stands or in low-lying soggy soils. The logs, pounded with the blunt head of an axe, separate the wood by annual rings that yield flexible layers that can be split and split again for basket making. In each Brown Ash stand, only about 5 percent of the trees are basket quality.

The basketmaker fells the tree and bucks it into a six-foot log, assesses the evenly spaced growth rings, bows his head to acknowledge it and then hoists the log onto a shoulder.

Not every basket tree is right for every kind of basket. Some logs yield pliable splints as thin as 1/32nd of an inch that



can be woven into delicate art baskets threaded with sweetgrass, or twisted to create a pattern in the weave called curl work, or shaped into baskets that look like corn stalks, acorns and strawberries.

Other logs yield wider splints that are woven into utility baskets. Brown Ash dries hard, strong and light. Potato baskets, which were commonly used by commercial growers in northern Maine in the 20th century, hold 25 pounds of potatoes with ease.

For most of the 20th century, roadside markets in Bar Harbor and elsewhere along the Maine coast offered fancy baskets, picnic, and pack baskets for sale to summer tourists. Many Wabanaki relied on the basket trade for crucial family income. Some still do.

When basketmaking fell out of favor in the marketplace, the Nations formed the Maine Indian Basketmaker's Alliance with funding from the Native Arts and Cultures Foundation to successfully promote ash basketry and train new generations. The artistry evolves, as new basketmakers continue to blend the practical and the creative to reflect the life bond between tree and Tribe.

As the basketmaker makes his way slowly through the waist-high ferns, the liquid notes of a veery spiral through the understory. Another answers, and the fluting calls roll and repeat, circling like a descending hymn.

So small that three can fit on the head of a penny, the Emerald Ash Borer stowed away as larvae in wooden shipping pallets that landed in Great Lakes ports two decades ago, then hitched eastward through firewood sales and through ash trees sold by nurseries. Maine took early action to slow the spread by restricting the movement

Tyler Everett lugs a Brown Ash basket-quality log back to the workshop.  
Photo courtesy of APCAW.







The hope is that action taken on Tribal lands spreads to other forest landowners who will help protect ash as a component of the forest.

a priority, said Daigle, so is participation by all woodland-owners across the state.

To that end, APCAW offers programs to train land trust staff, foresters, private landowners, and the public on how to identify, monitor and manage Brown Ash, including how to collect and store seeds for future use.

The hope is that action taken on Tribal lands spreads to other forest landowners to create the landscape-level actions needed to protect ash as a component of the forest, said Daigle.

The general recommendation from forestry professionals is to not cut ash trees down ahead of an infestation, according to Tyler Everett, of the Mi'kmaq nation of the Wabanaki. A doctoral student in forestry at the University of Maine, Everett is helping move the APCAW effort forward through work he started as an undergraduate when he developed a protocol for mapping Brown Ash stands. APCAW teaches woodland owners how to do an inventory and map Brown Ash stands to get a more complete picture of where basket trees are growing across the state.

Cutting down ash trees forces the Eastern Ash Borer to fly further to find a tree and increases the potential for it to spread, said Everett.

Keeping ash alive and standing now may help keep ash trees as part of the forest later. Some ash may be resilient and there is potential that individual trees may have varying degrees of resistance to the borer.

Each annual ring of *Fraxinus nigra*, as shown in the tree cookie on the right in the above photo, is bordered by uniquely large pores that allow volumes of water and nutrients to flow from the roots to the leaves. When logs are pounded, the porous borders easily separate the annual growth into thin, flexible splints used in basketmaking, as shown on the left in the photo. Photo courtesy of APCAW.

of firewood from infested areas, but nothing was going to stop it. In 2018, it came across the northern Maine border. In 2019, EAB entered southern Maine and the Maine Forest Service established a quarantine prohibiting the movement or sale of all firewood from the affected zones in or outside the state to areas where EAB has not been detected. In 2023, EAB was found in central Maine. A proposal to expand the quarantine is under review.

Over the past 20 years, key players and partners rallied forest researchers, Wabanaki basketmakers, state and federal foresters, land stewards and forest caretakers to fight back long before the Emerald Ash Borer arrived in Maine, an effort that evolved into the Ash Protection Collaboration Across Wabanakik (APCAW). Their plans are to map Brown Ash stands across the state, develop and test strategies to slow

the spread of EAB, test specific forest practices to create more diverse forest structure that may increase resilience within the Brown Ash stands, identify or develop potential genetic variations of Brown Ash that are resistant to EAB, and save seed stock in order to replant Brown Ash now and in the future.

University of Maine professor John Daigle, of the Penobscot nation of the Wabanaki, leads the research team that focuses on Tribes and partners working together to prevent, detect, and respond to EAB in Maine. Daigle said the Wabanaki will decide where the seeds will be stored and which pest management strategies to promote.

“The approach is landscape-wide and developed in partnership with the Tribal nations, so the strategies meet Tribal approval,” said Daigle. While the cultural knowledge informing decision-making is



“We would never get a chance to learn that or not, if that tree is [cut and laying] on the ground,” said Everett.

For APCAW, every option is open for discussion among the Tribes and partners, including those that spark controversy like bio-controls and pesticides.

Biological controls using non-stinging parasitic wasps that range in size from that of a fruit fly to no larger than the period on this page have been extensively studied and are being used across many states. Limited pesticide use, which is expensive and must be injected into the tree, is on the table, too, though it appears most efficient for individual trees.

“Large overstory ash trees are going to die,” said Everett, noting that the biological controls put the next generation of Brown Ash trees in a better position to survive and thrive over the long term. It won’t stop the ash borer, but it could contain it in smaller outbreaks.

“There are always some risks with bio-controls, but some are showing promise in thirty-three states,” he said, noting that risks and benefits were weighed in national research trials. “Bio-controls do offer an opportunity to buy some time by maintaining some ash on the landscape.”

That deliberate process reflects APCAW’s integrated pest management approach to problem solving. They aren’t relying on just one strategy.

Everett conducts his own research through a Tribal lens. He established four test sites across the state in forest stands with notable Brown Ash components. After testing for presence of the borer and, finding none, he inventoried the tree species on site as a baseline for monitoring changes over time. The next step is creating small openings, or gaps—ranging in size from half a tennis court to a whole court—and creating long strip-openings as narrow as the pavement on a two-lane road that follow stream corridors where Brown Ash grows.

Brown Ash is not tolerant of shade. The light provided by the openings will encourage new growth and allow established small

Brown Ash trees to grow bigger within the gaps. Tyler will monitor the presence of EAB as the forest grows and changes. He expects the mature trees to succumb and hopes the young trees, or at least some of them, will survive.

The Wabanaki are social and intergenerational in nature, and Everett’s research includes social components.

He surveyed foresters and loggers on how they are integrating Brown Ash into their forest management decisions and is working with the Tribal nations in Maine to create a Tribal-centric framework for decision-making that can help with EAB management decisions and be used to address future problems that threaten livelihoods and life ways. 🌿



A fancy but functional Brown Ash pack basket. Photo by Wabanaki Mi’kmaq Basketmaker Richard Silliboy.



Tyler Everett trains volunteers on how to identify and map Brown Ash stands. APCAW Ash Seed collection trainings are held in summer and fall. Photo courtesy of APCAW.

Learn More:

[umaine.edu/apcaw](http://umaine.edu/apcaw)

[emeraldashborer.info](http://emeraldashborer.info)

*My Father's Tools:*

A Heather Condo film about basketmaker

Stephen Jerome

[vimeo.com/blog/post/My-Fathers-Tools](http://vimeo.com/blog/post/My-Fathers-Tools)

# NEFF'S CLIMATE TEAM CHECKS IN

WRITING BY Deputy Director and Climate Fellow Andrea Colnes



Staff hiked NEFF's Whitten Woods Community Forest this summer. From left: Program Forester Daniel Hohl, Conservation Easement Director Andrew Bentley, Grant Writer and CSC Project Coordinator Catrina Year, Western Maine Project Specialist Christine Parrish, Forest Scientist Colleen Ryan, Development Associate Lindsay Sherman, Chief Development Officer Kerry Castorano, Deputy Director and Climate Fellow Andrea Colnes, Development Manager Penny Flynn, Executive Assistant Meaghan Guyader, Conservation Project Manager Sophie Anthony, Senior Forester Darren Johnson. Photo by Andrea Colnes.

Two years ago, New England Forestry Foundation (NEFF) made Exemplary Forestry and the forest-climate connection the center point of our programmatic work. We now have a powerful team working on the climate crisis from a variety of angles in support of NEFF's 30 Percent Climate Solution, which could pull more than 646 million metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub> out of the atmosphere over the next 30 years, with 542 million of those tons coming from adoption of Exemplary Forestry.

Exemplary Forestry is an approach created by NEFF to support forests' long-term health and the highest standards of sustainability with a focus on three key goals: enhancing the role forests can play to mitigate climate change, improving wildlife habitat and biodiversity, and growing and harvesting more sustainably produced wood. At NEFF, managing our forests to support the *combination* of biodiversity, climate mitigation and the continued production of sustainable wood products is the holy grail. As we pivot to a climate-changing world and the need to grow a bioeconomy that maximizes the use of renewable natural materials and minimizes carbon emissions, our climate team supports a powerful and integrated approach to the people, forests, wildlife and climate of New England.

So, how are things going two years in? By any measure, our climate team and the initiatives they lead have taken flight. Advancing forest-climate solutions that also support ecological health, biodiversity and harvesting wood products has found its way into all that we do. It is most visible in signature initiatives like NEFF's \$30-million USDA Climate-Smart Commodities program, which will pilot the application of climate-smart forestry across the region with family, commercial, and Tribal landowners. Here are some top-line highlights of what the NEFF team is doing.

## BIOECONOMY INITIATIVE

### TEAM MEMBERS:

Wood Sourcing Specialist  
Vanessa Komada, Bioeconomy  
Initiative Director Jen Shakun

NEFF's new Bioeconomy Initiative is progressing quickly with exciting work emerging in three areas: we are working with developers, builders and architects to grow market demand for local sustainable wood. We've been doing a lot of outreach via one-on-one conversations and requests for presentations across our region, and have worked with ZGF Architects on a variety of mass timber-related initiatives and hope to support the exciting decision by the Portland Museum of Art to build a major mass timber addition. NEFF is digging into climate-smart wood sourcing in our region and at the national level through our work with the Climate Smart Wood Group—a coalition that helps the North American building sector identify and procure climate-smart wood products—to develop sourcing criteria and guidelines. We have also begun our work around identifying the potential for increased use of mass timber in the affordable housing sector and the creation of mass timber design guidance working with partners in NEFF's Climate-Smart Commodities program.



## MASSACHUSETTS WOODLANDS PARTNERSHIP

### TEAM MEMBERS:

Woodlands Partnership Coordinator  
Kate Conlin, Director of Outreach  
& Engagement Lisa Hayden

As NEFF continues to work as Administrative Agent for the Woodlands Partnership of Northwest Massachusetts, a three-year project is launching to implement forestry practices that promote climate resilience on 700 acres of town-owned and private family forests. In an exciting expansion of this project, NEFF received \$540,000 in Congressionally Directed Spending to pilot climate-smart practices in the Partnership's 21-town region of western Franklin and northern Berkshire counties—the most forested corner of the Commonwealth—and will partner with Mass Audubon to implement the program. The region is a high priority for both the state and the U.S. Forest Service, which have agreed to work with these rural communities to promote conservation as well as sustainable economic development that includes forestry and recreation, while addressing climate challenges and solutions.

As we pivot to a climate-changing world and the need to grow a bioeconomy that maximizes the use of renewable natural materials and minimizes carbon emissions, our climate team supports a powerful and integrated approach to the people, forests, wildlife and climate of New England.

## CLIMATE-SMART COMMODITIES FORESTRY AND TRAINING

### TEAM MEMBERS:

Senior Forest Science and Policy Fellow  
Alec Giffen, Program Forester Daniel  
Hohl, Senior Forester Darren Johnson

As part of the Climate-Smart Commodities program, NEFF is beginning to work with partners to develop a climate-smart forestry curriculum and training program with the Trust to Conserve Northeast Forestlands. This program will train and certify loggers and foresters in the implementation of climate-smart practices on forestlands enrolled in NEFF's program.

By any measure, our climate team and the initiatives they lead have taken flight.

## WESTERN MAINE HABITAT RESTORATION

### TEAM MEMBER:

Western Maine Project  
Specialist Christine Parrish

Based on the successful 2016 project to restore native wildlife habitat on privately owned forest in western Maine, NEFF launched a new \$1.5 million, five-year Resource Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) with Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in July 2023 that focuses on private forest ownerships greater than 75 acres that link fish and wildlife habitats across ownerships in the Acadian Forest. NEFF's new role as a primary NRCS partner in the 2023–2028 Western Maine RCPP allows NEFF to shape the project while striving to make Exemplary Forestry accessible, affordable, and easy to implement for family forest owners through a \$320,000, three-year award from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

And this is only the beginning of NEFF's work to address climate change as we seek to fully realize our 30 Percent Solution. Building on the bold Climate-Smart Commodities program, NEFF is simultaneously working with partners to create a much larger financing program to allow landowners to implement climate-smart forestry across the region. The Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund is key to mobilizing climate finance in the battle against climate change, and NEFF is working with partners to direct some of this money to a new revolving loan fund that would allow landowners to invest in climate-smart forestry. 🌱

## GREENHOUSE GAS REDUCTION FUND

Created by the Inflation Reduction Act, the \$27 billion Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund (GGRF) represents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to leverage private capital for investments in environmental infrastructure and nature-based climate solutions. The GGRF is designed to make funding available for projects that reduce or avoid greenhouse gas emissions and other forms of air pollution, with a particular emphasis on projects in low-income and disadvantaged communities.

In New England, the GGRF has the potential to create new financing initiatives to bring climate-smart forestry solutions to scale, building on NEFF's Climate-Smart Commodities program to deliver fully 30 percent of New England's carbon reduction goals.



# TAKING CLIMATE- SMART FORESTRY TO SCALE

WRITING BY

NEFF Development Communications Specialist David Ayers

Imagine acres upon acres of forestland managed responsibly, both to sustainably produce wood for renewable products, and to ensure the forest remains healthy and continues providing benefits like clean water and air. Now, imagine the management of those forests also simultaneously taking into account the biodiversity of the land and our ever-pressing need to confront the climate crisis. Imagine, finally, a reality in which all of this is possible, and where the scale of “acres upon acres” far surpasses the idyllic vision of the landscape you had in mind.

NEFF is in a unique position to bring a combination of climate-smart, sustainable forestry and increased support for biodiversity to approximately 10 million acres of Maine forestland, as large commercial landowners in the state have expressed interest in contributing to this very vision. To put such acreage in context, that is roughly half the size of Maine and about one-quarter of New England’s total land area, forest or otherwise. In the previous thought exercise, we have now replaced the rolling foothills you might have pictured with whole mountain ranges. And the treetops visible from those mountains? They now number in the millions—a sea of green, stretching farther than the eye can see.

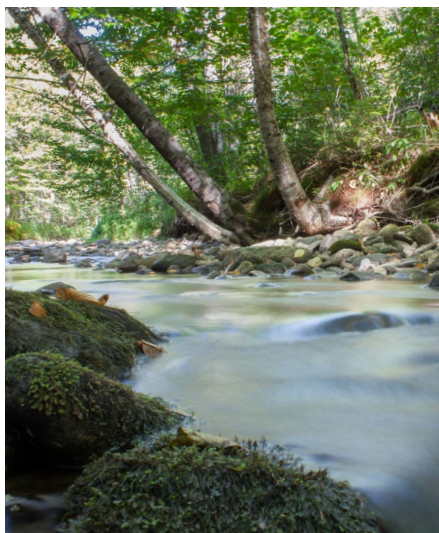
How do commercial forestlands alone present NEFF with such a large-scale opportunity in support of our 30 Percent Solution? In New England, roughly 80 percent of all forests fall under private ownership. Over the years, parcels of forestland have been handed down through families, conserved, subdivided, or reconsolidated. A significant amount of land has been converted to other uses, but the bulk of forestland in southern New England still remains forested and is still owned by these families and individuals, while much of the forestland in northern New England and in Maine’s North Woods, in particular, is owned by commercial landowners. These large working parcels—1,000 acres or more—stemmed from a colonial need for timber during the booming industrial period. These forests continue to meet commercial needs today, and for a growing population.

The sheer size of Maine’s commercial forests allows for landscape-scale implementation of climate-smart forestry practices like our own Exemplary Forestry standards. Enter the recent Forest Carbon for Commercial Landowners (FCCL) report,



a comprehensive study between NEFF and a broad coalition of large forest landowners, conservationists, other nonprofit organizations, scientists, and economists. The report, published in March 2023 with help from the University of Maine, details the effect climate-smart forest management could have on carbon storage on large commercial forestlands in northern Maine. The result: we can increase annual average carbon sequestration and storage on these lands by at least 20 percent over the next 60 years. And we can do this while maintaining current harvest levels, thereby ensuring we can meet society's demand for wood products.

The conclusion of this report is notable for a couple of reasons. First, it provides an opportunity for significantly reducing carbon dioxide in the atmosphere at a fraction of the cost of other approaches, such as building new alternative energy systems. Second, it provides a pathway, exponential in scale, to enlist a vast majority of Maine's forestlands in adopting climate-smart forest management practices. This is the start of something huge, where we can set a new precedent in the field of forestry and sustainable, climate-smart wood sourcing.



Charlie Reinertsen



Lauren Owens Lambert

At NEFF, we like to think big. For years we have used science-backed research to inform and propel real-world solutions. We continually look at ways we can advance and replicate these findings to maximize for greatest impact. The past 10 years have been a testament to NEFF's dedication to and persistence in the conservation and Exemplary management of forestlands. However, despite our achievements, we have not slowed. Instead, we eagerly seek to build on past success, using our knowledge and expertise to forge the path ahead.

Spurred on by the findings of the FCCL report and the awarding of a \$30-million USDA Climate-Smart Commodities grant to implement and demonstrate the impact of climate-smart forestry on approximately 70,000 acres, NEFF continues to gain momentum in the pursuit of climate-smart forest management for the betterment of all—rural communities' economies, wildlife, and, well, everyone impacted by climate change. To prolong the thought exercise, we are on the sun-soaked ridgeline. We can see the path laid out in front of us. Although

the trail may wind and dip from view, the direction is clear. The mountains that dot this stretch of the ridge are a series of straightforward ascents—a decidedly Northeast feature unlike the longer, circuitous switchbacks found elsewhere. These peaks are the milestones of our journey.

The success of the FCCL report is but one such milestone. The next is the expansion of this groundbreaking work, requiring additional modeling, scientific analysis, and the creation of a financial vehicle to ensure the program is enduring, evergreen. The pieces and partnerships are beginning to fall into place. Logistics are being ironed out. Funding, no longer a peripheral concern, is now the largest determining factor in the outcome of this work.

Once-in-a-lifetime. Unparalleled. Far-reaching. These are the adjectives that define this project. We need your help to carry it out. A landscape-scale expansion of climate-smart forestry driven by top-tier research is the vision, ten million acres is the goal, and taken together, they present an opportunity of epic proportions. 🌿

Read the FCCL report: [newenglandforestry.org/publications/fccl-report](https://newenglandforestry.org/publications/fccl-report)



FEATURED COMMUNITY FOREST

# NELSON MEMORIAL FOREST

WRITING BY NEFF Communications Manager Tinsley Hunsdorfer  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY Twolined Studio

## LOCATION



Marshfield, MA

## SIZE



180 Acres

## AMENITIES



Trails



Parking



Scenic Vistas



Rivers & Streams



It's a half-hour after sunrise, and three miles to the east, the sun is still low over Massachusetts Bay. You stand and watch the mist burn off the tidal North River as birds go about their crepuscular business; if you get lucky, maybe a Bald Eagle or Great Blue Heron will fly overhead before you follow the trail back into the woods behind you.

While you keep an eye out for birds and plan your return hike, water slowly trickles through the earth beneath you—growing cleaner as it passes through—and makes its way first into the North River and then out to the ocean.

**Dear reader, such an experience is yours to have at NEFF's Nelson Memorial Forest. Maybe it's time to plan a trip.**



The almost peninsula-shaped Nelson Memorial Forest has beautiful waterside views and a great trail network that connects to two neighboring Town of Marshfield forestlands and a Wildlands Trust property, all within easier reach of major cities than many of NEFF's Community Forests. Nelson is a 35-minute drive from downtown Boston and an hour from downtown Providence.

The property's 1.5 miles of trails first wind through mature stands of primarily white pine and oak, as well as beech, hemlock, and spruce and fir. They then lead visitors to vantage points for Cove Brook, which runs along the property's east side, and the North River, which runs along the northern edge of the property. These vantage points also provide views of one of Nelson's most exciting features: the salt marsh.

The outer edge of Nelson Memorial Forest is a tidal salt marsh, a habitat type unique among NEFF's

Community Forests. From a distance, the marsh appears flat, but it has a slightly hummocked surface and is situated on "mucky fine sandy loam soils"—according to the property's management plan—that can't support trees due to tidal water flow. The area instead provides quality habitat for salt marsh wetland species.

The marsh along Cove Brook in particular provides habitat for the Four-Toed Salamander, which was delisted from the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act in 2006 and is the smallest salamander species in Massachusetts.

The State of Massachusetts folded the marsh and similar habitat into river protection efforts as part of the 1978 Scenic & Recreational River Protective Order for the North River. According to the North River Commission, the order's aim is "to protect public and private property, wildlife, fresh and saltwater fisheries, and irreplaceable wild, scenic

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**The outer edge of Nelson Memorial Forest is a tidal salt marsh, a habitat type unique among NEFF's Community Forests.**  
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and recreational river resources." The order impacts the North River and some of its tributaries, and its area of jurisdiction is 300 feet from the natural banks of the North River.\*

As a result of this protective order and NEFF's own guidelines about protecting riparian zones, no harvesting takes place at Nelson within 100 feet of the North River and its marshes, and only limited harvesting occurs within 300 feet. This strip of land helps protect the watershed from

\*northrivercommission.net



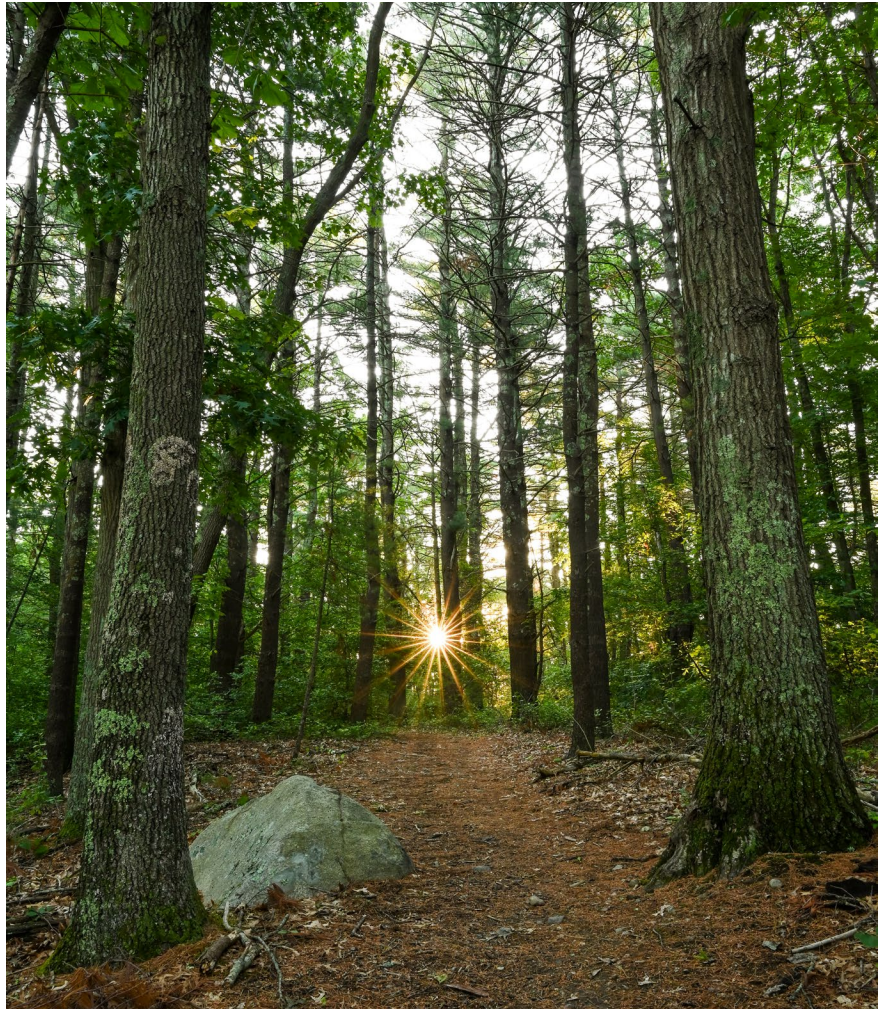
erosion-related sediment and a range of pollutants, as forests and marshes naturally filter water before it reaches rivers and streams.

The North River watershed and surrounding region have also benefited over the years from a great deal of land conservation. Nelson Memorial Forest is part of both a wildlife corridor around the river and a much larger band of conserved land that runs northwest to Wompatuck State Park.

Even the local wildlife corridor is extensive. Nelson is adjacent to or within two miles of another 3,000 acres of legally protected land, including Wildlands Trust's Phillips Farm Preserve; the Town of Marshfield's Cornhill Woodland, Highland Street Field, Cove Creek Nature Area, and Oak Street Woodland; Mass Audubon's Tilden Farm Wildlife Sanctuary and North River Sanctuary; the Town of Norwell's Procter Property, North River Conservation Land, and Farrar/Sinkewicz Property; North and South Rivers Watershed Association's Stetson Meadows; and NEFF's own Hagar Woods.

Much of New England's remaining private forestland—particularly in the southern portion of the region—has been carved into parcels that are too small to single-handedly support the full suite of native wildlife. Roads and house lots that proliferate in this fragmented landscape can cut animals off from reproductive partners and force them into degraded habitat as they seek food and shelter. That makes contiguous conserved land like this crucial, particularly so close to a city the size of Boston.

Nelson Memorial Forest makes an impact both as a small piece in a large habitat puzzle, and on its individual merits as a fascinating riverside forestland. 🌿



## Creating Nelson Memorial Forest

Nelson Memorial Forest's first 108 acres were donated to NEFF in 1958 by Miss Katharine Dorothea Nelson. Her heirs—Margaret H. Milholland, Anne Felton Spencer, Hugh Kingsbury Tyson and Penelope L. Adams—donated an adjacent parcel 19 years later to expand the forest.

Plan a visit to Nelson Memorial Forest  
or one of NEFF's other Community Forests:  
[newenglandforestry.org/explore-our-forests/trail-maps](https://newenglandforestry.org/explore-our-forests/trail-maps)



# A TRIBUTE TO WHITNEY BEALS

WRITING BY NEFF Development Manager Penny Flynn



photo by Charlie Reinertsen

New England's conservation community lost a champion in September when Whitney Beals, NEFF Board member and long-time staff member, lost his courageous fight with cancer.

Whit was not just our colleague—he was also an integral part of NEFF. His dedication, passion, and tireless efforts contributed significantly to the success and positive spirit of the organization. Whit had an unwavering belief in the power of teamwork, and was always willing to lend a helping hand or share a word of encouragement. His incredible ability to bring out the best in others with his positive attitude and infectious laugh could make anyone smile even on the most difficult days.

Whit's career suited him to a T, and he loved his work. During his 20 years with NEFF's conservation staff, he traveled throughout New England meeting with landowners to walk their land and discuss ways to meet their conservation goals. If he wasn't on the road, he could be heard on the phone from his office creatively structuring an important land protection opportunity.

Whit was an attentive listener and so easy to chat with. We often joked about how Whit knew everyone! A

name would come up and Whit would say, "I went to school with Bill," or "I went on a fishing trip with Sam," or "I served on a committee with Ann." He remembered everyone, and they would happily take a call from Whit.

Whit retired from NEFF's staff in 2019 and was elected to the Board in 2020. His 50-year conservation career included work with the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection, the Roaring Brook Nature Center, The Nature Conservancy, the Town of Wayland, and Sudbury Valley Trustees. His volunteer service included the EcoTarium Board, the Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition Board and Conservation Advisory Council, the Southborough Open Land Foundation Board President, Sudbury Valley Trustees Stewardship Advisory Committee, the 495/MetroWest Partnership Executive Steering Committee, and the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority's Water Supply Citizens Advisory Committee Executive Committee Chair.

Whit has made a lasting impact on our lives and communities, and left us with these valuable lessons: always be kind, there is strength in unity, and live life to the fullest. 🌿

## The NEFF Community Remembers Whit

"Whit was a friend and colleague for nearly 25 years. His knowledge and experience were critical to NEFF's mission. He was our land guy. Perhaps more than any other person, he is responsible for NEFF's position as the fourth largest land trust in the country. That's quite a legacy."

— NEFF BOARD PRESIDENT  
RICK WEYERHAEUSER

"As our first introduction to NEFF, we could not have found a better person to help us protect the Braintree Mountain Forest. Whit was delightful, thoughtful, and responsive to our desire for its preservation."

— PAUL L. KENDALL AND  
SHARON K. RIVES





NEW ENGLAND  
**FORESTRY**  
FOUNDATION

32 Foster Street | P.O. Box 1346 | Littleton, MA 01460  
T 978.952.6856 | F 978.952.6356 | [newenglandforestry.org](http://newenglandforestry.org)

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