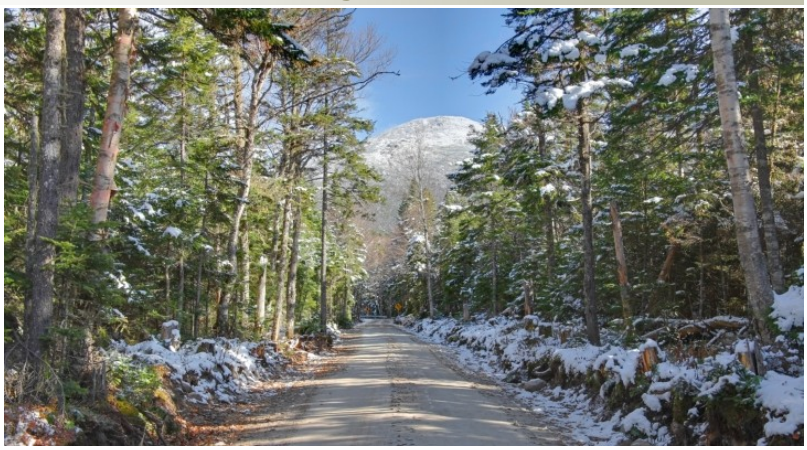
USDA Forest Service, Eastern Region



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LANDSCAPE SCALE CONSERVATION NEWS

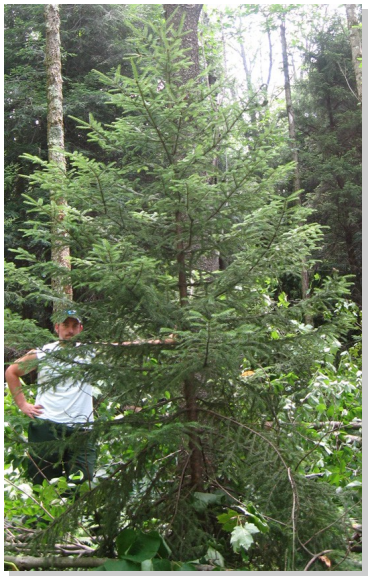
Model Landscape Scale Project – Red Spruce Restoration (Monongahela National Forest)

Working with partners and volunteers, the Monongahela National Forest is making strides in restoring essential red spruce habitat.

A volunteer plants a seedling as part of a CASRI red spruce ecosystem restoration project.

Red spruce and red spruce-northern hardwood forests once dominated the highest ridges of West Virginia, covering an estimated 500,000 to 1.5 million acres. Only a small fraction of this forest remains today, with the rest converted to forests dominated by northern hardwoods due to intensive logging and fires around the turn of the 20th Century. Forest stands and reclaimed mine lands in and around the Monongahela National Forest are being treated to restore the species composition and structure of red spruce-northern hardwood ecosystems.

The Monongahela and over 15 federal, state, private, and non-profit partners are working together under the Central Appalachian Spruce Restoration Initiative (CASRI) to restore and perpetuate the red spruce-northern hardwood forests and their native wildlife and plant species. A remarkable 240 rare species have been documented in red spruce and spruce-hardwood ecosystems in West Virginia, including the federally threatened Cheat Mountain salamander, native brook trout, West Virginia northern flying squirrel, and saw-whet owl.



This red spruce sapling has been released from overtopping hardwood mid-story trees

The Monongahela's Forest Management Plan includes goals to restore the red spruce component in current northern hardwood-dominated stands. To reach these goals, the Monongahela has done the following:

- Treated hardwood stands that have spruce seedlings and saplings present in the understory, using techniques such as eliminating overtopping hardwood saplings;
- Directly planted seedlings on previously mined lands that were planted to non-native grasses;
- Treated non-native species; and
- Acquired critical lands that provide important wildlife habitat for the Cheat Mountain salamander and the West Virginia northern flying squirrel (both federally listed species).

So far 568 acres have been treated to restore this community on the Monongahela. Other CASRI partners have conducted restoration treatments on 212 acres of land in close proximity to the Forest. Land acquisitions have added approximately 2,000 acres of spruce and northern hardwoods to the Monongahela, while acquisitions and easements by other CASRI partners have protected over 800 additional acres. The Monongahela continues to work with partners to identify funding sources and collaboration opportunities.

"One of the most exciting things all of the members of CASRI bring to the table (and the woods) is a deep interest in the values and intricacies of high elevation ecosystems. Combine that with an extensive set of skills covering a wide variety of scientific and land management aspects and the beneficiaries are the high elevation ecosystems themselves, "notes Forest Supervisor Clyde Thompson, "The Forest is proud to be a part of this effort."

LANDSCAPE SCALE CONSERVATION NEWS

- *January 9, 2013*, a ceremony was held to announce designation of the 722-mile White River watershed as the second National Blueway river system in the U.S. The watershed runs through Arkansas and Missouri and includes two national forests (Mark Twain & Ozark St. Francis); Link: http://www.fs.fed.us/news/2013/features/whiteriver.shtml.
- *December 4, 2012,* the White House released the 2012 America's Great Outdoors Progress Report. One specific project that engages the Eastern Region is the Connecticut River Blueway (pg. 23), which the White Mountain and Green Mountain Forests are taking a leadership role in. Other Forest Service efforts mentioned include the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (CFLRP) (pg. 20); and recreation.gov website (pg.11).
- The Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program of the Forest Service and partners created and maintained more than 4,500 jobs in Fiscal Year 2012 and improved the fire-resiliency of 380,000 acres of forestland near communities from 2010-2012. The Mark Twain National Forest is part of this national program. See the report at: http://wwwtest.fs.fed.us/news/2012/releases/12/restoration.shtml.
- The Future of America's Forest and Rangelands report examines ways that expanding populations, increased urbanization, and changing land-use patterns could profoundly impact natural resources, including water supplies, nationwide during the next 50 years. The study shows the potential for significant loss of privately-owned forests to development and fragmentation.

LANDSCAPE SCALE CONSERVATION PROJECTS — HONORABLE MENTIONS

Shawnee Volunteer Corps members perform trail work

Involving Local Communities through Public Service and Recreation on the Shawnee

Thanks to a variety of scenery—ranging from breathtaking vistas to forested woodlands—and a central location, the Shawnee National Forest (NF) is a major destination for hikers and equestrian enthusiasts throughout the Midwest. Offering over 400 miles of trails in wilderness and non-wilderness settings requires substantial maintenance. To help with this and encourage local engagement in the Shawnee, Forest staff developed a volunteer program, the Shawnee Volunteer Corps. In 2012, the Shawnee Volunteer Corps managed 350 volunteers who generously provided nearly 4,000 hours of service towards the maintenance of over 20 miles of trail in wilderness and non-wilderness areas. Volunteers also constructed .75 miles of new trail that provided a $45,000.00 savings to the Shawnee. For more information, go to: http://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb5395152.pdf.

Invasive Tree-of-Heaven (Ailanthus altissima)

Ohio Tree-of-Heaven Inventory and Control across Multiple Ownerships

In conjunction with a 2008 National Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), the Wayne National Forest, Ohio Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and Ohio Division of Forestry (DOF) signed a MOU to restore forest health in Appalachia Ohio. Within months, they were working cooperatively within the Wayne proclamation boundary, which covers 853,877 acres. Because federal ownership is only 28.5%, these agencies combined funding and technical expertise across boundaries to inventory and eradicate the highly invasive Tree-of-Heaven (Ailanthus altissima). Key actions of this collaboration include:

- 163,256 acres (116,678 acres private/46,578 federal) were aerially surveyed mapping 1,376 acres of Ailanthus infesting 6,408 acres on public and private lands
- 442 infested acres have been treated on federal lands

Landscape Scale Conservation - is a framework to conceive, plan, finance, and manage projects with significant conservation value—ecological, economical, and social. The broad concept of Landscape Scale Conservation includes three main components: Contributes to landscape scale goals or outcomes; connects separate but related actions and integrates internal program; and involves strong partnerships, a shared vision, and cross-boundary engagement with local communities and other landowners.