

Landscape Scale Restoration Project Report



Project Name: Kennebec Woodlands Partnership/Sustaining Kennebec Woodlands

Funding Year: 2010

Stakeholders

Forest Service Region: USDA Forest Service - R9

Sponsoring Organization: Maine Forest Service

State Project Contact: Morten Moesswilde | 207.549.9003 | morten.moesswilde@maine.gov

Participating Organizations:

Grantee: Maine Forest Service

Project Funding

Agreement(s): 10-DG-11420004-067

Funding Sources

Project Design

Landscape Scale Restoration Project Report



Project Purpose

Maine Forest Service and Kennebec Land Trust propose to launch a regional, long term, strategic initiative to keep forests as forests in Kennebec County, Maine. With 389,700 wooded acres, Kennebec County remains over 70% forested, in a context of a rapidly growing state capital district, historic rural communities, numerous lakes and streams, and rich natural areas and habitats. The effort will be three-pronged:

1) facilitate a regional dialogue on maintaining forest cover and establish a regional forest conservation network, involving multiple partners including communities, businesses/business groups, conservationists, forest managers, landowners, and others. The dialogue will culminate in a two-day conference highlighting common interests and mechanisms/strategies for sustaining rural lands, and with the endorsement of a framework of principles for future long-term collaboration; 2) develop a landscape level, comprehensive conservation and stewardship plan for the county that integrates land use and ecological data with human infrastructure and community needs, identifies conservation priorities, and lays out stewardship principles and best practices for forests in the region; and, 3) support individual forest owners through development of property-specific Forest Stewardship Plans for key parcels, prioritized based on high conservation value, importance as working forest lands, and certification potential.

Timeline

Winter 2009-2010 - Initiate contacts/meetings with multiple prospective partners/participants. Finalize schedule of events/programs including a two-day conference. Initiate strategic planning process with contractor(s)

Spring 2010 - Present series of workshops/presentations on project goals, basic forest Stewardship. Continue meetings with partners. Draft framework of principles for long-term forest conservation.

Summer 2010 - Review regional conservation stewardship plan draft; circulate among key partners. Develop criteria for support of individual forest stewardship plans;

Fall 2010 - Host regional Forest Conservation and Stewardship Conference. Finalize framework of principles. Conduct targeted outreach to priority landowners. Evaluate/approve proposals for property-specific forest stewardship plans

Winter/Spring 2011 - Finalize regional conservation/landscape stewardship plan. Meet with partners to discuss implementation

Landscape Scale Restoration Project Report



National Themes & Outcomes

Conserving and Managing Working Forest Landscapes

- High priority forest ecosystems and landscapes are identified and conserved.
- Forests are actively and sustainably managed.

Protect Forests from Threats

- Threats to forest and ecosystem health are identified, managed and reduced.

Enhance Public Benefits from Private Forests

- Water quality and quantity is protected and enhanced.
- Air quality is improved and energy is conserved.
- Communities plan for and reduce their risks from wildfire.
- The economic benefits and values of trees and forests are maintained and enhanced.
- Wildlife and fish habitat is protected, conserved, and enhanced.
- People are connected to trees and forests and are engaged in environmental stewardship activities.
- Trees and forests are managed and restored to help mitigate and adapt to changing conditions.

Strategic Issues

The project will substantially contribute to efforts to protect forests from harm. Primary issues in these landscapes include invasive plants, exotic pests, erosion and sedimentation of water bodies, high-graded forests, and forest compositions and structures strongly influenced by past land uses, especially agriculture. By encouraging conservation, stewardship and restoration of degraded sites, the project will provide additional focus and understanding of these issues to an expanded audience.

The project will enhance public benefits from trees and forests primarily by engaging municipalities, businesses, and other local entities much more closely in land use planning decisions. By providing detailed information and fostering partnerships, the project will enable these groups to advocate much more effectively for the many public benefits and community values related to forests.

In addition, the project aligns closely with the USDA Forest Service's Strategic Plan (Goals and Objectives 1.4, 1.5,2.1, 3.1, 3.2, 4.1, 4.3) and the USDA FS Northeast Area Strategic Plan (Goals and Objectives 1:A,B,D and 2:A,B,D).

Landscape Scale Restoration Project Report



Collaboration & Partners

The establishment of an ongoing partnership among numerous groups is a key component of the project. Thirteen partners have signed onto the partnership including the Maine Forest Service, the Kennebec Land Trust, the Trust to Conserve Northeast Forest Land, the Kennebec Soil and Water Conservation District, the Forest Society of Maine, the Small Woodland Owners Association of Maine, the Maine Forest Products Council, the Sebasticook Regional Land Trust, the Maine CDC Drinking Water Program, the Center for Research on Sustainable Forests (University of Maine), the Maine State Implementation Committee of the Sustainable Forestry Initiative, Maine Project Learning Tree, and the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Bureau of Agricultural Resource Development.

These partners have all attended meetings, delivered presentations at KWP events and signed on to the statement of principles.

Integrated Delivery

This project is working with many organizations in the impact area of the grant to enhance landscape level planning in Kennebec County, Maine.

Influence on Positive Change

This project will help to "Keep Forests as Forests", and to enhance sustainable forest stewardship in the impact area of the grant.

Accomplishments

Deliverables

The project will launch a regional, long-range, strategic forest initiative. Measurable outcomes will include:

- the number of partners and breadth of interests engaged, and the vibrancy of the network created
- an array of events, workshops, and materials on basic woodland stewardship, and the development of additional tools and strategies for landowners
- a regional conference and the endorsement of a regional long-range framework of forest conservation and stewardship principles
- a landscape-level, Regional Conservation Stewardship Plan
- assistance for 2500 +/- acres of key selected properties to conduct woodlot-specific stewardship planning for family forests, town forests, utility district land, or similar lands

Accomplishments to Date

Three day KPW conference held October 12-23 2010: Topics explored in the conference

Landscape Scale Restoration Project Report



included an overview of the landscape history and economic backdrop of Kennebec County's forest resources; promotion of a variety of approaches to woodland stewardship; case studies of local successes; a display of key resources for landowners and woodlot management strategies; information about working forest conservation easements, estate planning and current use taxation, working with licensed foresters and professional timber harvesters, and field trips to local working woodlots, forest preserves, and businesses built on Kennebec County's rich working woodlands. The conference also featured a talk and woods walk led by noted landscape historian Tom Wessels, author of "Reading the Forested Landscape".

Statement of eight key principles developed and signed by KWP partners:

- 1 Voluntary. The partnership is based on voluntary cooperation and seeks non-regulatory approaches to conservation, defined in the broad sense.
- 2 Mutually beneficial. The partnership is guided by mutual self-interest – there is something in it for everyone.
- 3 Multiple pathways of progress. There are no single one-size-fits-all solutions; rather, there is a range of items (tools, strategies, actions, levels of commitment) that lead towards keeping forests as forests.
- 4 Personal focus. Outreach and education efforts will "meet people where they are" along the path and help identify the next steps to take.
- 5 Diversify. The partnership will bring together constituencies with similar interests that may not have traditionally worked together; for example, the land trust community and the forest products and logging industry.
- 6 De-mystify. The efforts of the partnership will clarify terminology, reduce fears, and promote a common understanding of potentially divisive concepts; for example, commercial harvesting, conservation easements, comprehensive plans, data layers on maps.
- 7 Facilitate. The goal of the partnership is not to dictate, but to facilitate informed decisions.
- 8 Mediate. When disagreements arise, rational dialogue will be employed to work through differences.

KWP website developed:

http://www.maine.gov/dacf/mfs/projects/kennebec_woodlands/index.html

A 16 page booklet entitled "Your Woodlands; a Resource Guide for Kennebec County Woodland Owners" had a first (limited) printing in October, 2011; a second edition that incorporated feedback from the first edition has been printed in large numbers. There has been widespread distribution to woodland owners, foresters, town officials, loggers, land trusts and other interested parties since second printing in the spring of 2012. At the same time, the

Landscape Scale Restoration Project Report



Kennebec Woodlands Partnership web site (see above), hosted by the Maine Forest Service, has expanded to provide further information and resources to the target audience. The booklet and associated marketing campaign are designed to connect the audience with the Partners, either directly or via the web site. The site educates about the benefits of sustainable forest management, provide a range of tools, strategies and answers to questions, as well as a directory of resource organizations and professionals.

Events, classes, workshops and presentations: dozens of "Kennebec Woodlands Days" events have been sponsored and promoted by the KWP and individual members, including invasive species and vernal pool workshops, "Are you ready to harvest" presentations, tree and mushroom ID walks, and eye-opening field days for school children.

Deliverables in Progress

The KWP aims to be a catalyst in promoting a culture of conservation, with a particular emphasis on forested land, in Kennebec County. As such it is and will be a forum and a platform for further issue-focused projects, efforts and initiatives. Examples include a portable steel skidder bridge loaner program, administered by the Kennebec County Soil & Water District; and a "local wood" initiative, spearheaded by the Kennebec Land Trust, which will be sponsoring a 2 day conference in the fall of 2014. All these efforts are supported by and coordinated with the Maine Forest Service.

Challenges

Adequate financial support is always a key issue. Although funding from the USDA Forest Service is nearly gone, KWP has been moderately successful in securing enough support from other sources to maintain a part time coordinator. The coordinator role is essential to maintaining momentum and energy for particular projects and for the partnership as a whole. A backbone support organization is critical to successful and positive collective impact. The partnership continues to be an effective umbrella for the members to collaborate and share ideas. When particular projects serve the needs of one or more partner organizations, KWP helps provide support and promotion for events and fund-raising efforts.

The underlying challenge with this project is to make the landscape plan useful and effective for individual landowners and other users. Using a website as the "landscape plan" allows greater flexibility in updating information and contacts in a rapidly changing world. The downside is, someone needs to "mind the store" and keep the site fresh and useful.

Information Last Updated

11/18/2015