



Northeast Regional Pilot Demonstration Project to Strengthen Forest Product Markets, Forest Stewardship, and Forest Conservation - Task 2: New York –New England Family Forest Owner Engagement Initiative

Final Report Summary - November, 2014.

Prepared by Bill Labich, Highstead Foundation



Highstead 
Dedicated to conserving New England's natural landscapes



Acknowledgements

The following are the partner organizations that carried out this project. Great thanks for their efforts!

The Taconics Partnership

Agricultural Sustainability Association
Audubon CT
Audubon NY
Columbia Land Conservancy
Connecticut Audubon Society
CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection
Housatonic Valley Association
Commonwealth of Massachusetts Executive Office
of Energy and Environmental Affairs
Massachusetts Audubon
New England Forestry Foundation
NY Department of Environmental Conservation
Opacum Land Trust
Rensselaer Plateau Alliance, Inc.
Vermont Land Trust
VT Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation

The MA-VT Woodlands Partnership

Audubon VT
Franklin Land Trust
MA Department of Conservation and Recreation
MA Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs
Massachusetts Audubon
Vermont Land Trust
VT Coverts
VT Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation

The Quabbin to Cardigan Partnership

Ausbon Sargent Land Preservation Trust
Ashburnham Conservation Trust
East Quabbin Land Trust
Franklin Land Trust
Kestrel Land Trust
MA Department of Conservation and Recreation
The Monadnock Conservancy
Mt. Grace Land Conservation Trust
NH Division of Forests and Lands
North County Land Trust
North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership
Rattlesnake Gutter Trust
The Society for the Protection of NH Forests
University of NH Cooperative Extension

The Southern New England Forest Heritage Partnership

CT Department of Environmental Protection
East Quabbin Land Trust
The Last Green Valley
MA Department of Conservation and Recreation
MassConn Sustainable Forest Partnership
MA Executive Office of Energy and Environmental
Affairs
Northern RI Conservation District
Opacum Land Trust
Providence Water Department
RI Department of Environmental Management
RI Forest Conservators Organization, Inc.
The Rhode Island Resource Conservation and
Development Council
TNC – RI Chapter

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And our funder – U.S.D.A. Forest Service, State & Private Forestry

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Question: What works best to engage family forest owners to manage and conserve their woodlands to sustain large, priority, forested landscapes in eastern New York and New England?

Answer: Regional Conservation Partnerships (RCPs) of foresters and conservationists. RCPs can collaborate with Woodland Ambassadors (WAs) to creatively bring together small groups of landowners in priority conservation areas to learn from each other. RCPs work with WAs to help landowners take important steps toward stewarding and conserving their forestland.

1.1 Introduction

The NY/NE Family Forest Owner Engagement Initiative was a unique landscape conservation and stewardship project designed to answer the above question. The Initiative also served to implement recommendations of the New England Governors' Conference Commission on Land Conservation (CLC). The Initiative was one of three tasks associated with a winning proposal submitted to the U.S. Forest Service's (USFS) Competitive Resource Allocation Program (now called Landscape Scale Restoration). The North East State Foresters Association, as well as the state foresters of MA, CT, and RI were the applicants. The proposal, "Northeast Regional Pilot Demonstration Project to Strengthen Forest Product Markets, Forest Stewardship, and Forest Conservation," also received support from the Highstead Foundation and the Regional Conservation Partnership (RCP) Network.

The four regional conservation partnerships (RCPs) that participated in this Initiative are among the 40 RCPs in New England. RCPs are typically informal networks of people representing private and public organizations and agencies that collaborate over time to implement a

shared conservation vision across town and sometimes state boundaries.

Between 2011 and 2014, more than 100 leaders representing 28 conservation and forestry organizations, agencies and landowner networks, formed three new interstate RCPs and strengthened another. With the help of the Sustaining Family Forests Initiative (SFFI), partners learned how to communicate with unengaged landowners and identify which programs and activities from around the region were most promising.

While the full report is dense with those learnings, the purpose of this executive summary is to present the main products, outcomes, and findings of the Initiative. These lessons are based on partners' careful documentation of their activities, as each partner adopted our shared evaluation protocol. This protocol includes the tracking of impact indicators. At 1 year, 3 years, and 5 years, Highstead Foundation will review the identity of family forest owners listed in the

rolls of new stewardship plans and practices and new conservation easements and projects. They will note which of these were participants in the Initiative. We will then compare the percentage of participation within the focal areas to the percentage of the larger landscape and for each state as a whole. Through this method, we intend to capture the longer-term impacts from our work together.

We would not have any results without the commendable efforts of the partnerships and individual partners. They sought to learn from first hand experience the relative value of different landowner engagement strategies. Some pursued strategies to their conclusions despite challenges and less than promising turnouts. New practices were tried out, some without fully understanding, or being able to commit to the amount of time or follow-up that was required. However, in each and every case, their activities and results have led to our greater understanding of what we need to do to encourage many more previously unengaged family forest owners to steward and conserve their land. This study is, therefore, dedicated to the forestry and land conservation partners and the partnerships that made it all possible.

1.2 Outcomes: Learnings

The primary function of this Initiative was to help us learn which strategies and activities would be most useful in advancing stewardship and conservation outcomes on family forest ownerships at the landscape-scale. Each partner and each partnership learned a great deal while trying new ways of connecting with landowners. Additionally, together, the four RCPs learned even more. Together, they:

- Created a 16-step approach for engaging landowners in large landscape stewardship and conservation .
- Developed a model evaluation protocol for tracking and measuring the short- and long-term activities and impacts of landowner engagement work .
- Discovered how to use and improve eight landowner engagement strategies.
- Identified the attributes of a well-designed and implemented communication Initiative and engagement strategy.
- Leveraged the communication capacity of the RCP Network. This was especially apparent at the RCP Network Gatherings in 2012 and 2013. Related sessions at each RCP Network Gathering conveyed to over one hundred conservation and forestry professionals the benefits, lessons, and opportunities to be gained by increasing social capital among landowners. This is an area of particular importance to RCPs because many know they need to develop networks of knowledgeable peer landowner leaders in order to help others make informed decisions about the future of their woodlands.

Together, we have learned that the best strategies for reaching and engaging landowners are not of a particular kind, but in how they are advertised, organized, run, and of most importance—whether there is follow-through (see section 1.224 for more on follow-through).



Foresters for the Birds
Massachusetts Field Workshop

Friday, May 3, 2013
8am-4pm
Fellowship Hall
17 Little Mohawk Rd. Shelburne, MA

The MA-VT Woodlands Partnership presents this professional development opportunity for foresters, featuring:

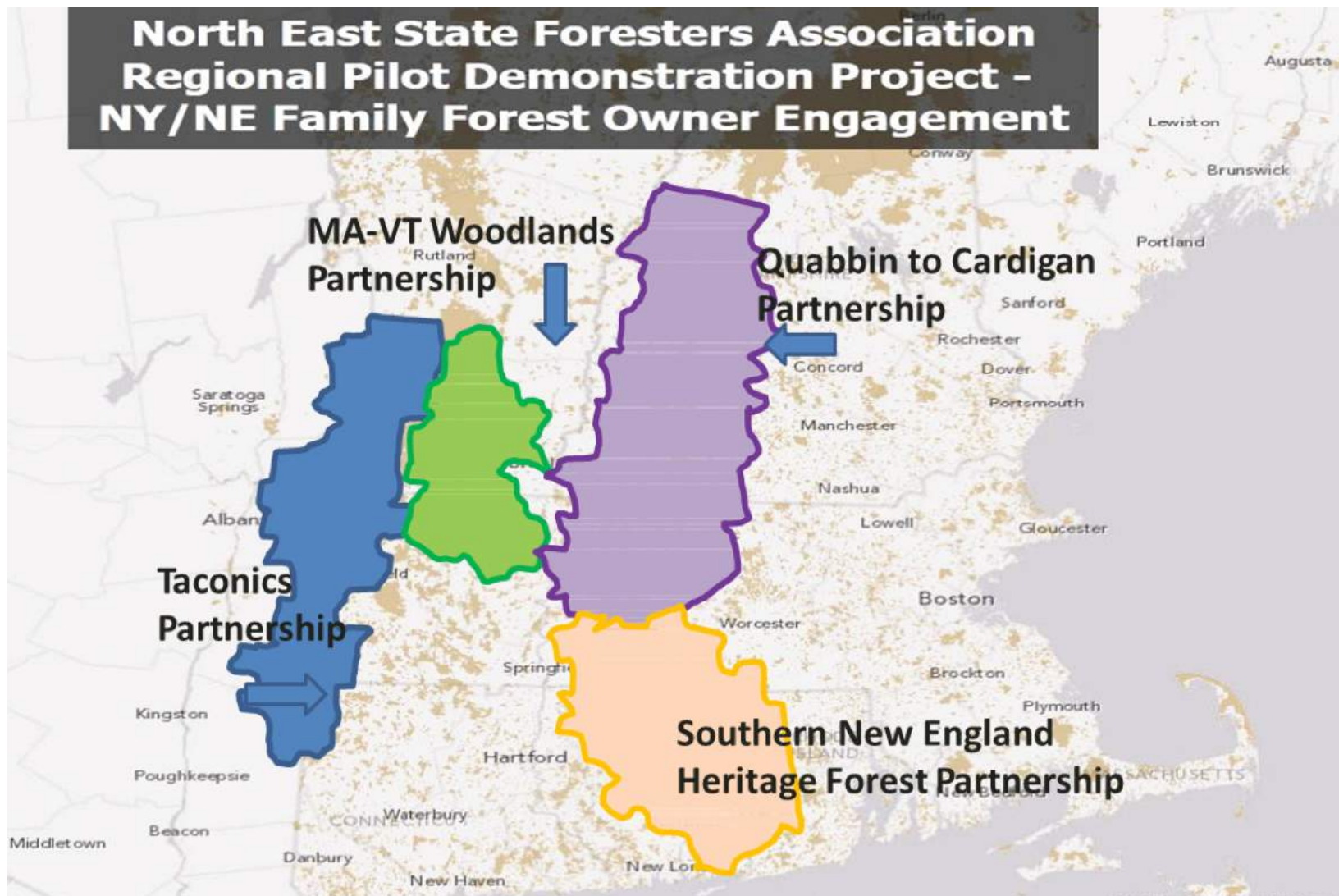
- **Introduction to the Foresters for the Birds Toolkit**—Innovative and practical guides for managing forests with birds in mind created with input from more than 80 foresters.
- **Bird identification**—learn where to begin or sharpen your skills.
- **Discussion** tour of stands managed with birds in mind.
- **Share knowledge** and experiences to create new guidelines for future work in Massachusetts.

Register by April 29, 2013
Online registration at:
https://www.massaudubon.org/catalog/listing.php?program_code=1521-HA13SP1

7.5 CFE credits available
For more information contact Mass Audubon's Matt Kamm or Stuart Watson
781-259-2164 mkamm@massaudubon.org or swatson@massaudubon.org

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North East State Foresters Association Regional Pilot Demonstration Project - NY/NE Family Forest Owner Engagement





1.21 Results by the Numbers

Between January 2012 and June 2014, RCP partners designed their strategies using the skills and landowner programs in which they were trained. Partners crafted their own messages to engage a particular landowner type (see the SFFI's website). Together, they communicated directly with more than 18,000 family forest owners, owning forestland within ten key conservation focus areas in the four interstate landscapes. Partners and, in some cases, peer landowner leaders, invited these mostly "Woodland Retreat" owners to events. These events included Woods Forums and Woods Walks, Estate Planning Workshops, Silviculture for the Birds Workshops, and other landowner programs.

More than 1,000 landowners attended these events (12 percent of those contacted), and a majority were of the target landowner type. Those landowners who attended their first event heard from their peers about why they enjoyed and cared for their land. They learned they had options and opportunities. RCP members and peer leaders followed up with attendees. They encouraged the landowners who were most interested to take the next step: speak with a forester, an attorney, a land trust professional, or go to a bird workshop and get a free bird habitat assessment. More than 200 landowners did just that (28 percent of those attending their first event). By making these next steps easy, RCP partners moved these landowners further down the path towards accomplishing their own objectives. In most cases, the landowners' objectives supported the mission and objectives of the RCP and its partners.

Of the 206 landowners who took action:

- 41 landowners met with a consulting or an extension forester; 10 have begun management plans, and 52 had Bird Habitat Assessments completed on 7,358 acres.
- Eight landowners met with an attorney to talk about their estates and their conservation options, 20 met with a land trust professional, and 16 new land protection projects are in process, representing 1,935 acres.

Based on a comparison of outcomes tracked by participants, we have learned how to help advance unengaged landowners down their paths toward land stewardship and conservation. We have learned which kinds of strategies and approaches work best.

Although plenty of detail awaits the reader in the full report, most will appreciate getting the gist of what we learned from our work together. The following sections of the Executive Summary provide our main takeaways.

Your Land, Your Estate Plan:
A FREE WORKSHOP for Forest LANDOWNERS in SW MA, NW CT and Eastern NY

Introduction to Estate Planning
Saturday, March 30th, Blodgett House, Simon's Rock College, Great Barrington,
9AM-12PM
Free, refreshments served.

Your land is a part of your legacy. Deciding what will happen to your land after you are gone may be the most important step you can take as a landowner.

In order to find solutions that will meet your needs and those of your family, planning ahead is important. An estate plan ensures that your assets—including your land—are distributed in a way that will meet the your financial and personal needs.

Learn about estate planning and land conservation options that can help you shape the future of your land at this free workshop featuring:

- Elizabeth Wroblicka, an experienced estate planning attorney, explaining taxes, trusts, and other important legal provisions, with opportunities for a free follow up attorney meeting with interested landowners;
- Tim Abbott of the Housatonic Valley Association, discussing conservation options and how land trusts can help ensure that your land remains in its natural state forever.

There is no obligation or cost. **Space is limited, so please let us know if you will attend.** To preregister, please call Wendy Ferris at 413.625-9151 x111 or email wferris@franklinlandtrust.org.

Postcard used for estate planning workshop covering western Massachusetts and Connecticut and eastern New York in the Taconics region.

1.22 Lessons Learned: Best Approaches to Landowner Outreach and Engagement Activities in Large Landscapes

We could only have accomplished our Initiative through coordinated partnerships, each collaborating with partners to work at the scale of large, interstate landscapes, often much larger than the territory of any one group. The following 16-step approach is designed to be pursued in partnership:

1. Share local and regional knowledge of the landscape about:
 - a. the focal areas containing the most important and threatened forests in the region. Use geographic information systems (GIS) to map and analyze the forests in the larger landscape in order to identify priority focus areas.
 - b. the most important forest threats and desired outcomes in these areas.
 - c. the individual and family forest owners in the focus areas.
2. Get trained:
 - a. in how to think like, and write to attract, your target audience (e.g. Sustaining Family Forest Initiative's Tools for Engaging Landowners Effectively (TELE)).
 - b. in how to help unengaged landowners do the next positive thing towards managing and conserving their land. Identify and collect winning strategies from within and from outside your region.
3. Identify the target landowner audience (by location, area (in acres), TELE attitudinal group).
4. Build a landowner database (in Excel or Access) for each focus area and fill the database with information from local assessors' offices (e.g. names, addresses, area). Use the database as a contact manager. Document and track which partner reaches out to and engages each landowner using which specific strategies.
5. Develop and agree on an evaluation protocol that includes process, outcome, and impact indicators .
6. Develop work plans designed for the whole partnership (to implement shared objectives) and then for each focus area group of partners.
7. Using TELE, develop outreach messages for each target landowner category in each focus area.
8. Reach out to "Woodland Ambassadors" (WAs) and invite them to help promote and or lead peer-landowner education events like Woods Walks and Woods Forums.
9. Develop media, like postcards, flyers, and press releases, using the outreach messages. Work with WAs and ensure that design standards or practices achieve media that works well with the target audience.
10. Engage and train private consulting foresters to assist in engaging and following-up with landowners.
11. Implement the strategies and programs.
12. Use the evaluation tools.
13. Track all landowner participation, outcomes, results, and partner investments using the landowner database.
14. Meet regularly and in-person as an RCP and with surrounding RCPs so that partners can learn from their own and others' mistakes, lessons, and successes.
15. Communicate these methods, lessons, and outcomes to the larger RCP, conservation, and forestry communities.
16. Continue to engage WAs, foresters, and partners in activities, coordinated via the RCP, that help individual landowners achieve their long-term stewardship and conservation objectives.

1.221 Best Approaches to Landowner Outreach

Messages used by partners to “speak” to targeted landowner types were often unique to the landowner category and landscape. However, we learned that there are key steps to follow in designing and using TELE-based messages:

1. Determine your desired outcomes.
2. Get to know your conservation focus area and the culture of the communities involved.
3. Know which landowner category you want in attendance.
4. Reach out and invite Woodland Ambassadors (WA), or otherwise-named peer landowners, to help you target your message and pick your channel and your strategy.
5. Depend on one message, but use multiple channels.
6. Use good design in crafting your media (e.g. post-cards).
7. Choose to highlight the fact that you’ll serve pie and coffee over explaining who’s in your partnership.
8. Have flyers on follow-up activities to offer the attendees at these first events.



This project relied heavily on the TELE principles.

1.222 Attributes of Best Landowner Engagement Strategies

Based on the outcomes reported by the partnership groups, a “best” strategy is one having the following attributes:

- A collaboration of organizations and agencies, like an RCP, engage their partners, each of whom contribute to and coordinate landowner outreach and engagement in their shared focus area(s).
- Involvement and leadership of land trust professionals for conservation-related outcomes and follow-through, and an extension forester or other natural resource professional for stewardship-related outcomes.
- Woodland Ambassadors or Peer Landowner Leaders cultivated, trained, and motivated to assist in all aspects of outreach and engagement, but not serving as event leaders, organizers, producers, or managing follow-through with attendees. Have conservation staff do this work.

- A well-thought out outreach strategy that includes direct mail within a month of the event and partner staff and peer leaders calling prospective attendees before events.
- Events that have tangible follow-up activities and opportunities like one-on-one meetings with foresters, attorneys, and land trust professionals or volunteers, or other workshops.
- Landowner follow-up within one to two months of these one-on-one next steps (e.g. meetings with an attorney) by the partners most invested in management and or land protection outcomes.
- Plans to capture momentum by continuing to communicate and engage landowners in the partners' focus areas.
- Connect landowners to various professionals that allow for new opportunities and pathways to conservation and stewardship like Audubon groups and their Silviculture for Birds program.
- Ample time to plan for those activities like Silviculture for the Birds. This program requires larger windows of time for inviting landowners, for doing fieldwork, and for following up with next steps. Follow-through activities need to link assessments to management plans, to active treatment, and to future Bird Habitat Walkovers.

Sample workshop information

Continual Collaboration

 NEW HAMPSHIRE TRAVELERS
 CHAMBER ASSOCIATION

Managing for Red Oak

Saturday November 3, 2012

**Maynard Forest
 Keene, NH
 8 a.m. - 12 p.m.**

Cosponsors:
UNH Cooperative Extension

UNIVERSITY
 of NEW HAMPSHIRE
 Cooperative Extension

Course Content

Southwestern New Hampshire grows some of the finest northern Red Oak (*quercus rubra*) in the world. This informative, in-the-woods workshop will discuss ways to increase the quality, quantity and regeneration of this high-value hardwood.

Topics will include:

- Soils and site index.
- Regeneration techniques
- When to harvest.
- How big do you grow them?
- Harvest types- crop tree, patch cuts, shelter-wood, and group selection.

In addition, examples of various grades of sawlogs and veneer will be on site to discuss log defects such as spider heart, mineral stain, and seams.

Handout materials will be available.
 Workshops will happen rain or shine, so please dress for the weather.

Special thanks to the Monadnock Conservancy for hosting the workshop, and to Green Crow Log Yard for providing the log samples.

NOTE: If you have special needs in order to participate in this program, please contact us 2 weeks in advance of the program date informing us of your need, to allow us time to make the necessary arrangements. Thank you

Workshop flyer for landowner in the New Hampshire portion of the Quabbin to Cardigan landscape.

1.223 How well did the Landowner Engagement Strategies and Activities Work?

Initiative partners used one or more of the following four basic strategies to engage landowners in conversations about their land that resulted in landowner action.

1. Event (like a Woods Forum) and follow-up with a one-on-one meeting with a forester, attorney, or land trust professional.
2. Neighborhood event with follow-up invitation to participate in local, collaborative landscape-scale conservation project.
3. Train Woodland Ambassadors (WAs) in how to organize and facilitate landowner engagement events and then have them host events on their land.
4. Train consulting foresters in Silviculture for Birds, provide WAs with free bird habitat assessments, host a bird workshop for landowners, and offer attendees free bird habitat assessments. Then modify bird habitat assessments so they comply with NRCS conservation plans or current use management plans. Then manage forests for birds. Land trust staff can follow-up with specific conservation opportunities.

By far, the simplest and most effective strategies were numbers one and two. The events in strategy one were typically Woods Forums and Estate Planning Workshops. A Woods Forum is a low-key introduction to conservation and stewardship whereby the audience leads the session themselves with experts ready to help with technical questions and next steps. [Click here for more information about this model.](#) Partners saw an average of 4 percent response rate to their media (e.g. postcard) and with follow-through to varying degrees, 27 percent of participants took a next step. Estate Planning Workshops had a 7 percent response rate, and 24 percent of attendees took action ([click here to learn more about estate planning workshops](#)).

Number two in the above list, the Neighborhood meeting strategy was developed by partners in the Q2C Partnership to great effect. Those partners were a MA state forester and another RCP, one of the oldest in New England: the North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership. Their Landowner Neighborhood Gatherings and Forest Stewardship Program Landowner Network (Stew Club) are relatively low cost, small-group gatherings of landowners with WAs involved from the beginning. Their purpose was to generate interest in a potential landscape scale land conservation project and in forest management, respectively.

Both strategies provided for a relatively high response rate (37 percent and 14 percent) and a very high percentage of attendees taking next steps (55 percent and 40 percent). What accounts for this success? As mentioned earlier, the best strategies are not of a particular kind, but based on the manner in which they are advertised, organized, run, and of most importance—whether there is follow-through. Based on the outcomes reported by the partnership groups, a “best” strategy is one having the attributes listed on the previous page, with the most important being follow-through.

Follow-through was one key factor that was missing from both the Woodland Ambassador (WA) Program and Silviculture for the Birds, as they were implemented. Evidence suggests that the WA program can be effective in harnessing the charisma of strong peer leaders who then go on to serve as recruiters and extension agents for dozens of landowners. Silviculture for the Birds is also very promising both as a hook to engage unengaged landowners, and as a means for bringing forestry and foresters into the effort. In the partners’ defense, both of these programs were designed and carried out to test and learn about their effectiveness in engaging landowners to take new steps.

They also had to compete with a too-tight time frame that we learned only much later was too short. As both programs were implemented, much energy was spent on the first stages: recruit, train, and have WAs host Woods Forums and Woods Walks. This first stage for Silviculture for the Birds involved training foresters and informing landowners of this new way of managing woodlands (for birds), while lining up and completing bird habitat assessments. In each of these programs, and despite their considerable promise, we learned of the critical importance of the landowner shepherd, the organization, or individual, that would encourage the landowner towards stewardship and conservation. Without that role, no activity would succeed in achieving its full potential. Time did not adequately allow for that next step for both of these strategies, and that in itself is an important finding. Silviculture for the Birds organizers found that the workshop for training foresters and the bird workshop for landowners did not by themselves result in landowners signing-up for bird habitat assessments. To realize the full potential from a WA program and the Silviculture for the Birds Program, a great deal of time, planning, oversight, and follow-through would be required.


1.224 The Critical Importance of Follow-Through

Follow through (intransitive verb): to press on in an activity or process especially to a conclusion. (MerriamWebster.com)

Follow-through, in the context of landowner engagement, is the act of staying in communication with a particular owner and helping them take steps towards managing or conserving their land. When applied to a landscape-scale approach by an RCP, follow-through also applies to the capacity of partnership members to coordinate various activities efficiently. Their activities become mutually supportive and collectively helpful to landowners as they take steps towards stewardship and conservation.

The results of our Initiative point to the effectiveness of following through with landowners, especially if an opportunity exists that they can take advantage of like funding for due diligence for land protection or management plans. However, even in the earliest stages of a forest owner's awakened interest in their land, there are concrete steps that they can take. This can be as simple as receiving a follow-up phone call from a land trust staffer to meet with them or an attorney. It could be their agreeing to drive to a Woodland Ambassador's home (at their invitation) to meet with a consulting forester. In both cases, someone needs to manage this follow-through in a timely way in order to help the landowner get to their next step. Without follow-through, a landowner might very well lose interest.


It is common knowledge that it usually takes much time, effort, and money for landowners to move from awareness of their options to action. However, most RCP members including those involved in this Initiative believe all three are in short supply. This is one of the main reasons people form RCPs.



**You Love Your Woods
What's Their Future?**

Please join us for an informal walk on November 16, 2013 at On The Lane Farm, 52 Hartford Pike in Foster to explore the woods in our backyards. This free event is brought to you by the Southern New England Heritage Forest Partnership

See details in article on page 12



They seek to coordinate their efforts and resources to keep forests from being further fragmented from development. Forested ecosystems with important habitats, timber, soils, and watersheds are more valuable and sustainable when located in relatively large undeveloped blocks vs. small ones. A large landscape stewardship and conservation approach can be effective in connecting, managing, and protecting unfragmented blocks of forest if partners follow-through with their activities at the landscape scale and over time.

Within this context, we can imagine a hypothetical RCP interested in reaching out to unengaged landowners. Perhaps there is funding for some activities, or they are interested in increasing landowners' general awareness of stewardship and conservation options. Within their landscape, they have identified the most important long-term conservation focus areas in which they plan to target all of their coordinated outreach activities. Even using a focus area approach with priorities, there could still be thousands of landowners to potentially reach and engage. This particular RCP includes partners with interests in wildlife, rivers, forest management, farms, and land protection. In order to be most effective, our Initiative's results point to the need for the partners to share agendas, information, resources, and measures of success. They need to coordinate planning, scheduling, and implementation of their various strategies and activities. Their activities can build off each other, enjoy synergy, and get the kind of results that people want. This level of coordination is challenging if there's a lot going on and impossible without regular partner interaction. Coordinated follow-through by an RCP's members is, however, paramount if common objectives are to be realized in a timely and cost effective manner.

1.31 Recommendations for the 3 Emerging RCPs and Q2C of this project following the end of the project

- Re-convene, decide whether to continue your partnership, and, if so, whether there are other organizations you could include as partners.
- Join the RCP Network and take advantage of the resources and knowledge of its member RCPs.
- In the near future, develop a strategic conservation plan with focus areas based on best available science and data sets.
- Continue to engage the state foresters in your outreach and engagement work.
- Revisit each of your strategies and consider where improvements are needed.
- Reach out to the other RCPs including Q2C to explore collaborating on future grants.
- Consider the following sequences of events as possible templates where the land trust owns the follow-up in each case, bringing in the state forester or extension forester as needed:
 - Woodland Ambassador (WA) recruitment, Woods Forum, sit-down meetings with land trust staff and or forester, land trust leads follow-up.
 - WA recruitment, Woods Forum, Estate planning event, meet with land trust and attorney.
 - WA recruitment, Neighborhood Landowner Meetings, meetings with land trust and attorney to discuss conservation opportunities.
 - WA recruitment. Train foresters in Silviculture for the Birds. Produce Pioneer Bird Habitat Assessment on WAs' lands. Have a Bird Workshop with Tours of Assessed Lands by WA landowner. Develop additional Bird Habitat Assessments. Set up one-on-one meetings between landowners and foresters/NRCS state conservationists. Conservation and or Management Plan completed and Implemented. Continued follow-up by land trust staff and state forester. Land entered into current use, and or conserved with an easement.



1.32 Recommendations for the North East State Foresters Association and other State Foresters and their Agencies

- Support the continued involvement of your state foresters in the work of these four RCPs.
 - Fund the development of peer-to-peer education and actively engage networks of family forest owners throughout your state.
 - Encourage the RCPs to apply for Landscape Scale Restoration grants themselves or in partnership with other RCPs.
 - Find ways of sharing the lessons and results of this Initiative throughout the Northeast region, and beyond.
 - Continue to look for ways to partner with the RCPs in your states to achieve shared objectives. Consider attending the RCP Network Gathering each fall to stay engaged with this important community.
 - Work with RCPs as a means for engaging with other state and federal agencies to access resources or to have a positive impact in high priority areas.
-

1.33 Recommendations for the USDA Forest Service Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry

- Explore ways of working with RCPs and the RCP Network to advance the stewardship and conservation of large forested landscapes in high priority resource areas. Help RCPs access and use GIS data layers including: prime forest soils, current use parcels, areas threatened by development, pests and disease, areas of high forest productivity or “wood baskets,” and distressed watersheds. The U.S. Forest Service might be able to provide valuable input to RCPs’ prioritizations by delivering accessible science and information similar to the North Atlantic Landscape Conservation Cooperative (NALCC). The USFS might be able to provide experts and or educational programming and training in watershed protection, climate change adaptation, forest-based economic development, and on effectively partnering with the forest products industry.
- Continue to support the development of landscape-scale approaches to conservation and stewardship challenges. Promote approaches that take advantage of the immense capacities already in existence in the form of peer landowners, landowner networks, land trusts, and regional conservation partnerships (RCPs) that together cover over 55 percent of the forests of New England. The U.S.D.A. Forest Service and states need to increase funding for peer-landowner leader training like Coverts and Keystone Programs while Congress needs to increase funding for the Forest Legacy Program for New England and New York.