

Massachusetts Forest Update

November 2017

Nominate Someone you know for MFA's new [Forest Voices Series!](#) (Or Nominate Yourself !)

We are the forest economy. MFA advocates for a strong, sustainable forest economy. But what does that mean? It's us! Our jobs, our families, our homes, our communities, our businesses. The forest economy is all of us. If you: own a few acres or a few thousand acres of family forestland; work in the woods as a logger, forester, wildlife biologist or land manager; process wood products in a sawmill, woodshop, or a paper mill; use wood to heat a business, your home, a school, or to provide process heat for an industrial application or to generate electricity; manage public or private lands for wildlife, timber production, water protection, or privacy - MFA advocates for you each day.

We'd like to showcase the people behind our message. MFA is creating a new series of Forest Voices profiles and we need YOUR help! These profiles will celebrate the people at the heart of the forest economy.

Please take a moment to tell us about yourself or someone you know in the forest economy. It won't take long. We'll reach out to nominees who are chosen for the series.

To nominate yourself or another person for consideration, [Click Here](#)

Ask an Expert

Got a nagging question? A serious one, or a casual one? Think that others might have that same question?

Send an e-mail to our executive director with "ask an expert" in the subject, and we'll try and identify an expert, ask them the question, and publish their answer in the next Forest Update. Depending on the complexity and the subject it may take us a little while to find the right expert and the answer, but this is a service we frequently find ourselves doing for members, and we think it would be great to bring the answers to more common questions back to all of you.

To submit your question, send e-mail directly to nletoile@massforestalliance.org.

MFA Forest Wildlife Habitat Seminar draws Overflow Audience



Jeff Ritterson talks about habitat needs for birds[/caption]

Can we have too much mature forest? How can we provide sufficient habitat for wildlife species which are being crowded out by our ever-maturing forests. What steps can land managers take to create more diverse habitats in our forest landscape?

Those were some of the questions examined at a well-attended *Forest Wildlife Habitat Seminar* that the Mass Forest Trust and the Ruffed Grouse Society held in Plainfield and Hawley on November 2nd for foresters, land managers and representatives from state and federal agencies. High demand and limited seating capacity forced MFT to limit the number of invitees.

The morning session heard presentations from John Scanlon from Mass Wildlife, Jeff Ritterson from Mass Audubon, Andy Weik from the Ruffed Grouse Society, and Bill Leak and Mariko Yamasaki from the U.S. Forest Service, on the current state of wildlife in Massachusetts woodlands and how the current mix of forest stands doesn't provide enough habitat for birds and wildlife species that depend upon grassland, shrubland and early forest growth to live and breed in.

Where 40 percent of woodlands after the 1938 hurricane were in the young forest stage here, today just 4 percent of Massachusetts' 3 million acres of forests are in the early growth stage that species like ruffed grouse, New England cottontails, and rufous-sided towhees need, far less than

the 10 percent target for these open habitats. The light selective harvesting that is most commonly done doesn't generally create large enough openings in the canopy to allow sufficient herbaceous growth of food plants and cover these species depend upon.

Complicating the problem is the fragmentation and small parcel size of many privately owned woodlands here, the added cost that making larger openings entails due to the large number of low value trees that would need to be cut, and the limited markets for the low grade wood that clearing such forest openings generates in large volumes.

Ideal management would create a patchwork of age classes and habitats across the landscape by cutting large enough blocks and openings every 10 years or so, researchers said. Rather than re-cutting such blocks when the stands grow past the early successional stage, it would be better and more cost effective to cut new openings and allow previously cut openings to continue to grow to maturity. To reach the 10 percent target for open habitats, more than 10,000 acres of such openings would need to be created every year across the state.

In the afternoon field portion of the workshop, participants visited two Hawley woodlands, one belonging to the Mass Forest Trust that had 30 acres of ice-damaged trees clearcut with funding from a Mass Wildlife Habitat Management Grant to regenerate the forest and provide new forest habitat, and a second woodland now on Mass Wildlife property that had large openings cut 13 years earlier. Attendees could see how the forest has regrown and how neighboring stands might be considered for new openings now.

Restoring a Degraded Forest Tree Farm Tour in Ashfield December 3rd



How do you improve a degraded woodland to let it grow higher quality trees? What can you do to restore a forest that has been previously high-graded? Can you improve wildlife habitat at the same time you improve the potential for better timber?

Those are the questions that will be discussed at a Tree Farm tour on W. D. Cowls' Stanley lot in Ashfield on Sunday, December 3rd at noon. Cowls bought the 237-acre Stanley Lot in the 1950s after it had been high-graded by a previous landowner. They let the forest regrow, and in 2011 and 2012, Cowls foresters set up a timber harvest on much of the property to remove poor quality trees and create conditions for regeneration. The seed tree harvest, which included a few 4-acre patch cuts, was intended both to create conditions for diverse regeneration and provide early successional habitat for wildlife.

Cowls forester Jacob Macko will lead the tour. Attendees should meet at the eastern landing on the south side of Route 116 about 1 mile from the intersection with Route 112 north of Sanderson Academy.

Participants should dress for the weather and wear sturdy boots and heavy pants to hike along skid roads on uneven terrain for about a mile. The tour will be cancelled in event of heavy rain or snow.

Wood Energy News

Woodstove Change-Out Program Successful



The Mass CEC

Woodstove Change-Out program has just completed its fifth year. The 2017 program awarded over \$700,000 to nearly 450 residents across Massachusetts for changing out their old, polluting non-EPA certified wood stoves, and replacing them with new, low emission wood and pellet stoves. This represents a 45% increase in participation compared to 2016.

The program aims to make clean energy technologies like modern wood and pellet stoves available to customers across the income spectrum by offering increased incentives to income-eligible households. This year, MassCEC ramped up its efforts to encourage low and moderate-income customers to participate. As a result, 33% of participants (148) received an income-based rebate, compared to 28% in 2016.

In 2017, the program offered a new “efficiency adder” to incentivize customers to seek out the most efficient new stoves. This adder enabled customers to receive an additional \$250 to \$500 if the stove they purchased met a higher efficiency threshold. A typical change-out reduces particulate matter emissions by 90 to 95%, from an average of about 40 grams per hour for old, non EPA-certified stoves, to just 2 grams per hour for new qualifying stoves.

This year, the program helped change out more wood stoves than any year since the program’s inception in 2013. If the program is funded in 2018, MassCEC can continue to help people across Massachusetts get new, cleaner stoves for their homes!

Want to Change-out your Outdoor Wood Boiler?

Mass CEC has expanded its residential and small-commercial biomass heating program to provide an additional \$6,000 rebate for removal of old outdoor wood boilers when replaced by high-efficiency cordwood or pellet boilers.

Many older outdoor wood boilers are inefficient and contribute significantly to local particulate matter air pollution.

This rebate will be available to residents, farms, and businesses who remain interested in heating with biomass, but would like to upgrade to a higher efficiency and cleaner technology. New York has implemented a similar program to help address rural air-quality issues, and Massachusetts will use NY’s list of qualifying high-efficiency cordwood boilers.

For information, see www.masscec.com

Smaller Wood Boilers Do Not Need ASME Certification

On October 12, the Massachusetts Board of Boiler Rules determined that it does not have authority to require American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME) certification on residential boilers with less than 200,000 BTU/hr output.

Previously, the board required manufacturers to build boilers to the ASME specification, which manufacturers say added \$2,000 to \$5,000 to the cost. A 2009 industry study found that the European safety standard meets the intent of, and is at least as safe as, the ASME requirements.

The ASME requirement has been cited as a key reason several biomass boiler companies chose not to do business in MA.

Have You Heard about the Timber Growing Contest?



The Northeast Timber Growing Contest is a friendly competition, coordinated by the NY Forest Owners Association and Cornell's ForestConnect program, where woodland owners throughout the Northeast learn to measure the growth of their forest trees to learn more about timber volume and value.

The Timber Growing Contest is designed to help improve the long-term productivity and health of small private woodlands in the northeastern forest through the engagement of landowners and forestry professionals in a process that includes education, research, technology transfer, and friendly competition.

The contest grew from a recognition that many forest owners take pride and see value in growing the best quality trees possible on their property. The contest provides an opportunity to

encourage, reward, and recognize these owners. Growing nice timber is one element of good stewardship in northeastern woodlands, often reflecting success in controlling deer impacts, reducing interfering vegetation, and practicing good silviculture.

For more information about the contest and how you can take part, go to <http://blogs.cornell.edu/netimbercontest/>

VPA Program: Landowners in 28 Towns Eligible for Compensation for Allowing Public Access for Designated Wildlife/ Recreation Activities



Is part of your property a hotbed for wildlife? Have you recently done work to enhance wildlife habitats on your land? Would you be willing to have the public visit your property to enjoy wildlife?

If so, you may want to investigate the new Voluntary Public Access (VPA) program for private landowners in northwestern Massachusetts. VPA will pay cooperating private landowners to allow public access on their lands to allow wildlife viewing, hiking, fishing and hunting. Landowners can receive a payment of \$50/acre to allow public access for a ten-year period on their land, or \$35/acre if they don't allow hunting.

Land in the following towns may qualify for VPA payments:

Berkshire County: Adams, Cheshire, Clarksburg, Florida, Hinsdale, New Ashford, North Adams, Peru, Savoy, Williamstown and Windsor

Franklin County: Ashfield, Buckland, Charlemont, Colrain, Conway, Hawley, Heath, Leyden, Monroe, Rowe, and Shelburne

Hampshire County: Chesterfield, Cummington, Goshen, Plainfield, Williamsburg and Worthington

VPA is being funded by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) through the Franklin Land Trust, in partnership with the Berkshire Natural Resources Council, Massachusetts Department of Conservation & Recreation, and the Massachusetts Forest Alliance.

For more detailed information about the VPA program, see www.franklinlandtrust.org/vpa

There will be an informational meeting about the VPA program for landowners and how they can take part, at the *Notchview Reservation in Windsor on January 10th, 2018 from 6:00 to 7:30 p.m.*

To learn more about the VPA program, payment rates, and other criteria, contact Greg Cox from MFA (gcox@crocker.com or 413 339-5526), or Melissa Patterson at Franklin Land Trust (mpatterson@franklinlandtrust.org or 413 625-9151).

Corps of Engineers to Scale Back Proposed Vernal Pool Restrictions

The New England District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has recently agreed to significantly reduce the vernal pool protections contained within the proposed Programmatic General Permits for Massachusetts (MA GP). In the final public comment draft of the MA GP, the Corps has eliminated the proposed 750-foot buffer zone around vernal pools.

The Corps originally sought to impose a proposed single New England General Permit for all six states that was withdrawn in 2015 after protests by the New Hampshire Homebuilders Association. The Corps then proposed a 750 foot buffer zone for vernal pools in the 2015 draft Massachusetts General Permit. This was opposed by the Home Builders & Remodelers Association of Massachusetts and the National Association of Home Builders. If implemented, the 750 foot buffer would have put 900,000 additional acres of uplands in Massachusetts under Corps jurisdiction, requiring Corps permission for activities within those zones.

The final MA General Permit, which implements an expedited review process for activities in the Corps jurisdiction pursuant to Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899, and Section 103 of the Marine Protection, Research and Sanctuaries Act, is scheduled to be final in January, 2018.

Farm Credit East Scholarships for Future Leaders in Agriculture, Forest Products

Farm Credit East, the Northeast's largest agricultural lending cooperative, recently announced a new scholarship program for students involved in The National FFA Organization (Future Farmers of America).

This scholarship will be awarded to four students with a strong Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE), and who understand their project's impact on their future career in an agriculturally related field. Four \$500 scholarships will be awarded. Funds can be used to support the student's current SAE project or to enhance their knowledge of the agriculture, commercial fishing or **forest products** industries.

To apply, applicants must be active in their local FFA chapter and reside within the seven states Farm Credit East serves. Applicants will be evaluated on their Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE), including objectives, progress to date and project financials. Community involvement and volunteer activities will also be considered in the judging criteria. *Applications are due by December 31, 2017.*

To apply for a Farm Credit East FFA scholarship, [please visit this page](#) on the Farm Credit East website or contact a Farm Credit East branch office. For more information: contact Kristie Schmitt by telephone, (800)562-2235 or email.

Business News:

Important W-2 Filing Deadline Information

Last year, a federal law change shifted the W-2 filing due date to January 31st. The Massachusetts Department of Revenue (DOR) adopted the January 31st due date. As the 1/31/18 due date approaches, DOR would like to remind employers of the importance of filing state copies of Form W-2 and all quarterly wage reports on time.

Employers filing 50 or more W-2's are required to submit them to DOR electronically. If your business uses DOR's online system, [MassTaxConnect](#), to upload your W-2 files and your confirmation includes a "check back" message, please be sure to do so.

Last year, DOR found that many employers assumed their W-2 files were submitted on time only to find that the file had been suspended due to errors and the submission was incomplete. If you have any questions or concerns about filing your state copies of Form W-2 or any of your state tax obligations, please contact DOR at [617-887-6367](tel:617-887-6367).

MFA Forest Update: Now accepting ads, both graphic and text ! Contact MFA to learn more, or place your ad.

Upcoming Programs and Training

December 2 **MA/RI Chapter American Chestnut Society Annual Meeting – West
Whately**

December 3 **Improvement Harvest Tree Farm Tour – Ashfield**

December 8 **Safe Trucking Workshop – Campton, NH**

December 9 **Woodbank Workbee – Petersham**

December 12 **Threatened & Endangered Species and & the Private Landowner –
webinars**

January 9 **Forest Management Responses to Invasive Insects – webinars**

January 10 **Voluntary Public Access Information Meeting -- Windsor**

*Additional information about these and other events will be posted at
www.massforestalliance.net as information becomes available.*