SOT Chapter Woods Walk at Kazacos Property

On June 9th, a woods walk was held at Stacey and Jeannine Kazacos 100 acre tract in Otsego County. The woods walk offered participants insight into various aspects of both the 480a program offered by the state, and the variety of applications available for funding by the NRCS through its EQIP program. There are a number of practices that are eligible for funding through the EQIP program including forest health thinning, crop tree release, and forest trail and landings improvement. Each eligible conservation practice has a "Practice Payment Rate (PPR)" based on a percentage of the state average cost of a typical installation of that practice. In order to apply for EQIP funding the applicant must have a valid Forest Plan which has been established through either a private forester, or state DEC forester. The applicant can be in both the 480a state program, and the EQIP cost share program. To apply for EQIP funding you need to sign form NRCS-CPA-1200, Conservation Program Application. These forms are available at your local NRCS office. To find additional information on EQIP funding contact your local USDA-NRCS office, or your local DEC Forester. Information is also available online at www.ny.nrcs.usda.gov, or www.dec.ny.gov.

On hand for the woods walk was Stacey and Jeannine's forester Chris Tcimpidis, president of Bevin Forestry Services, which is located in Delaware County. Chris has many hats including forester, certified herbicide applicator, and Wildlife Biologist.

Water's edge showing herbicide line.

During the walk Chris explained many of the unique aspects of each area under the forest management plan entailed. Some areas near wetlands, or water, such as ponds, which Stacey and Jeannine have both, need special consideration in the type of herbicide used, and its proximity to the waters edge to alleviate potential dangers to wildlife. Concentrations are also adjusted depending on the species of the invasive, or competing vegetation being treated. It was noted that for removal of competing vegetation such as ferns, the requirements under the EQIP program require multiple year treatments up to three years to ensure the rhizomes, and spores already present on the forest floor are eliminated so that they do not return after the initial treatment.

On an area treated for removal of diseased beech, Chris's team had used small stem treatment with Glyphosate. Stems in this area averaged 1-3". By applying the treatment to these smaller stems, the herbicide permeated other connected sapling roots and even the larger diseased beech that generated them. Glyphosate was also used on many of the NY, and Hay-scented, ferns that covered the under story, to allow light to hit the forest floor. Chris also noted that having some beech is not necessarily bad if it was not afflicted with the "Beech Bark Disease", though it has little economic value except as firewood, or for propagation of Shiitake mushroom logs. Another reason to preserve uninfected beech is the valuable mast(nuts) they bear, loved by turkeys especially.

Stops were made at other heavily wooded old forest areas. These areas contained a very large population of Red Maple. Stacey explained that their hopes were to remove as much of the red maple which was not covered under their EQIP funding, and beech as possible, so the forest canopy could be opened, and they could plant more valuable species such as oak, and hard maples while leaving species like black cherry, which also populated the area in place.

Closed canopy allows very little light to the forest floor.

Chris mentioned that in order to control the red maple population that a different herbicide approach would be necessary since Glyphosate did not work well on removal, or controlling Red Maple regrowth. This area would require the use of Triclopyr in combination with perhaps other agents containing surfactants. Triclopyr by itself requires a certified herbicide applicator to apply, however Pathfinder II which contains Triclopyr is legal, and available for purchase by the landowner in NYS. Jerry Michael noted that simply removing the Red Maple and Beech population, and replanting new more desirable saplings, would not in itself solve the issue since the new saplings in the now open under story would be subject to browsing by deer. It would be necessary to protect these saplings from browsing by the use of tree tubes, or some form of deer exclosure. Stacey, and Jeannine are committed to doing this at the additional cost that it entails. Michael Zagata, who was among the participants, and has recently joined the NYFOA state organization as Director of Organization Development, mentioned that "replanting and protecting the effort" was one of the larger issues with the average landowner being able to take on such a reforestation effort, since many landowners could simply not afford to do this without some type of funding program from either state, or federal agency funding like those from the EQIP program. Mike mentioned that the "Empire Forest for the Future Initiative (EFFI)", would have been a great step forward in helping some landowners realize some of these reforestation goals, but it did not pass final legislative approval during the last budget session due to local government concerns over reimbursements

for loss revenues. Hopefully, we can all help by pushing our representatives for passage in the not too distant future.

Our final stop along the walk found us again in an area of wetlands where large growths of invasive shrubbery had taken over the landscape. Honeysuckle was the predominant issue in the under story of this old pastoral acreage that once was home for White Pine that had been afflicted with the White Pine Weevil which had deformed many of trees producing multi-trunk monsters that will be difficult to cut and remove.

Treated honeysuckle lies in front of a white pine with severe white pine weevil damage, noted by the multitude of trunks.

Chris and Mike spent considerable time talking about why the mature forest crown needs to be thinned. Doing so allows light to reach the forest floor and thus enable those plants that don't grow in the shade to form an under story.

Michael Zagata, speaking of Dr. Ralph Nyland, SUNY-ESF, and the path forward to sustainable regeneration.

Those plants, via the process of photosynthesis, convert CO2 and H2O into O2 and sugar - food and cover for wildlife. Thus when we open the forest crown we encourage grasses, "weeds" and brush that provide habitat for species not found in the mature forest. In other words, by managing our forest we can increase wildlife diversity. We also provide openings where the young of mature forest birds can go to feed on insects and fruits to "bulk-up" for the fall migration. Proper cutting can actually lead to an increase in the acres of "young forests' - a goal supported by DEC, Audubon and The Nature Conservancy.

We thank Stacey and Jeannine for the time they put into our woods walk at their property with the help of their forester Chris Tcimpidis to allow us a greater picture of the associated problems, and some of the solutions, and programs available to landowners toward reforestation in NY state.