

CASRI

The Central Appalachian Spruce Restoration Initiative

2011

Central Appalachian Spruce Restoration Initiative

Meeting Agendas and Minutes

Wednesday Jan. 26, 2011 - Monongahela National Forest Office - 9 a.m.

AGENDA

Please bring details of upcoming projects.

9:00 – 9:10

Introductions/Welcome

Evan Burks

9:10 – 10:45

Upcoming Projects

Private	Public	Research	Ongoing
Callen Easement	Upper Greenbrier	Photoscience validation	Seed/root collection
Beckwith WHIP	Mower Tract	WVNFS Proposals	Seedling production
Sundelin	Canaan Valley		Planting logistics/projects
Elk Headwaters Assoc.	Kumbrabow Releases		
Chestnut Woods	Cheat Mtn. Releases		
Dalen fir planting	Gauley Dist. Thinning		
Snowshoe			

-Ten Minute Break-

10:55 – 12:00

Updates & Other Business

- Native Plant/Seed Collection Subgroup Meeting
- MOU Review
- Schedule Meeting With Private Land Group
- Schedule Root Collection
- CASRI Action Plan Complete
- Restoration Approach Final Draft
- NFF Grant – Photoscience Validation
- Other business

MEETING MINUTES

Upcoming Events: April 11th-15th Greenbrier Headwaters Exclosures, April 16th-17th Cabin Mtn. Planting in Canaan, April 30th Barton Bench Planting, TBA Sundelin.

If interested in the Greenbrier Headwaters Exclosure Project please contact Evan or Elizabeth. If interested in the Native Plant Production Group please contact Kent Karriker.

Our next meeting will be May 4th.

Project Updates and Planned Actions

Callen Property: Still waiting to hear back on the WVNFS Fund. Committee should be reviewing and ranking proposals over the next few weeks. Has great potential for restoration and possibility of additional small planting with LIP funds. **Action:** WVNFS Fund dependent. Small planting possible for fall 2011 with LIP.

Beckwith Elk Mtn: Group from NRCS, ARRI, TNC, and USFWS Partners met with Ralph Beckwith. Ralph agreed to initiate a WHIP project plan. Ben Collier (NRCS) is working on getting the property boundaries. The next WHIP ranking period may not be until late summer. Group will meet again in late February to discuss further planning. **Action:** Group meeting late February. Implementation proposed for fall 2011 or spring 2012.

Sundelin: This project is scheduled to move forward this spring with a small spruce planting on Sundelin's property in Wildell. Date TBA.

Elk Headwaters Association: CASRI has been providing trees for landowners for a few years now. EHA is interested in having some CASRI representatives attend a meeting this spring to discuss spruce restoration. **Action:** Schedule spring 2011 meeting with EHA.

Snowshoe: Snowshoe has expressed interest in a spruce planting project on old ski slopes or side slopes and a strip mine area. Because regeneration is so strong in this area, it might be better to allow natural processes to take place. Benefits to a project with Snowshoe would include high visibility PR, possibility

of annual donations to CASRI. **Action:** Schedule meeting with Ed Galford, USFWS, and others for late spring 2011.

Morgan: Rusty Morgan applied for EQIP money to do TSI work including red spruce release on 50 acres on his property.

Upper Greenbrier: A draft EA for Upper Greenbrier is due out next week. NEPA comment periods may take until mid-summer. Project includes 5,000 acres of spruce restoration. **Action:** Implementation will begin 2012. More public outreach may be needed for the project.

Mower Tract: Deep ripping is complete for Barton Bench. USFS received \$12,000 from the Arbor Day Foundation to fund the cost of trees. A prescribed burn is scheduled for spring 2011. Shane Jones is working with Dave Saville to plan for spruce seed sowing. AmeriCorps NCCC planting crew has been applied for. \$350,000 agreement to fund wetland work is currently being negotiated with WVDEP. Three panel interpretive kiosk has been ordered with Brownfields money. NEPA for larger Mower Tract will begin soon. **Action:** Planting/media day scheduled for April 30th. Work on interpretive panels will begin next month. Need to schedule public outreach meetings for larger Mower Tract planning.

Canaan Valley NWR: Cabin Mountain planting planned for spring 2011. This will be on the north facing slope of Cabin Knob. Possibility of a road decommissioning project in fall 2011. Planting locations are becoming increasingly difficult for large groups of volunteers. Smaller groups will be needed to reach difficult locations. **Action:** Planting Cabin Mountain scheduled for April 16th & 17th. Need to schedule date for CASRI float trip during the week.

Kumbrabow State Forest: Precommercial releases of varying levels planned. Red spruce release currently in a sale scheduled for summer 2011. **Action:** Need to schedule a meeting this spring/summer with Kumbrabow and CASRI members to check sites for restoration potential.

Greenbrier Headwaters: WVDNR applied for a grant to do more caging and planting on Forest Service property near Dalen. Money will be used to build exclosures and fund fir and spruce production. **Action:** Planting and exclosure building is scheduled for the week of April 10th through April 14th. Those interested should coordinate with Elizabeth Byers and Evan Burks.

State Parks: Blackwater Falls State Park finished their planting this fall. Canaan Valley State Park planted more spruce to buffer Abe's Run Wetland. The parks are interested in hosting more plantings in the future. **Action:** Elizabeth Byers has offered to provide a map of suitable spruce planting sites for Canaan and Blackwater.

Cheat Mtn. Release: NEPA done on 300 acres of spruce release on Cheat Mtn. Implementation scheduled for this summer. 100 acres has been funded. 200 acres remain.

Gauley District Thinning: Jay Martin is leading a project to thin small red spruce trees in thick stands on the Gauley District.

Photoscience Validation: The West Virginia Highlands Conservancy applied for a National Forest Foundation matching award grant to fund one or two interns for spruce mapping. The interns will work to coordinate volunteer efforts and collect GPS points. DNR mapping website will go live this week. Remember there are two data sheets and CASRI group members should be collecting as much information as possible. **Action:** NFF funding expected in April. Will hire interns if funding comes through. Elizabeth Byers will send URL to group when it becomes available. If anyone needs data sheets contact Evan Burks.

Research: Nathan Beane (WVU) finished his PhD research on current and potential red spruce locations based on a variety of climate change scenarios. Contact Evan for a copy of the paper. Tom Schuler and Jim Rentch are continuing to process data from their spruce release research plots. Information should be available soon. Melissa Thomas-VanGundy will present her research on witness tree analysis today at 1 p.m.

Other Updates and Notes

Native Plant Production Group: A group dedicated to native plant materials production is being formed. Kent Karriker has developed a rough estimate of native plant material needs for the Forest. This group will focus on coordination between commercial growers and seed collectors. If interested in participating please contact Kent Karriker (kkarriker@fs.fed.us). The group will be scheduling a meeting soon.

Root Collection: An aspen root collection outing will be scheduled for late February. Ken Sturm expressed interest in the quaking aspen currently being grown at Alderson. An aspen seed collection will also be scheduled. Kent Karriker will follow up on information about growing resistant beech. If you would like to participate in root collection, contact Evan Burks (ejburks@fs.fed.us).

CASRI Action Plan Final Draft: The CASRI Action Plan has been reviewed and is now in final draft mode. A copy was sent to all CASRI members with corrections. If you have any comments please send them to Evan Burks before February 4th. After February 4th the document will be considered final and we will distribute.

Restoration Approach Document: The Restoration Approach group met last week to continue their edits. The document is in final draft mode and should be finalized in the next month. This document will be available shortly.

Red Spruce Website: Dave Saville has launched www.restoreredspruce.org. The website is meant to represent the red spruce restoration effort. It is not a CASRI website. Dave has done a great job getting input from group members. Please check out the site. If you have comments please contact Dave Saville.

Next meeting was scheduled for May 4th at 9 a.m.

Wednesday May 4, 2011 - Monongahela National Forest Office - 9 a.m.

AGENDA

Please bring details of upcoming projects.

9:00 – 9:10

Introductions/Welcome

Evan Burks

9:10 - 9:25

Spring Re-Cap

- Refuge Plantings
- TNC – Orders Planting
- Root Collection
- Barton Bench
- TU – TMI Plantings

9:25 – 10:45

Upcoming Funding Opportunities

- American Rivers
- NPCI
- FWS Grant for Timberline

-Ten Minute Break-

10:55 – 12:00

Updates & Other Business

- Nature Serv Conference CASRI Presentation
- WVNFS Listing
- Kumbrabow Release Sites Visit
- Seed/Cone Collection
- TNC New Climate Models
- Restoration Approach Final Edits
- Photoscience Validation
- Fall Projects

MEETING MINUTES

Please stay tuned this summer for updates on cone/seed collection and fall projects.

Spring Re-Cap

Canaan Valley Refuge – planted 2,000 red spruce trees at Cabin Mountain to expand CMS habitat. A successful canoe trip also planted an additional 100 spruce and 600 balsam fir along the Blackwater to expand riparian cover. The refuge will plan more riparian plantings in the future.

TNC – planted 2,000 red spruce to buffer the North Branch on the Orders tract. This wrapped up most of the work on the tract for now.

TMI/TU - are continuing the plantings in the Big Run area and have begun monitoring success rates of the trees. They are also working on a WHIP contract to do plantings on Back Ridge.

WVDOF – planted 2,000 speckled alder at Kumbrabow in various locations including the head of Mill Creek and on an old deep mine site.

Root collection - was conducted in February for big tooth and quaking aspen. Alderson will continue the aspen propagation efforts. Some plugs were pulled and planted at Barton Bench.

Blister Swamp - fir seeds were sent to be grown at a nursery by Amy, Shane and Elizabeth.

USFS – conducted spring plantings at Barton Bench. An NCCC crew worked for 4 weeks planting mixed hardwoods and red spruce according to the planting prescriptions. The NCCC crew was called off the project to help with disaster relief in the south. 5,000 trees remain to be planted this spring.

USFS also planted 500 spruce trees at Sharps Knob and 5,000 trees on decommissioned roads.

Funding Opportunities

American Rivers – has released an RFP for the EPA Potomac Highlands fund. The RFP is available at www.AmericanRivers.org/PotomacHighlands. This grant requires at least a 25% non-fed match and awards projects up to 300k over a 2 year time frame. Initially the group thought it would be best to submit a multi-project/partner proposal of 3 or 4 projects in our focal areas. A subgroup is being formed to hash out an application and matching funds. Proposals are due in August.

NPCI – has a grant out that requires a 1:1 non-federal match to propagate native early successional species. This funding could be used at Alderson or the State Nursery to provide native plants for Mower and other projects. Evan will work on this opportunity.

WVNFS Fund – committee funded one CASRI proposal to the WV Highlands Conservancy to support volunteer efforts and seed collection for restoration. Fund committee will be returning proposals with comments and seeking additional funds for leveraging projects.

WVNFS

Barb Douglas informed the group that the WVNFS is back on the ES list. All requirements for consultation are back on. USFWS will know if the DOI intends to appeal the decision by the end of May. If appealed, the process will take several years. If **not** appealed, it is likely they will have to re-do the recovery plan.

Kumbrabow Visits

Kent Karriker, Evan Burks, Dr. Rentch, and Josh Daniels visited Travis Miller for a tour of Kumbrabow State Forest. The group visited single tree release sites created by Schuler and Rentch several years ago. Trees were released at 33-100% canopy opening by hack and squirt methods. Results are still being gathered. The group also visited an active timber harvest for cherry regeneration where red spruce was

left in the overstory and understory and a preharvest area treated for stripped maple and fern. After the next harvest, Travis will take photos of spruce trees and get baseline measurements to monitor growth at a 5 year interval.

TNC Regional Science for Resiliency

TNC is working on resiliency mapping for the Central Apps. This work will produce two products. The first will be a landscape resiliency map for climate change. The second will be an analysis of bottle necks or pinch points that will be critical areas for conservation. The maps should be released in May or June.

CASRI Action Plan Reporting

CASRI will report progress towards achieving key actions items in the plan. This reporting will be conducted annually at a CASRI meeting before the end of the calendar year. The goal of this reporting will be to keep the group focused on the Action Plan and measure progress. Reporting will also show areas that need improvement.

Seed & Cone Collection

Aspen - seed should be ready now. **Please collect aspen seed if you see any trees.**

Service Berry – and other species will be collected over the summer/fall. A seed collection calendar is being prepared. Evan will inform the group when these activities are happening.

Balsam Fir – trees could produce a bumper crop this year. Optimal collection time will be around the last week of July. Evan will help coordinate cone collections with Dave Saville. Ladders and climbing equipment will be needed. Several people will be needed to support the ladders and help carry them to sites.

Red Spruce – cones should be showing by July. If it looks like a good cone year, we will organize volunteer cone collections in October or November. The best place to collect cones will be pure spruce stands like Cass, Snowshoe, Gaudineer or Spruce Knob.

Fall Projects

USFS is working on a 400 acre non-commercial spruce and cherry release on Cheat Mountain. They will also be working on the NEPA for Lambert Run this summer. NEPA for UGN is still in the works.

John Schmidt and Evan will visit several land owners this summer to discuss the possibilities of projects for the fall.

The Refuge will conduct a planting this fall possibly in conjunction with the Timberline Home Owners Association.

Plum Creek is interested in conducting red spruce restoration projects. Possibilities for a partnership project with Appalachian Forest Heritage Area, Plumb Creek and CASRI and being explored.

The next CASRI meeting was set for August 10th.

Wednesday Aug. 10, 2011 - Monongahela National Forest Office - 9 a.m.

AGENDA

Please bring all project ideas for the next 1-3 years.

9:00 – 9:10

Introductions/Welcome

Evan Burks

9:10 - 9:25

Updates

- Monitoring Plan
- Timberline Homeowners Association
- Partnership with Snowshoe
- Communication with Southern partners
- Other updates

9:25 – 10:45

Fall project logistics

- Canaan Valley/WVU planting
- Barton Bench Wetland Planting
 - Plum Creek Planting

-Ten Minute Break-

10:55 – 12:00

CASRI Action Plan Implementation

- Review Action Plan
- List all current projects and recent past projects and how they work toward goals, objectives, and key actions (brainstorm for end-of-year accomplishment report)
- Gather ideas for future projects ; evaluate fit with goals, objectives, key actions

MEETING MINUTES

Mark your calendars: 9/17 CVNWR Planting, 9/22 Barton Bench Wetland Planting, 9/24 Plum Creek Planting. Please begin to compile your current and potential future projects.

Next meeting: November 9th.

Updates

Rapid Monitoring Plan – We have successfully collected baseline data and year-1 data for spruce planting plots at Idleman’s Run. Data is also being collected at the Blackwater Falls planting site. The monitoring plan still needs to be adjusted and finalized. It was suggested that survival counts be done by volunteers, while more technical monitoring be done by seasonal. Cathy Johnson, Marquette Crockett, and Kent Karriker will reconvene the monitoring group this fall to finalize the plan.

Timberline Homeowners Assoc. – Timberline HOA asked Ken Sturm to recommend future planting sites for the Conservancy and HOA. The Conservancy committee selected a planting location along the Blackwater that borders CVNWR property. WVHC applied for a F&WS grant to fund planting on 50 acres along the Blackwater. The project could be ready for spring 2012.

Partnership with Snowshoe – John Schmidt and Evan Burks met with Ed Galford at Snowshoe Mountain. Snowshoe is interested in becoming more involved with restoration projects. They have ski slopes that are in need of shade, an old airport/strip mine, old ski slopes, and various underplanting opportunities. Snowshoe is also interested in interpretation. Snowshoe will work on putting together a map of these locations. A project could be ready for spring 2012. It was suggested CASRI assemble a subcommittee to develop interpretation resources.

Partners in the South – NC WRC is continuing efforts to develop a seedling source. At this point it is still unclear how much capacity for planting they will have. Some locations (Balsam Mtns.) have shown poor regeneration. NC WRC has asked CASRI to provide any mapping tools we have to help them determine the best places to conduct restoration.

American Rivers Grant – TNC has applied for the American Rivers Potomac Highlands Implementation Grant. The grant would fund an easement on Pharis Knob to connect Laurel Fork Wilderness to Spruce Knob. The project would include fencing, NNIS treatment, spruce restoration, and riparian restoration. The project budget combines monies from TNC private conservation funds, Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture, an easement donation, the WVNFS fund, and American Rivers. Announcements are expected in January.

Cone Collection – Dave Saville collected Balsam cones in Canaan Valley. Cones are ready at Blister Swamp. Amy Cimarolli offered to organize a quick trip to collect them. Dave has also collected various shrub species including service berry. It was suggested that the Native Plant subcommittee reconvene to address issues surrounding collection and propagation.

Upper Greenbrier – The Greenbrier District is working through their last go around with USF&WS consultation. A decision should be coming very soon. The District is beginning to think about how to sequence implementation.

Fall Projects

Canaan Valley NWR 9/17 – CVNWR is planning to plant trees along ski trails at Whitegrass. The planting will involve Adventure WVU again. More details are being formed, but mark your calendars.

Barton Bench Wetland Planting 9/22 – The Barton Bench project is near completion. Contractors built over 100 vernal pools and wetlands. The district still needs to get native plants in around the wetlands. This will be a day for anyone who has yet to see the project site or is interested in touring the completed wetlands. Details will come soon.

Plum Creek Planting in Webster 9/24 – Plum Creek has been interested in planting red spruce in riparian areas and on strip mines. This fall they will be buffering a riparian corridor with the help of AFHA AmeriCorps and a few thousand spruce trees. It would be great for CASRI members to have a presence at this event.

Action Plan Implementation

Year-End Successes – In order to build on our successes, we need to document them. Documentation of progress towards goals will help CASRI build a picture of our achievements. Evan will send out an email asking project leads to provide details of projects that achieved objectives or key actions from the Action Plan. Evan will assemble these into some sort of year-end report.

Future Priorities – In addition to the yearly report, CASRI will focus on future implementation of projects that fit into the goals and objectives of the Action Plan. The group already knows what is coming in the near future (Upper Greenbrier, Mower, etc.). Now we need to determine how these projects fit into our broader goals. The group must also develop a list of potential projects for the future that will help us reach our goals. This list should be completely unrestricted and totally exhaustive. From this “wish list” we can develop priorities that best fit into our goals. Evan will send emails soon regarding this effort.

Wednesday Nov 9, 2011 - Monongahela National Forest Office - 9 a.m.

AGENDA

MEETING MINUTES

*Reply Due: **November 30th**, Please review CASRI 2011 Accomplishments and report additional items we missed under the appropriate goal and key action from the Action Plan. Because this is the first time we've done this, accomplishments should be **to date** and **calendar year 2011**.*

*Reply Due: **November 30th**, Please review CASRI 2012 Goals and identify upcoming projects, what support specifically is needed from the group to accomplish the project, and who will be the lead on the project.*

Email both documents to Evan. Evan will compile the results and begin developing a work plan for 2012. Work plan will be completed by December 23rd.

Group worked through Goal I and II identifying accomplishments and upcoming needs.

Stephanie identified MNF soils accomplishments and recommended actions for CASRI to take to get more involved. It was decided a small ad-hoc group would be formed to further coordinate these efforts and CASRI actions.

Jason-2012. Ecological site specialist new role with NRCS. Mapping project of NRCS with some supporting funding from Stephanie, will be put into spatial data. Jason will need technical specialists from stakeholders to make this happen.

Steve Keller's Talk

What can CASRI do?

Need old 'native' historical populations of spruce

Maybe folistic epipedons-thick O horizons, can indicate the sites of historic soils (one under hemlock, highly correlated to spruce)

NHP can send him the cores/aged stands, can ID old trees in those stands

Remember can't use size to ID old tree

Outplanting of some of their tree seedlings to test variability

TNC has old aerial photos of red spruce available from 1936

Kevin Potters balsam fir migration paper

Input/support on how their research will support our work

Proposal for completing today's work:

Each member review remaining Actions and add to the bullets within. Identify What, where, who will do, support, who is committing to do it, what is left to be done/think about (e.g. idea not firmed up yet)

NEXT BIG STEPS

Each member send Evan their 2012 items—November 30th

Form report committee: Kent, Thomas, Andrea, Evan complete report by December 23

Ad hoc committee on soils/ecosystem services, and so on: Thomas, Andrea, Stephanie, Jason. They will schedule.

Follow up on CASRI meeting...February 8th 2012.

Idea for consideration: do we need a Steering Committee to drive things and hold things accountable?