

FIVE YEAR REGENERATION STUDY RIFCO DEMO WOODLOT CLEARCUT

By Marc Tremblay, CF



Photo at left of the western half of the two-acre clearcut showing advanced regeneration of oak sprouts, red maple clumps, and various hardwood saplings.

This is the half with retained coarse woody debris to discourage deer browse on shoots.

Photo taken by Milt Schumacher on 6/17/09.



The picture at left was taken on August 11, 2006, during the second growing season, as presented in the Fall Newsletter that year. Woody debris can be seen above the vegetation on the left. Compare to the photo above for 3 year growth response.

Photo by Milt Schumacher

Background: In March, 2005, a two-acre clearcut was established at RIFCO's Demonstration Woodlot in Foster. The eastern half of the two-acre circle was completely cleared of its slash, with all tops and larger limbs moved off to the perimeter of the circle. The western half was not cleared of slash, leaving whole tops scattered throughout, even bringing in some of the larger slash (known as coarse woody debris, or CWD) from the adjacent area, to create obstacles for browsing deer.

Photo at right of the eastern half of the clearcut area.

This half was completely cleared of debris. Compare to photo on top of previous page. Marked difference in sprout development.

Photo taken by Milt Schumacher on 6/17/09.



On August 11, 2006, within the second growing season following the March, 2005 clearcut, Milt Schumacher and I conducted a survey of the regeneration within the two areas. We utilized six 1/100th acre plots (3 in each half of the clearcut) to count all tree seedlings, and the following results are extrapolated from that count.

	Slash-free	Slash-strewn
No. Red oak	33/acre	567/acre
Black oak	NF	467/acre
White oak	NF	533/acre
Red maple	66 clumps/ac	66 sdlings & 66 clumps/ac
Am. Chestnut	66/acre	66/acre
Sassafras	967/acre	2,367/acre

The larger red oak stumps had no sprouts at all, in either area. All saplings in the slash-strewn area, as well as the witch hazel and highbush blueberry, were significantly taller and fuller.

On June 17, 2009, within the fifth growing season, six 1/100th acre plots (3 in each half) were surveyed for regeneration by Milt, Paul Boisvert, and I. These six plots were not in the exact same locations as the 2006 plots. The following per-acre results are extrapolated from that count.

	Slash-free	Slash-strewn
No. Red oak	33/ac.	67/ac.
Black oak	67/ac.	167/ac.
White oak	200/ac.	933/ac.
Red maple	33/ac.	33/ac.
Am. Chestnut	66/ac.	100/ac.
Sassafras	633/ac.	1,266/ac.
Grey birch	167/ac.	NF
Black birch	33/ac.	NF
Am. Beech	33/ac.	NF
Total/acre =	1,332	2,566

Shrubs throughout included highbush blueberry, witchhazel, blackberry, and ferns. New and problematic is the presence of a few Autumn olive shrubs and a multi-flora rose shrub in the eastern slash-free site.

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Tree Protection Ordinance

The Town Council in Smithfield, RI is currently in the process of developing a tree protection ordinance to address land-clearing for commercial development in town. As is often the case, ordinances and laws are initiated as an emotional response to a poor example of resource management.

RIFCO is in the process of commenting on the content of the ordinance and its potential to affect woodland owners. Exemptions for forestry operations in the draft ordinance still require convincing the Town Engineer that you are eligible for such an exemption. The state's Right-to-Farm Act says otherwise.

The Council has scheduled a hearing on this Ordinance for July 14th.

Regeneration Survey Results

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The trends include:

- ◆ a reduction in the amount of No. red oak (random plot locations could be a factor, no sprout clumps included in the 2009 survey);
- ◆ An increase in the amount of White oak seedlings;
- ◆ A significant reduction in the amount of sassafras saplings encountered;
- ◆ Seeding in of birch species.

Overall, the trend of vigorous advanced regeneration in the western, slash-strewn half compared to the eastern half continues, which may include the exclusion of less desirable species (birch, Autumn-olive). Establishment of oak in the eastern half is encouraging.

RIFCO MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

To support RIFCO's efforts and receive member benefits, please complete the form below and send it with your appropriate dues payment to:

RIFCO
PO Box 53
No. Scituate, RI 02857

YOUR NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

PHONE: Business _____
Home _____

DUES SCHEDULE:

- ___ Individual \$25.00
- ___ Family 35.00
- ___ Sustaining 60.00+
- ___ Non-Profit 20.00
- ___ Student 10.00
- ___ Life Membership = \$350+

Any amount over \$25.00 is tax deductible

Please take a moment to provide some information so that we can better serve your interests:

- Land owned: none(); houselot(); farm(); woodlot()
- Number of acres _____ Town _____
- If wooded, is your property currently under some form of management? _____
- Would you be interested in being contacted by a forester for some complimentary, first step professional advice? _____

What issues concern you most?
