

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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RIFCO'S SUMMER TWILIGHT SESSION TO SHOWCASE SOUTHERN NEW ENGLAND'S FIRST "SLASH WALL" INSTALLATION AT THE RIFCO DEMONSTRATION WOODLOT IN FOSTER

The RI Forest Conservator's Organization is conducting its annual Summer Twilight Woods Walk at RIFCO's Merriman Demonstration Woodlot on Howard Hill Road, at the end of Briggs Road, in Foster, RI, on Thursday, August 6, 2020, from 5 to 7 pm. Pre-registration is required for safety during these uncertain times, even though outdoor events are inherently a safe option for our gatherings. The evening will feature a review of our recent installation of a thinning, a habitat clearing, and a slash wall surrounding a portion of that habitat clearing. Our guests will include Dr. Jeff Ward of the CT Ag. Experiment Station and Dr. Peter Smallidge of Cornell University, where several slash wall projects have been established, starting in 2018.

The RIFCO Demonstration Woodlot is the northern RI demonstration site for the RI Forestry for the Birds project, and is the site of a recent forest thinning and habitat clearing project to illustrate some of the options that woodland owners can employ to attract key bird species to their properties. RIFCO has taken the extra step to establish what is now the first slash wall site in southern New England, and Drs. Ward and Smallidge will be joining us to establish regeneration study plots both within and outside of the slash wall site to monitor its success.

Slash walls are constructed instead of expensive 8 foot tall exclusion fencing to keep deer from browsing out the vegetation that should be able to develop in the forest understory. The increased deer population in southern New England, and elsewhere in the eastern US, has had a major negative impact on the forest, browsing down sprouting trees, shrubs, and wildflowers that are relied upon for wildlife habitat and a healthy, productive forest. The costs and benefits of our slash wall installation will be calculated and discussed at the workshop, and that information will be posted at www.rifco.org following the workshop.

More information on Cornell's Arnot Forest slash wall installations is available at www.slashwall.info.

The Forestry for RI Birds Program is patterned after similar efforts in other states, where bird habitat assessments are incorporated into the Forest Stewardship Plans of private woodland owners. The Program includes workshops for the foresters who prepare these plans and the subsequent forest thinning operations, with the goal of providing diverse bird habitat conditions along with improved forest productivity. It is a program funded by the USDA-Natural Resource Conservation Service through the RI Resource Conservation & Development Council (RC&D).

The RIFCO Summer Twilight Walk is free of charge, but registration is required in order to limit attendance for proper social distancing. Registration is available by contacting RIFCO at info@rifco.org, or by calling us at (401) 568-3410.

The RI Forest Conservator's Organization is a statewide, non-profit organization dedicated to the protection and wise use of Rhode Island's forest resources. RIFCO is also a co-sponsor of the RI Tree Farm Program, and an affiliate of the National Woodland Owner's Association.

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