

THE FOREST CONSERVATIONIST

A Publication of the Rhode Island Forest Conservator's Organization, Inc.

ANNUAL ACTIVITY UPDATE 2022



**RIFCO is an affiliate of the National Woodland Owner's Association
& co-sponsor of the RI Tree Farm Program**

Lifetime Achievement Award: Hans T. Bergey

Mr. Bergey started his forestry career at Providence Water in 1959, following his graduation from Penn State and the Yale Forestry School. For the past 63 years he's been actively involved in all manners of the forestry community here in RI, especially with the RI Tree Farm Program and the Society of American Foresters.

A mentor for many of the foresters that have worked here in RI, RIFCO honored him with this first ever special recognition.

The award was presented to Mr. Bergey by Chris Modisette, who himself just recently retired from the USDA-NRCS, and Marc Tremblay, pictured on the right.



RI Outstanding Tree Farmer of the Year Award

Ken Mitchell, of Level Best Farm in Richmond, RI.

At left, Ron Fasano presents the annual OTFY award to Ken and his daughter and granddaughter at the RIFCO/Tree Farm Annual dinner at the WG Elks Hall.

A Tree Farmer since 1975, Ken has been managing about 100 acres of woods in the Alton village area of Richmond for multiple benefits. He hosted the 2022 RIFCO Spring Program.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By William Fortune

Looking Back on 2022 and Looking Forward to 2023

I am happy to report back to you that RIFCO had a very good year during 2022 and we are working toward making 2023 just as good if not better. Starting with our Winter Workshop Series during March of 2022, we held a series of lectures and held a portable sawmill demonstration at RIFCO's Demonstration Woodlot. The highlight of the Winter Workshop was on Biochar where the focus was on educating our members on the science of biochar along with its wide-ranging application benefits. Our hope is that we can generate some enthusiasm that will lead to biochar's increased profile, production and use here in Rhode Island. Since then, we have launched our biochar-ri.org website, and we have been working with a URI student to research the potential applications and feasibility of biochar production and use here in Rhode Island.

We had our Spring Program at Ken Mitchell's property in Richmond, and we held our Summer Twilight Walk at George Washington Management Area, where we viewed the RI DEM's recently constructed slash wall surrounding a habitat clearing.

We resumed our Annual Dinner Meeting on November 18, 2022 after a two-year hiatus. It was great recognizing our award recipients and to see those of you who participated.

We have continued to maintain and implement various practices at our Demonstration Woodlot and are in the process of applying for additional federal funding through the USDA to fund additional forest management practices there. These are some of the obvious things that RIFCO did during 2022.

However, much of what RIFCO does is done behind the scenes by our Board Members. We are at monthly Rhode Island Woodland Partnership and Rhode Island Forest Conservation Commission meetings where we have a significant voice in determining forest conservation policy within Rhode Island. See the next page for more information on those efforts.

We partner with the Rhode Island Tree Farm Program and with Rhode Island's Conservation Districts on policy and programs. We keep informed on state and federal policy issues that affect local forest issues and attend legislative hearings to give our voice.

Recently we have been partnering with various representatives of Rhode Island's loggers, wood product producers and arborists with the formation of an organization that will unify and promote those industries.

2022 marked our first year of totally replacing our quarterly paper newsletter with our monthly digital E-News as a means of keeping our members informed of what RIFCO is engaged in, along with other forest conservation issues that are pertinent to us. Hopefully you have been opening and reading your E-News and hopefully you are sharing them with a friend. Moving forward, the RIFCO Board of Directors decided we would prepare an annual report as a substitute for our quarterly paper newsletter. Hopefully you will enjoy this and find it informative.

For 2023 RIFCO is planning on doing much of what we have been doing in the past. You can look forward to our winter workshop sometime in March where we hope to focus on the business of woodlot management.

As mentioned, we have a long-term commitment to promoting the production and use of biochar here and we hope to move forward with our objective.

As always, we want to hear from our members on issues that they feel RIFCO should be focusing on. The reason RIFCO does what it does is primarily due to our membership and its commitment to our Mission. I can say with confidence that RIFCO has made a tangible positive impact over our 30+-year history. Without its members RIFCO is nothing. Without your support, participating at events and financial contributions, none of what we do would happen.

Remember our mission statement: *Promoting the protection and wise use of Rhode Island's forest resources through education and advocacy.*

Thanks to you all for making this happen.

POLICY & ADVOCACY EFFORTS

RI FOREST CONSERVATION COMMISSION

RIFCO is represented on the newly-appointed FCC to represent woodland owners. Its first meetings in 2022 focused on developing a sound definition of Old Growth Forests in response to proposed legislation to set aside large areas of public land to promote old-growth characteristics, aka Pro-forestation.

RI WOODLAND PARTNERSHIP

As a partner organization, RIFCO has participated in the Partnership's meetings to help advance the collaboration of like-minded organizations in the conservation of RI's woodland resources.

For more about the Woodland Partnership and the collaborative projects we've been working on, go to: rhodeislandwoods.uri.edu and click on Links to see the RI Woodland Partnership site.

The current hot-button topic that we've been involved with:

PROFORESTATION & OLD-GROWTH FORESTS

What is Proforestation? Proforestation is a recent preservationist movement that seeks to ban timber harvesting, logging, and active forest management—including prescribed fire and other wildfire mitigation activities—on public lands, particularly in “mature forests.” This movement cites a small body of research suggesting forests should be left to grow unmanaged by humans to maximize carbon sequestration.

What are the implications of this movement? Proforestation advocates are pushing lawmakers to set aside public lands as unmanaged, permanent reserves. If our goal is reducing atmospheric carbon, then looking only at forest growth paints an incomplete picture. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) recognizes active forest management will yield the highest carbon benefits over the long term because of its ability to mitigate carbon-emitting disturbance events and store carbon in harvested wood products. Beyond carbon, forest management ensures forests continue to provide assets like clean water, wildlife habitat, recreation, and economic activity.

Forest management provides an invaluable suite of benefits to society, including diversified wildlife habitat, essential wood products, regulation of water quantity and quality, and the ability to adapt forests to a changing climate. With its focus on carbon stored in forests, proforestation overlooks these services and fails to account for the full climate benefits of the forest sector or the growing challenge of natural disturbance emissions.

Forest management offers strategies to manage for carbon sequestration, including forest regeneration and afforestation, carbon stored in durable wood products, and improved resilience to carbon-emitting disturbances like wildfires and insect epidemics. Preservation can be appropriate for unique protected areas, but it has not been demonstrated as a solution for carbon storage or climate change across all forested landscapes.

Above information from the Society of American Foresters (www.eforester.org)

RIFCO'S BIOCHAR INITIATIVE

www.biochar-ri.org

FOREST CARBON & BIOCHAR PRODUCTION WORKSHOP VIDEOS AVAILABLE AT THE RI BIOCHAR INITIATIVE WEBSITE: WWW.BIOCHAR-RI.ORG

Below, Bob Wells of New England Biochar, Inc., on the left, demonstrates a backyard biochar cooker while RIFCO Board member Bob Verrier, right, looks on. Bob was the headline speaker at the Woodland Owner Workshop at the West Greenwich Community Center on March 5, 2022. His presentation was preceded by one about Carbon Sequestration and Storage by Christopher Riely, and was followed up by Chris Modisetter of the USDA-NRCS on their programs relating to Forest Carbon and Soil Health

USDA-NRCS has recently updated a couple of its practices under the Conservation Stewardship Program and EQIP to include soil enhancements with biochar from woody residue.

Check out the new website for the biochar initiative, where we've loaded up some information on biochar and its many uses, producers in the region, and the videos from the biochar workshop, courtesy of Zane Lewis.



RIFCO OUTREACH EVENTS

Winter, Spring, Summer and Fall, we've got them all! RIFCO sponsors winter workshops, a Spring Program, a Summer Walk, and we co-sponsor the RI Tree Farm Fall Tour every year.

In 2022, we held 3 winter workshops, including the sawmilling workshop at the RIFCO Demonstration Woodlot, with Rob Swanson and his Wood-Mizer mill (pictured below). A Spring Program walk in the woods was held at Ken Mitchell's Level Best Farm in Richmond. A Summer Twilight Walk took place in the George Washington Mgmt Area in Glocester to view their new slash wall surrounding several acres of habitat clearing, with our hostess DFE Stewardship Forester Fern Graves, pictured at right in the lower frame. And we co-sponsored the RI Tree Farm Program's Fall Tour, which was held at the Doctor's Lane properties of the Hope Associates in Hope village, Scituate. That tour was led by forester Paul Dolan and others from the RI Tree Farm Committee.



RIFCO'S DEMONSTRATION WOODLOTS

MERRIMAN DEMONSTRATION WOODLOT, HOWARD HILL ROAD, FOSTER



New England's first-ever slash wall surrounds half of the 3-acre habitat clearing we established in March of 2020. On the right in the above picture, the enclosure is stocked with sprouts and other vegetation. On the left, outside of the slash wall, the deer have browsed the ground clean. The opening is gated.

The Foster woodlot, now at 40 acres thanks to Alex and Julia Merriman, is also the northern RI demonstration woodlot for the Forestry for RI Birds project. Several thinning and habitat projects have taken place here, and additional work will be done in cooperation with the USDA-NRCS and their programs.

BUGNET DEMONSTRATION WOODLOT, WEST GREENWICH



RIFCO's pine-dominated demonstration woodlot, owned by the West Greenwich Land Trust with a cooperative management agreement with RIFCO, was dedicated to Ernest & Marie Bugnet in 2021.

Protected by a Forest Legacy easement, there is a long track record of active management on this property, and RIFCO, the RI Tree Farm Program, and the WGLT are all dedicated to continuing the active management of the pine resource while providing wildlife habitat and protecting water quality. The property is adjacent to the Big River Management Area along New London Turnpike.

Rhode Island Forest Conservator's Organization, Inc. (RIFCO),
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RIFCO Executive Committee (2023)

Officers

President William Fortune
Vice- President Richard Went
Secretary Richard Nagle
Treasurer Marc Tremblay
& Outreach Coordinator

Directors

Norm Hammond
Tom Bryson
Hilary Fortune
Bob Verrier
Bob Maguire
Mike Cavaliere

The RIFCO Board would like to thank all of our members and partners for their support, both financially and through their participation in our programs and activities.

MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

There are numerous benefits of a RIFCO Membership

Involvement

As a member, you will have the opportunity to join together with other landowners, natural resource professionals, land trusts, and industry representatives to exchange ideas, receive technical advice, and help promote action on vital conservation issues.

Publications & Workshops

You will receive our monthly digital e-news and our printed Annual Report. And you will be invited to attend meetings and workshops dealing with the cur-

rent issues in woodlot, shade tree, and wildlife management.

Technical Assistance

The RIFCO Outreach Coordinator is available for telephone and on-site assistance with woodlot management advice. Often the issues can be addressed over the phone or by email, or with referrals to other resources. There are times when your questions or your situation is best addressed in person, with a visit to your woodlot to provide an assessment.

WHY JOIN RIFCO?

- Education and technical assistance on woodlot management
- Networking with people in similar situations
- Advocacy voice on issues such as taxes and regulations
- Support forestry and agriculture in Rhode Island
- Support wise use of RI's woodland resources
- Fellowship
- Voice concerns on issues through a common medium
- Participation by landowners in the policy-making process
- Staying on top of issues and current events through receipt of monthly e-news

Are these reason enough for you to become a member of RIFCO, and to continue your support if you already are a member? Our voice on forestry issues is only as strong as our membership. Visit our website (www.rifco.org) for our membership form, and join us at our meetings.

OUR 2022 AWARD WINNERS ARE:



YOUTH FORESTRY AWARD

Westin Palumbo, of Coventry and a student at URI, accepts the 2022 Youth Forestry Award from Bill Fortune and Pete Stetson. Westin led the Coventry Envirothon Team for the past few years and in 2022 they placed 7th in the country at the International Envirothon Competition.



CONSERVATOR OF THE YEAR

Bob Verrier, at right above, accepts the 2022 Conservator of the Year Award from RIFCO president Bill Fortune at the Annual Conservation Awards Dinner in November, 2022. Bob has championed the efforts to improve training for loggers in the state.

RI Forest Conservators Organization

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