

Young Forest Habitat – Benefits and Establishment: Early Successional Habitat Management

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The young forest, shrublands...

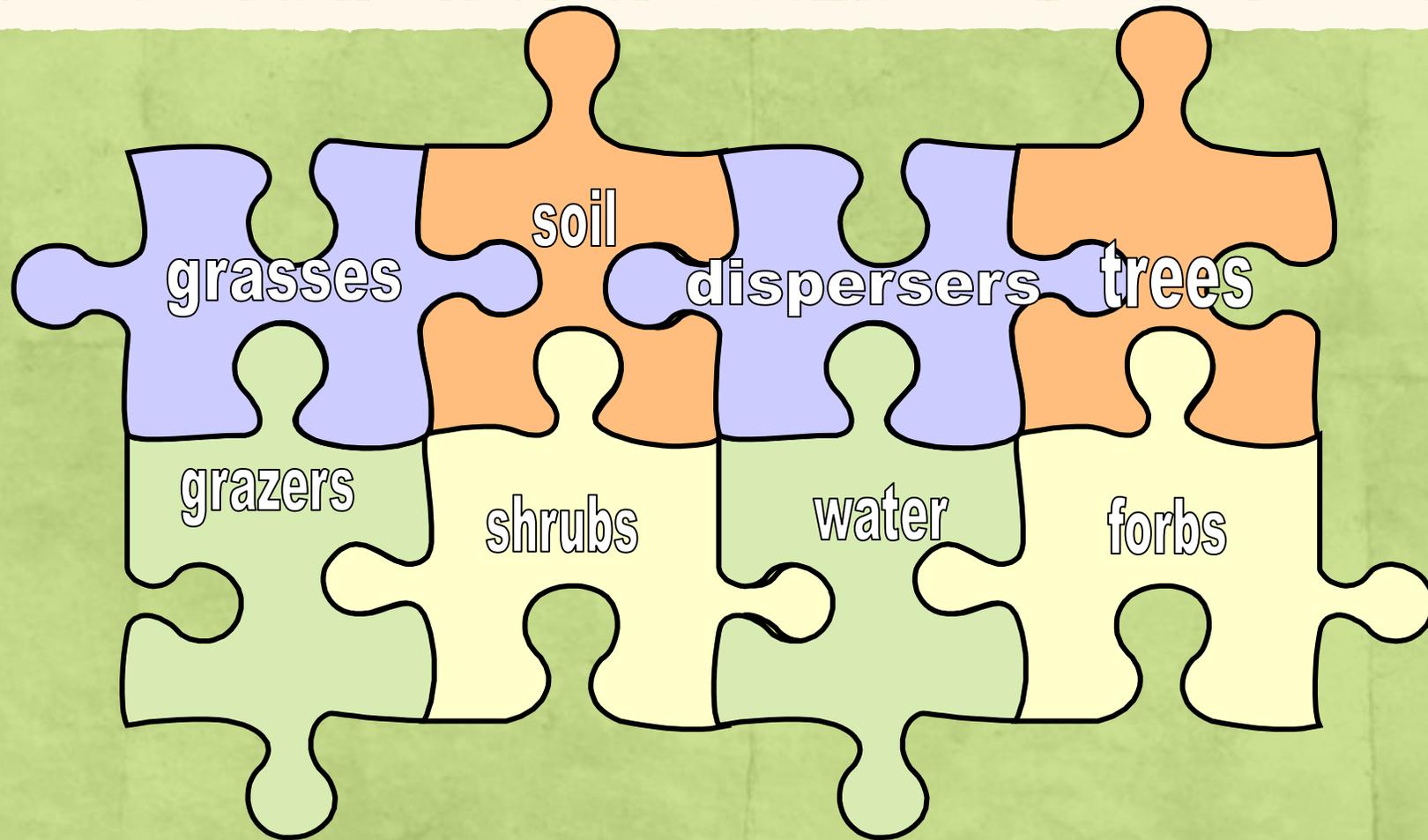
A tale of two projects...

Natural resource management at Audubon



"Things with wings..."
Plus others

Ecological restoration?

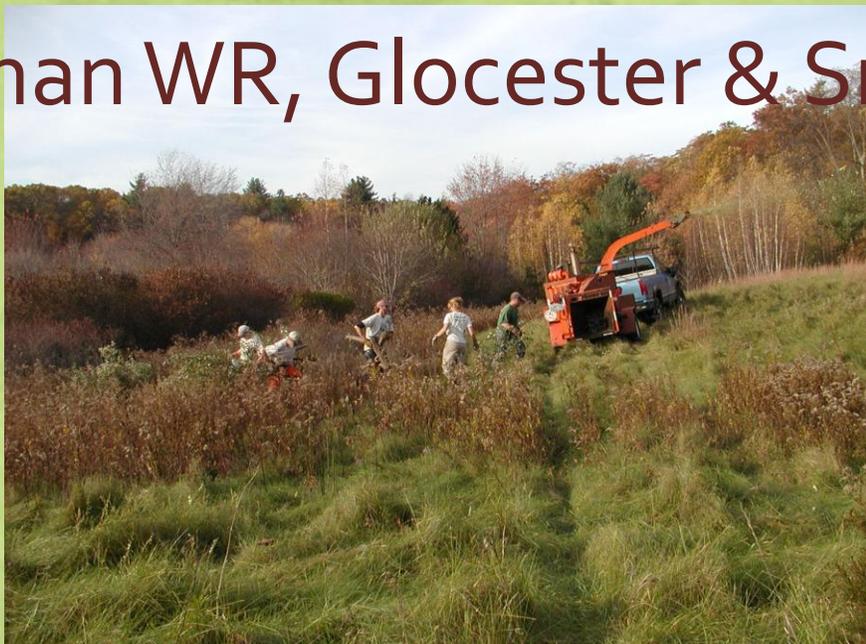


What are your goals and benchmarks?

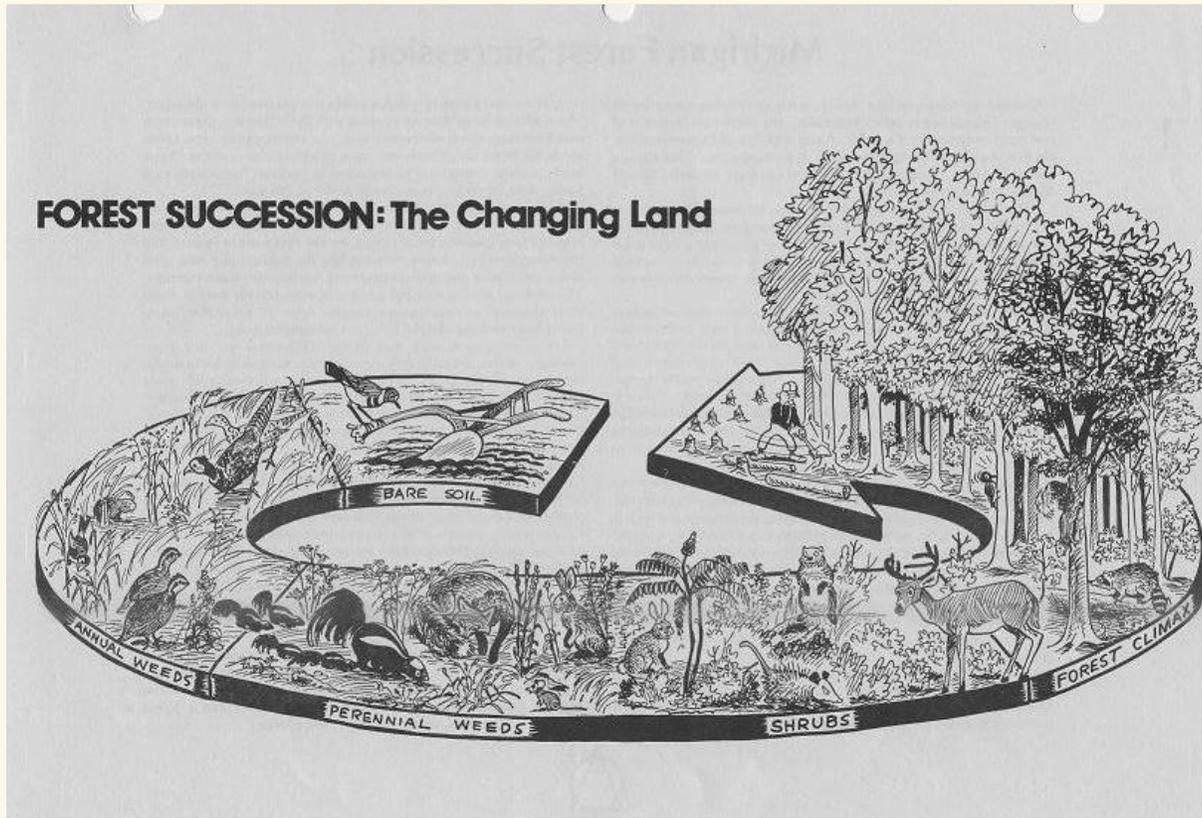
Kingston Wildlife Research Station



Newman WR, Gloucester & Smithfield



Secondary succession?

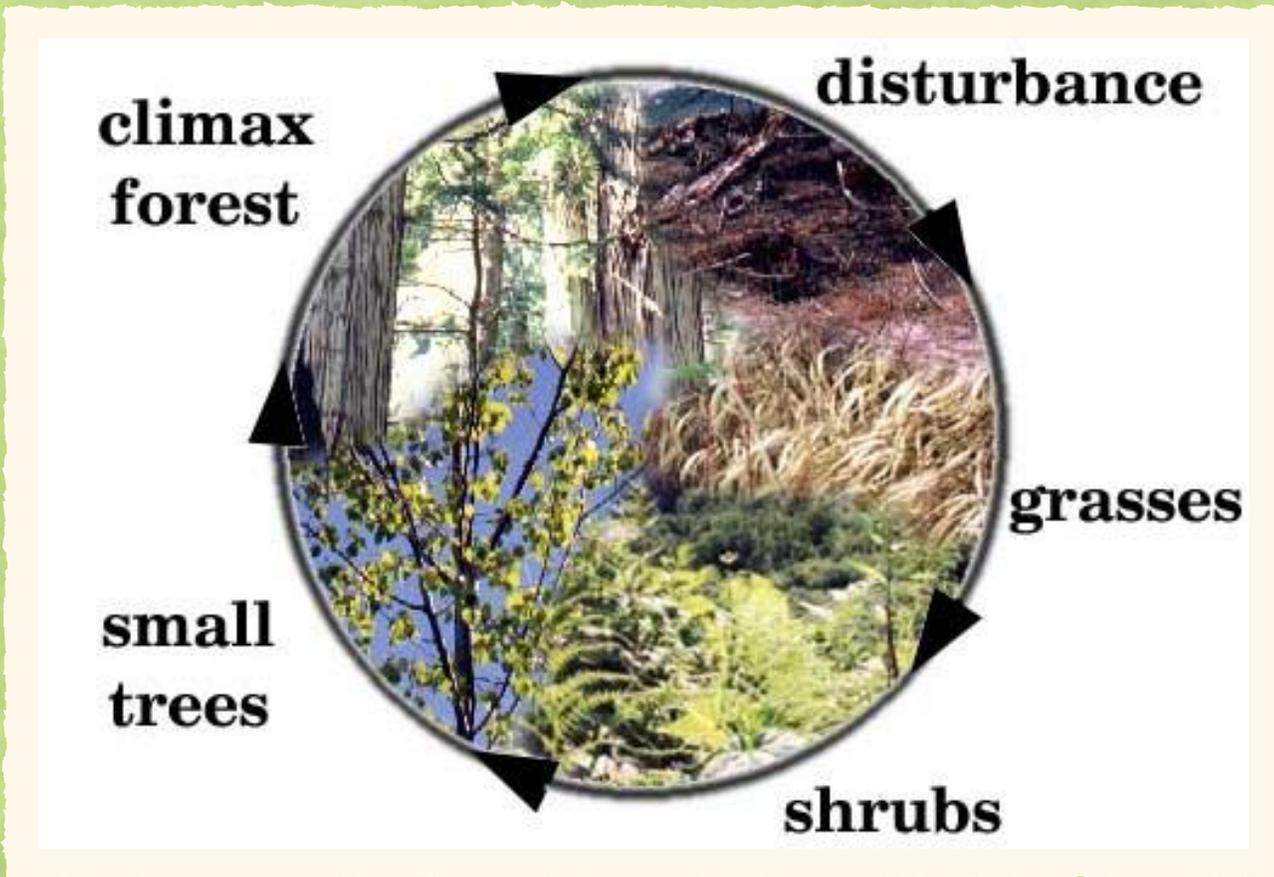


Change in species and community following a disturbance

A sequence but not always continuous

Limits, influences?

Secondary succession?



Change in species and community following a disturbance

A continuum, though seems like a series of snapshots

Dynamic versus static

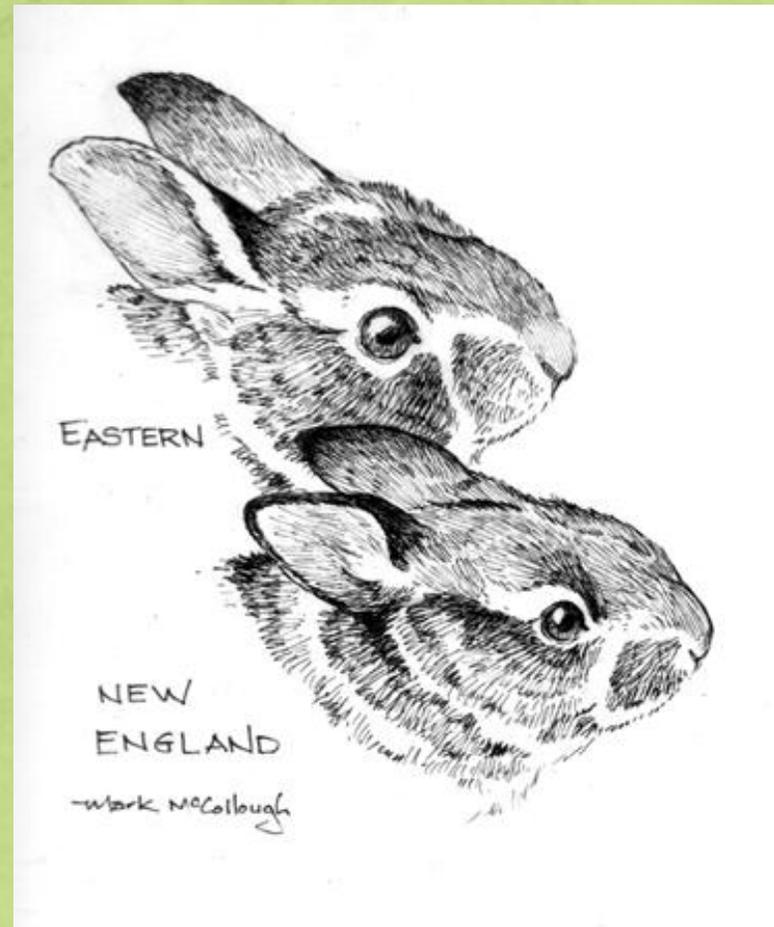
Species that thrive in the young forest habitats (or used to...)



New England cottontail
An “umbrella species”

DOI - USFWS

Cottontails?



Eastern cottontail, Wakefield, RI



“Hello, I think I saw
one...”

Species breeding, restoration and challenges?



Species that thrive in the young forest habitats



Box turtle

Black racer

Species that thrive in the young forest habitats



American woodcock

Brown thrashers

Eastern towhee

Golden-winged warbler

Indigo bunting

Prairie warbler

Rose-breasted grosbeak

Yellow-billed cuckoo

Species that thrive in the young forest habitats



Bobcat

Deer

60+/- birds, mammals and reptiles species of greatest conservation need (**SGCN**) depend on young forest and shrubland (not all in RI)

Dealing with forest edges and fragmentation



Softening, feathering edges



TNC's Carter Preserve

Restoration techniques

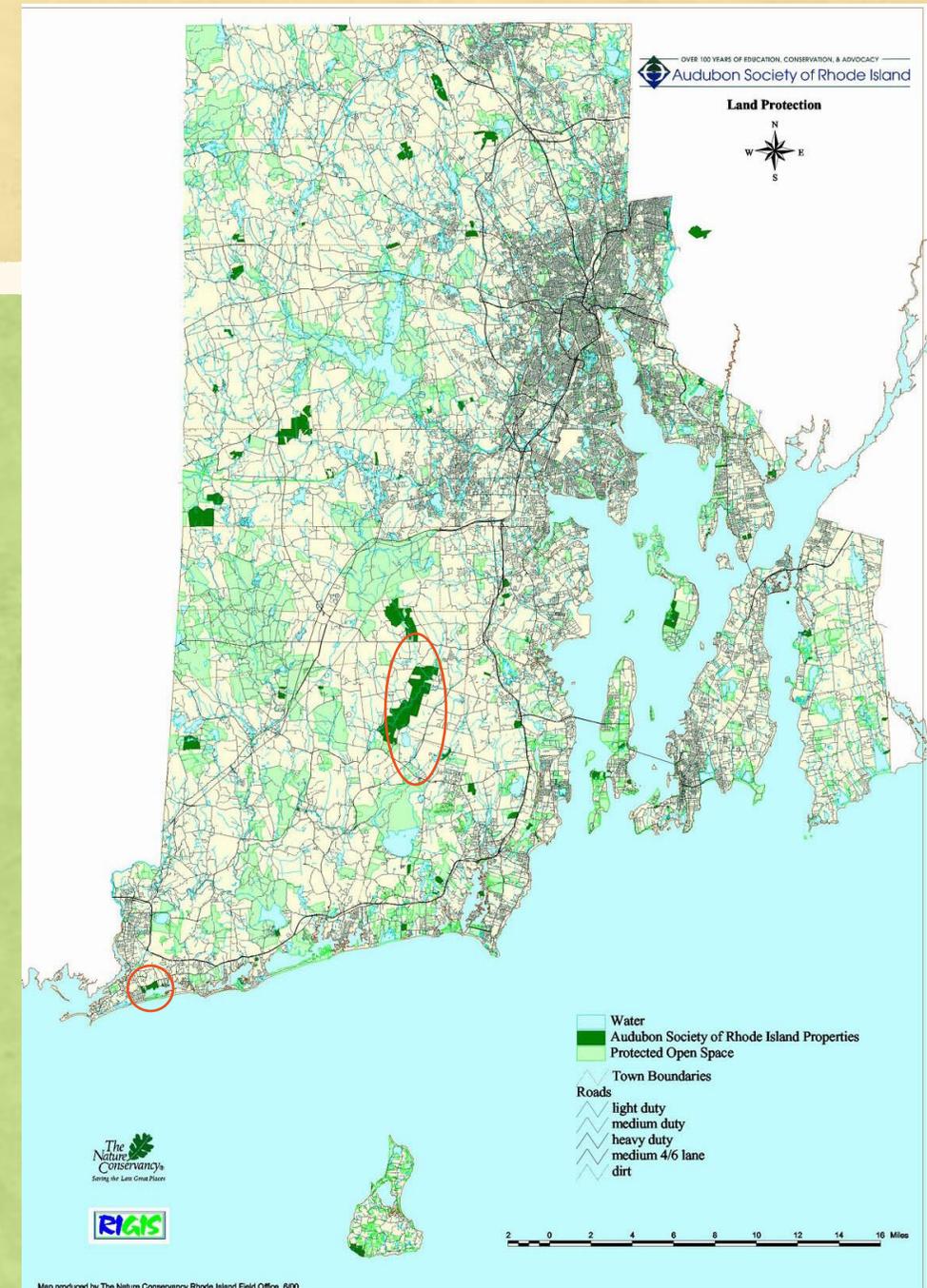
USDA-NRCS funding for
shrubland management
and creation of wildlife
habitat

The masticator



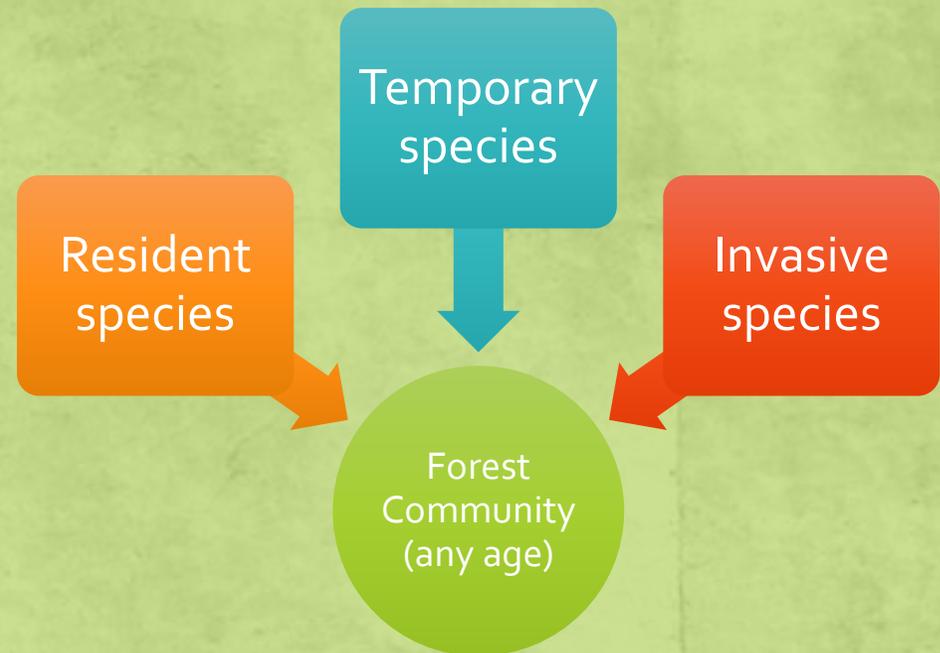
Project locations

- 2 Audubon refuges
- Vary by location, soils, habitat types, amount of invasion
- Shared goal to improve habitat for important species



The forest community

- Residents are the main matrix
- Temporary can mean seasonal *or change* over time
- Invasives vary in number and impact by site



Marion Eppley & Lathrop WRs



Main cuts 2014

Special considerations?

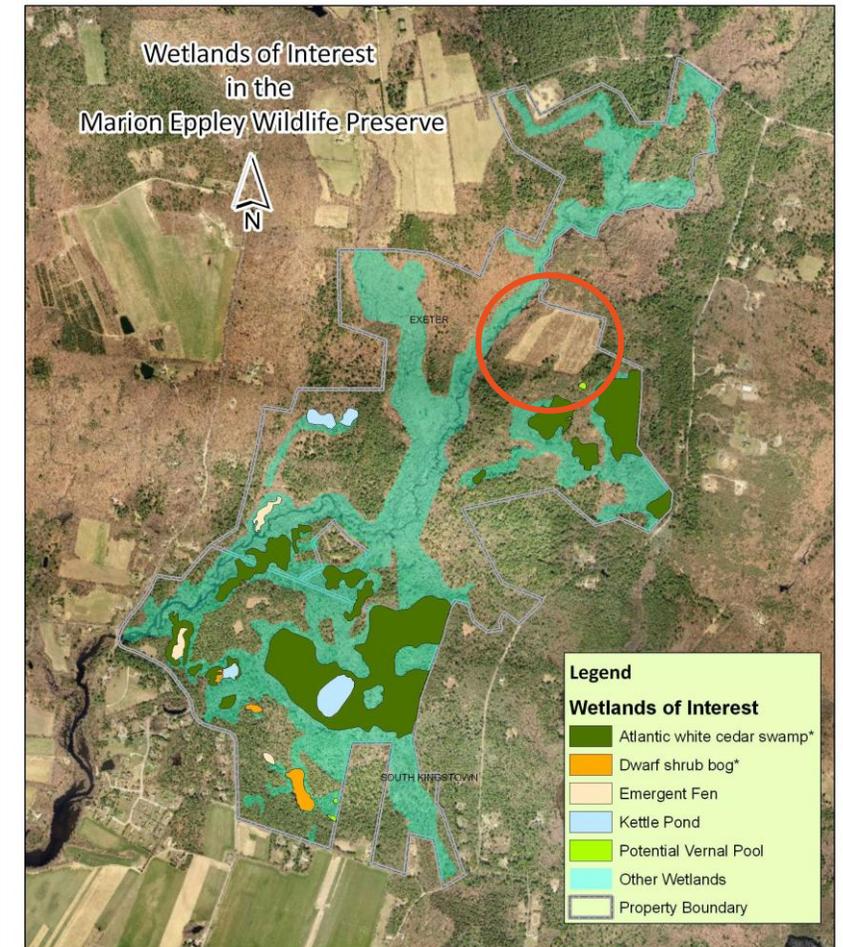
Less expensive options?

- Hand-held tools
- Volunteer work days
- Herbicide question



Case Study 1. Marion Eppley Wildlife Refuge

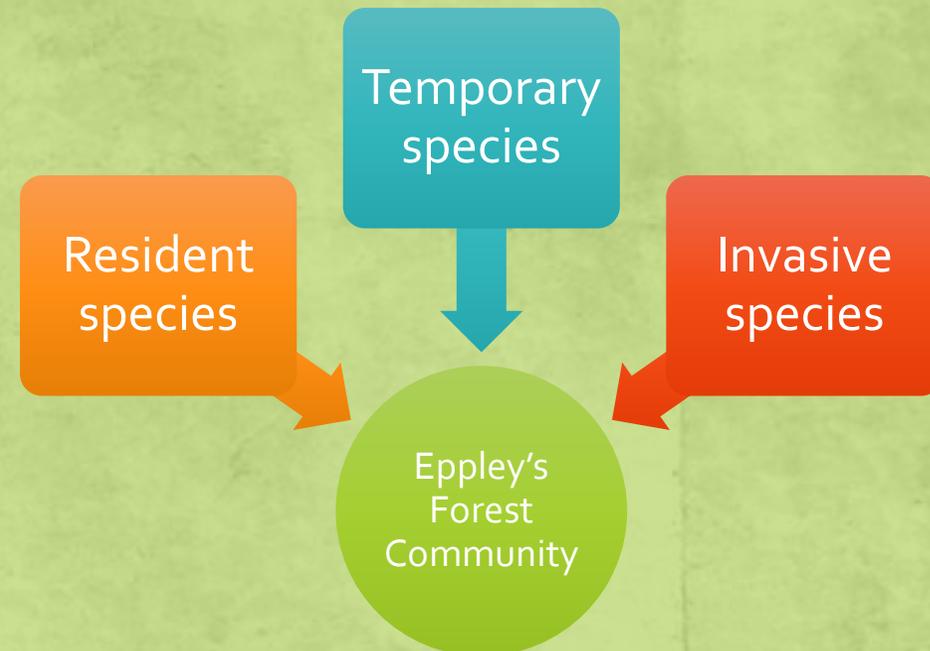
- 1100 acres of diverse forest habitat from wet to dry, extensive Atlantic white cedar swamps and floodplain forest
- In South Kingstown and Exeter
- Project site is mostly dry upland surrounding an old pasture



This map was produced for the Audubon Society of Rhode Island by the Rhode Island Natural History Survey for general identification and locations of wetlands of interest. Wetlands of interest were heads-up delineated by RINHS through photointerpretation of digital imagery; no field verifications were conducted, so identifications are unconfirmed. Other wetlands, Eppley boundaries, and backdrop imagery were derived from RIGIS (2010) data.

Eppley site's forest community

- Residents include an oak and pine mid-successional forest surrounding a managed hayfield
- Temporary species including breeding songbirds and amphibians in vernal pools
- Overly dense shrub layer with low diversity of plants, poor food quality for NEC
- Invasive plants are low



Eppley project stages

Approximately 30% canopy left, debris on ground



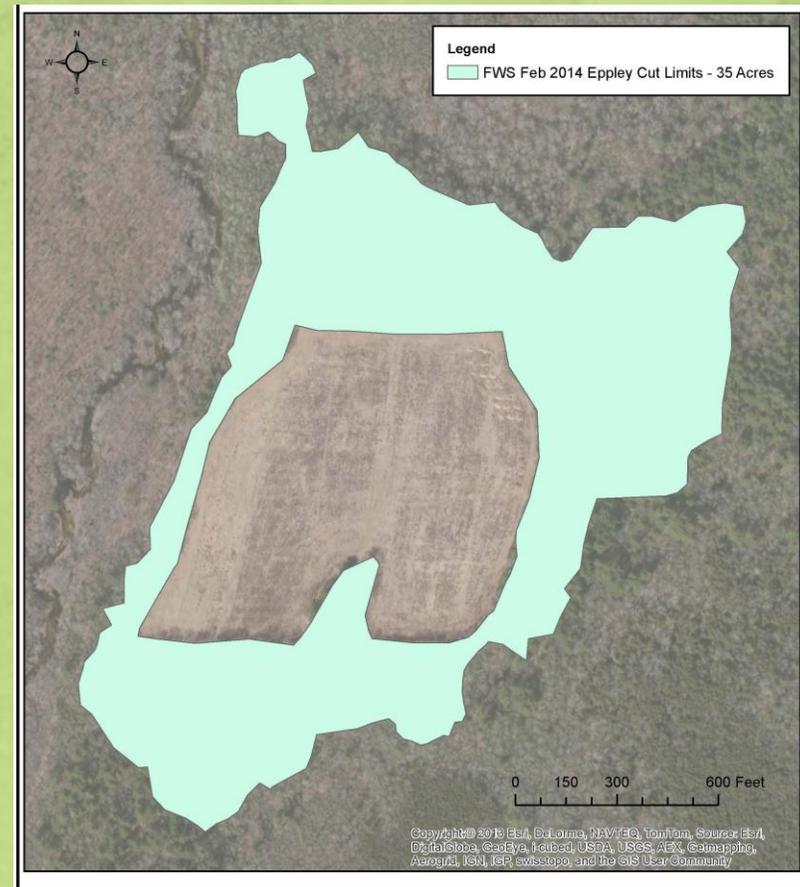
2014



2018

Some winter seeding but overall relied on seed bank and regrowth

Marion Eppley WR cut limits



Eppley project considerations and restrictions



Vernal pools



Queen River slope and floodplain

Eppley project invasive species?



Restoration follow-up and monitoring (Eppley)

Permanent camera

Birding by Audubon and
URI

Targeted plant removal,
thinning by Audubon



Measures of success?

Prairie Warbler



Eastern Towhee



Eppley project in summer 2023 and 2025



Case Study 2. Lathrop Wildlife Refuge

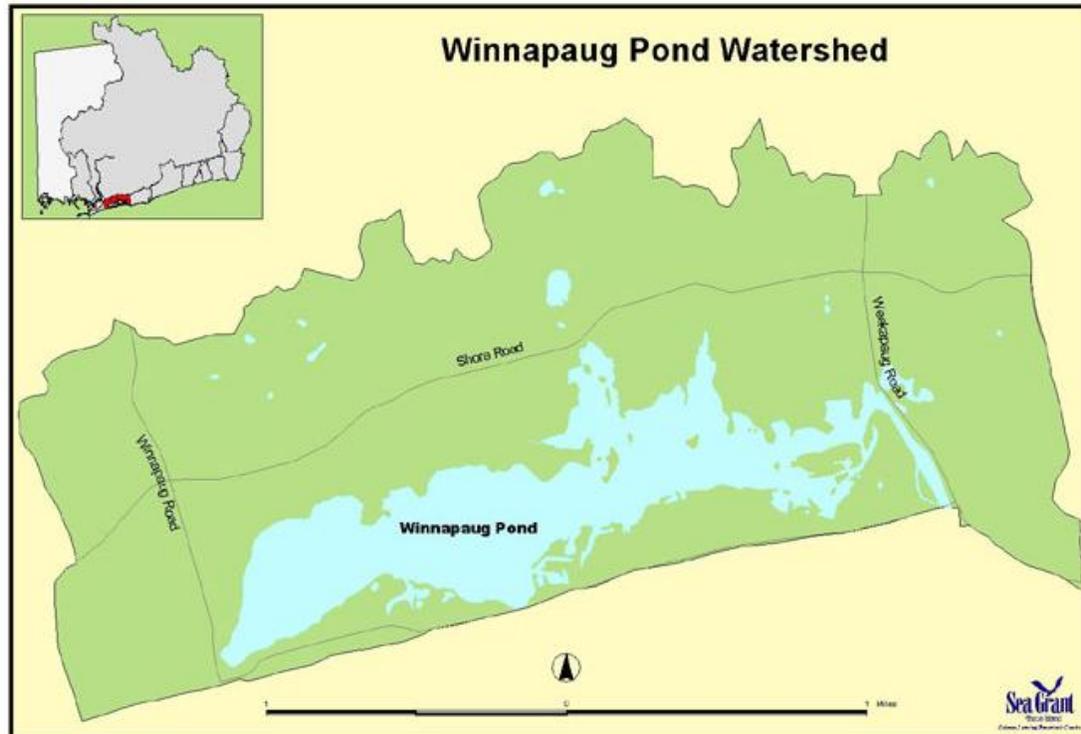


86 acres of coastal forest, red-maple wetlands, red cedars and tidal marsh in Westerly, RI

Former agricultural fields and managed salt marsh on north shore of Winnapaug pond

Historic range of NEC

Lathrop WR



Special considerations?

Wetlands

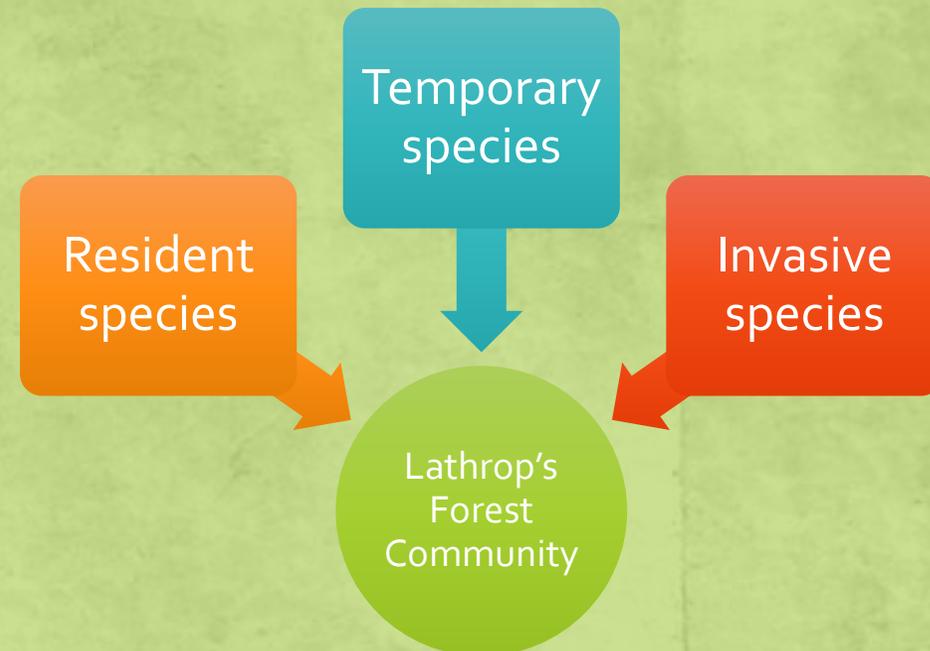
Sea level rise

Invasive trees, shrubs
and vines

Route 1A (Shore Road)

Lathrop's forest community

- Residents include large mature red maples, oaks, deer, turkeys, bobcats
- Temporary and wandering coyotes
- **Invasive woody plants!** multiflora rose, bittersweet vines, honeysuckle vines and shrubs and glossy buckthorn (growing concern)
- Historic region of NE cottontail



Lathrop restoration winter 2014



Lathrop WR cut limits 2014



The final cut

Lathrop project in 2025?



Lathrop restoration follow-up and monitoring



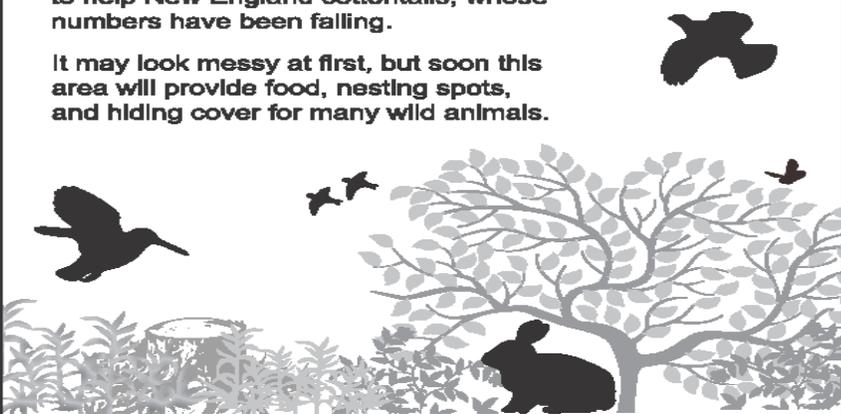
(RCPP funding for 2026)

Public relations and education?

Helping Wildlife

We're cutting trees so that shrubs and other plants will grow into a dense "young forest" to help New England cottontails, whose numbers have been falling.

It may look messy at first, but soon this area will provide food, nesting spots, and hiding cover for many wild animals.



Conservation groups and landowners are working together to help young forest wildlife.

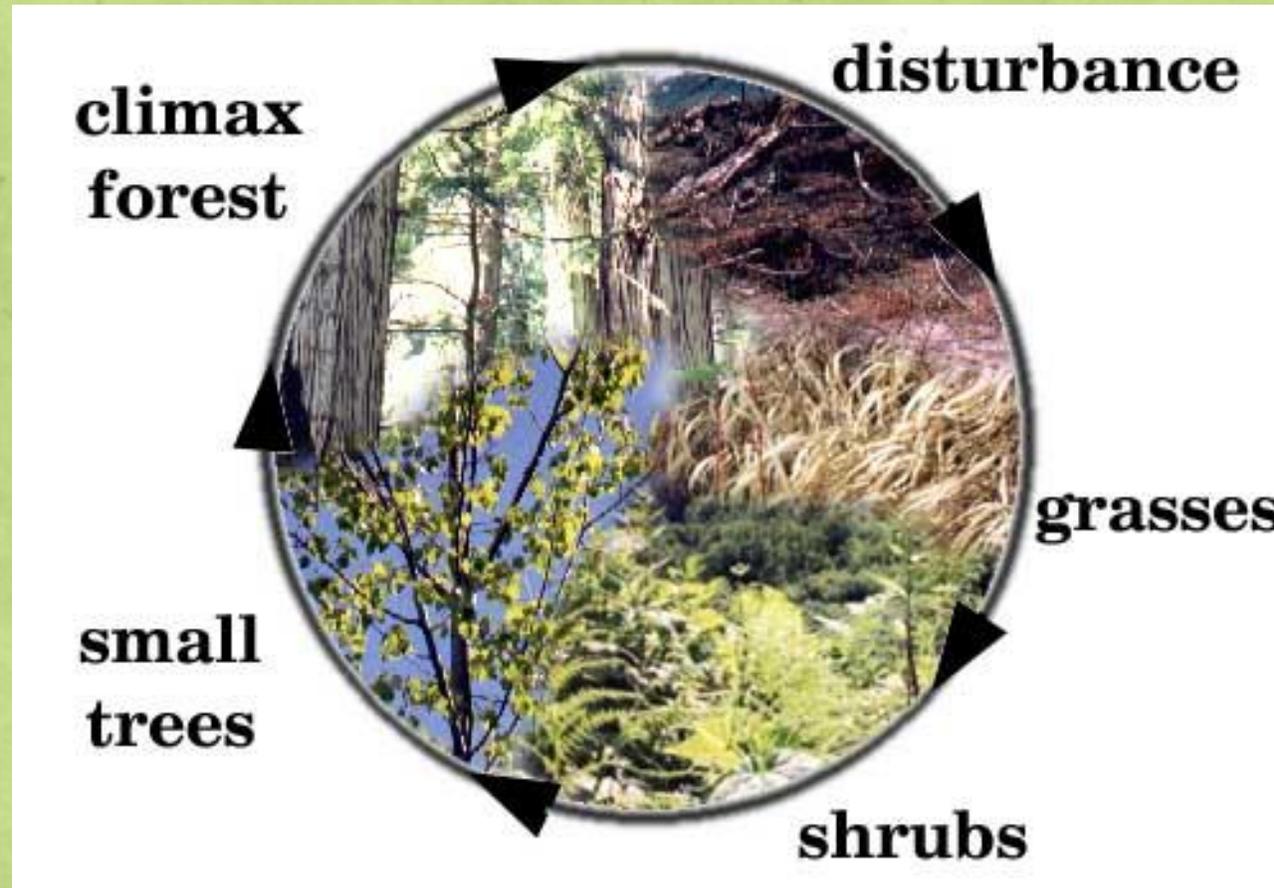


www.newenglandcottontail.org www.youngforest.org

6614-100718 YOUNG FOREST, LLC, MANASSAS, VA 12184-0903 1-800-425-0676 www.youngforest.com



Consider if a young forest is one of your goals.



Resources for woodland owners?

- USDA-NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) funding
- Audubon's Forestry for the Birds – bird and habitat assessments

Additional resources

Under Cover: Wildlife of Shrublands and Young Forest

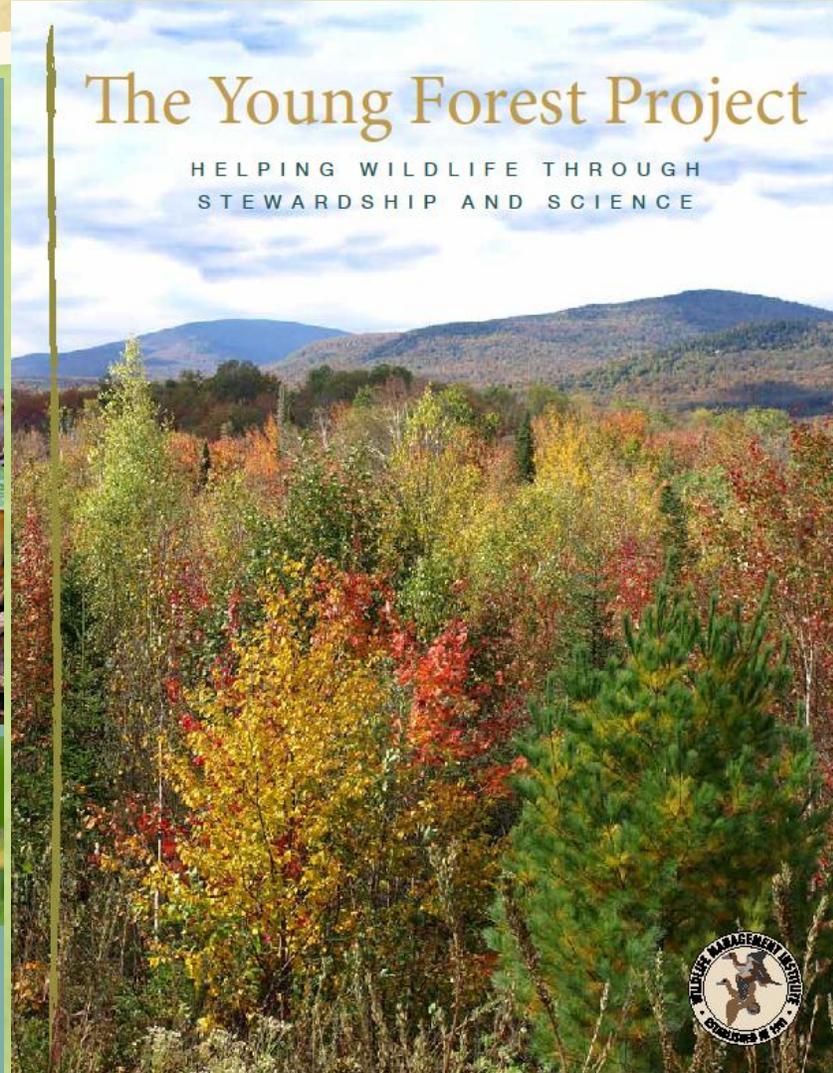


Wildlife
Management
Institute

January 2012

The Young Forest Project

HELPING WILDLIFE THROUGH
STEWARDSHIP AND SCIENCE



A Landowner's Guide to New England Cottontail Habitat Management



Thank you!

