



Hogback Mountain
Conservation Association

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Hogback Mountain Newsletter

News and Events at Hogback Mountain

Habitat Rejuvenation Kick-Off Set for Sept. 21 – Volunteers Needed

The first work session in the Early Successional Habitat (ESH) rejuvenation project on Hogback is scheduled for Saturday morning, Sept. 21. Anyone who would like to help create an appealing environment for a wide variety of birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, insects, etc. is invited to join the work party. We'll be clearing the 20-30 year old growth on the former Meadow ski slope. Skilled chain saw operators are needed, as well as people to haul the cut saplings away from the hiking paths, and people with loppers to cut smaller growth. Bring your own tools and meet at 9:00 a.m. at the parking lot on the south side of Route 9 between the Gift Shop and the A-Frame (the former Alpenglow). It's an easy ¼ mile hike to get to the work site. We'll call it a day at lunchtime.

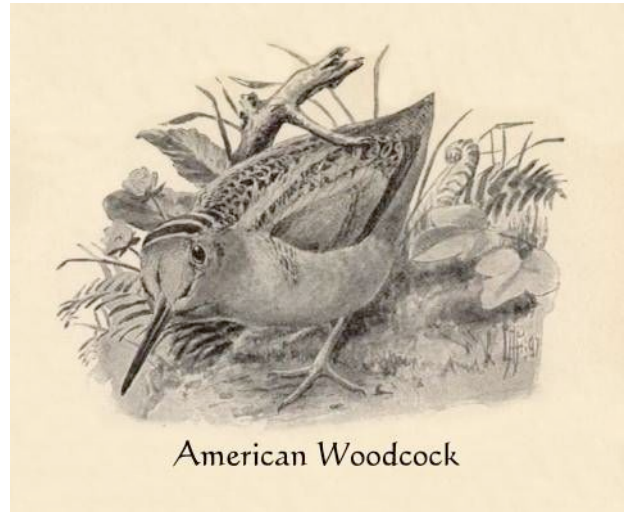
If you plan to join us, send me (Diana Todd, Chairman of the ESH committee) an email at diana.todd@comcast.net or give me a call at 240-342-2276 so that I can get a feel for how many people to expect. If you haven't contacted me in advance and at the last minute you decide you want to join us, by all means, come!

If you can't make it on Sept. 21 but want to be involved, don't worry, you'll have several more opportunities. Five work sessions are currently planned:

- Saturday, Sept. 21
- Sunday, Oct. 13 (Columbus Day weekend)
- Saturday, Oct. 26
- Saturday, Nov. 9
- Friday, Nov. 29 (Thanksgiving weekend)

A sixth work session will be added to the schedule if necessary.

The goal of the ten-year project is to develop a broad array of habitat choices for wildlife by reopening the five major ski slopes, one every two years, and then allowing the slopes to regrow. Vermont is suffering a crisis of habitat loss of a specific type: early successional habitat (ESH). Succession refers to the natural regrowth that occurs when open land reverts to forest. The first 15-30 years of that process, the early phases of succession, provide crucial habitat for a number of species, including woodcock and New England cottontail rabbits



American Woodcock

Early successional habitat abounded in New England throughout the 20th century as farms were abandoned and the land gradually reverted to forest. Those processes are now almost complete, leaving Vermont and its wildlife with plenty of forested land and a modest amount of open fields and meadows, but hardly any of the all-important in-between growth of shrubs, densely spaced young saplings, and brambles: ESH.



Fisher

Photo by Diana Todd

When the Hogback Ski Area went out of business in the mid-1980's, the regrowth on the abandoned ski slopes created a haven for wildlife. Today that regrowth is nearing the end of the "early" phase. The variety of habitats available to wildlife on the mountain is decreasing. The 10-year rejuvenation plan will set back the clock on the regrowth and establish a veritable buffet of differently aged environments where birds and animals can feed, nest, rest, and raise their young. At the end of the 10-year period, we'll reassess and develop a plan for the next 10-20 years.

To learn more about the ESH project on Hogback, check out the Hogback website: <http://www.hogbackvt.org>. To read the entire ESH proposal as it was approved by the Marlboro Select Board, and to see supporting documentation, go to <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/eu8rujvpyahv0b/-Md0sY2rwY>.

75 Hours to a Revitalized Habitat – Test Cut Results

How long will it take to clear the growth from the former Meadow ski slope in order to rejuvenate the early successional habitat (ESH)? Answer: about 75 hours of chain saw work.

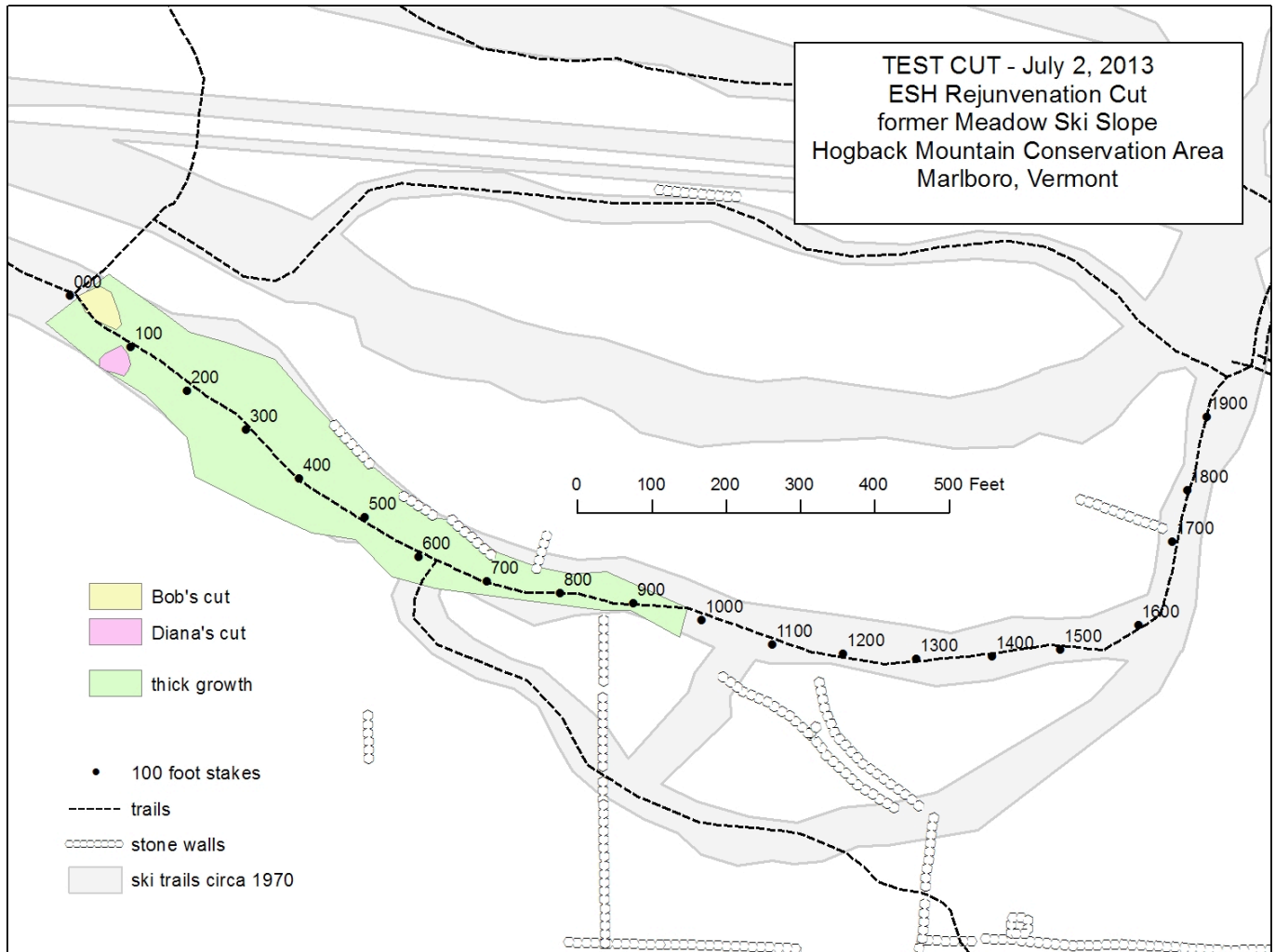
The 10-year plan to revitalize the ESH on Hogback is designed to have little or no monetary cost – but to instead rely on a large input of volunteer labor. Is the plan feasible? To find out, HMCA President Bob Anderson and ESH Committee Chair Diana Todd toted their chainsaws over to the former Meadow ski slope in early July and worked for a little over an hour clearing the 20-30 year-old growth. Diana worked in an area of densely spaced, even-aged young maple saplings, while Bob tackled a section of mixed growth.

The map (next page) shows Bob's work in yellow, Diana's in pink. The top half of the former ski slope is covered in thick growth, shown in green. The bottom half will need relatively little work. That section is covered mainly in ferns, with little or no woody growth. Based on Bob and Diana's test cuts, it looks like it will take about 75 hours of chain saw work to clear the slope. Feasible? We currently have five work sessions planned. If we get five chain sawyers to come to each three-hour work session, we should be able to complete the project by Thanksgiving weekend. We can add a sixth work session if it looks like we won't hit our target.



If we don't complete the work in the first year, we can finish up next fall. (Cutting is planned only for early fall, after the bird nesting/fledgling season is over.)

Put a fresh chain on your saw and join us! The first work session will be Saturday morning, September 21. Meet in the parking lot west of the gift shop at 9 a.m.



All text, photos and map by Diana Todd