



CASE STUDY

FOLSOM BROOK, VLT WAITSFIELD, VT

The Folsom Brook property is a valuable forest within a patchwork of agricultural land and residential developments. It provides forested and riparian habitats for wildlife to travel between two larger, high priority forested areas to the east and west.

MEET THE LANDOWNER

Robert and Jacqueline Rose gifted the 98-acre Folsom Brook property to the Vermont Land Trust (VLT) in 1997. VLT is a statewide conservation organization, committed to protecting farmland, forestland, and community land from development. VLT holds conservation easements on private land and also owns land, such as the Folsom Brook property. VLT's forestland is managed by staff foresters. VLT Forester Caitlin Cusack has been managing the Folsom Brook property since 2015. Caitlin is licensed by the State of Vermont and is endorsed by Audubon. An Audubon endorsement means that participating foresters have completed bird-friendly forestry training and demonstrated that they can apply these concepts to land they manage. Her first couple of years at the property focused on manual control of introduced invasive plants, such as honeysuckle, buckthorn, multiflora rose and burning bush. In 2018, she updated the forest management plan with guidance from Audubon Vermont.

HOW HAS THIS LAND BEEN MANAGED?

Caitlin secured cost-share funding in 2020 from the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) to continue controlling the invasive plants and implement a crop tree release with canopy gap formation in a 7-acre area where red maple, white ash and aspen dominated. This area was mostly pasture until the 1960s and soil compaction, low soil organic matter, and invasive earthworms are resulting impacts that need to be addressed to restore the health of the soil and the forest. A crop tree release is a practice where individual trees are 'released' from competition for light and space by removing the surrounding trees on 2-4 sides. In August 2022, Caitlin chose 30 crop trees per acre, including

AT A GLANCE

PROPERTY / PROJECT ACREAGE

98 acres (7 acres managed in project)

LOCATION

Waitsfield, VT

FOREST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Crop tree release with canopy gap formation

PARTNERS

Vermont Youth
Conservation Corps
Audubon VT

Natural Resource
Conservation Service
Vermont's Women
and Our Woods

WOMEN & OUR WOODS

Vermont's Women & Our Woods (WOW-VT) is a collaborative women-centered community that shares information, resources, and support for people who care about and steward Vermont's forests. WOW-VT has developed a series of case studies to highlight a variety of management activities being conducted on women-owned or women-managed woodlands to highlight successes, share lessons learned, and identify resources available.

To learn more visit wowvt.org.

WOW-VT is led by steering committee members from VT Woodlands Association, VT Coverts, VT Land Trust, VT Department of Forests Parks and Recreation, VT Fish and Wildlife Department, and Audubon Vermont.

black cherry, which are a great food source for migrating songbirds; straight and defect-free red maples; and wild apple trees. Caitlin also identified eight areas to create small canopy gaps, where poorly-formed red maples were clumped or where young spruce and fir trees were growing in the understory. In the gaps, all trees 2" in diameter were marked to be cut. These gaps create space for the young spruce and fir trees to grow or to let in sunlight for new red maple and ash seeds or aspen roots to sprout.

The project also aims to increase the understory and midstory canopy layers, which are important for providing nesting, perching, foraging, and protective cover for birds. In the fall of 2022, a Vermont Youth Conservation Corps crew cut the trees marked around the crop trees. Trees were girdled if their removal would have led to a lot of damage and were left to become standing dead trees, or snags, and provide habitat for yellow-bellied sapsuckers, barred owls, and other wildlife to nest in the holes that will develop. All tree tops and trunks were left on the forest floor. This allows for the slow decomposition and release of organic matter. It also protects the soil from erosion and young trees from being browsed by deer while providing birds with places to nest and forage. By increasing age and species diversity, and vertical and horizontal structure, this work also increases the ability of the forest to respond to climate change.

WHAT COMES NEXT?

This project has given Caitlin the opportunity to practice her craft and provided the next generation of woods workers with the opportunity to learn forestry techniques. Given the increase in sunlight, Caitlin will have to monitor and remove new invasive plants as they establish. In the spring of 2023, Caitlin treated 12 ash trees (9 female) with an insecticide that kills emerald ash borer (EAB). EAB is a non-native insect that threatens the survival of all native species of ash. The Folsom Brook property is one of a number of properties around the state where groves of ash trees are being treated to preserve their genetics.

ACTIVITY	ACRES	NRCS FUNDING	COST
Invasive plant control	12	\$2452	\$52 for glyphosate & buckthorn blaster
Crop tree release w/canopy gaps	7.3	\$2537	\$5000 for VYCC



Before and after photos of the crop tree release.

PROJECT PARTNERS

Vermont's Women and Our Woods

WOW-VT secured funding from the US Forest Service to pay for VYCC to complete demonstration projects on women-owned and women-managed land.

Vermont Youth Conservation Corps

Trains young adults to work on projects related to water quality, forest health, recreation and agriculture.

Audubon Vermont

Provides technical support and guidance for enhancing habitat for priority forest birds.

Natural Resource Conservation Service

Provided financial support to pay for the VYCC crew and invasive plant control.