

Responsible Timber Harvest Creates Next Generation Forest in Campton

by Jane Kellogg, Campton Conservation Commission

If you've recently driven on Blair Road, through the Blair Covered Bridge to NH Rt 175, you might have noticed some logging activity in Campton's forest at Pattee Conservation Park. There was a logger there this past Spring cutting and staging lots of large pine trees and hauling them away.

Timber harvests draw a number of reactions because they impact the forested landscape. Perhaps you were surprised? Perhaps you were disappointed to see such a change to the forest? Perhaps you were happy to see a local logger doing the work? Maybe you wondered who had made such a decision? Perhaps you are unhappy about the current condition of the forest after a timber cut? Maybe you thought of the various reasons to be thankful for our forests?

This small forest was planted by Ed Pattee back in the 1920s or 1930s. Since then, it had little forestry management, such as thinning, which resulted in many large and mature trees, but in a crowded condition.

When discussing a possible timber harvest on behalf of the town, the Campton Conservation Commission (CCC) wanted to demonstrate responsible forestry management practices. This involved research, discussion of various harvesting methods, planning, and outreach to qualified and responsible individuals to do the work.

The Campton Conservation Commission began consulting with the county forester and others seeking knowledge and advice. We learned that the forest was in decline, that trees were dying and tree growth (width of tree rings) was limited. In addition, the forest was too dense and the tree canopies were stunted. Very little sunlight was actually reaching the forest floor, so there was virtually no new tree growth (saplings).

To ensure a healthy forest, and preserve this town resource for future generations, the Commission realized that a harvest of mature trees was needed to open up the space and give new seedlings a chance to thrive.

First, a certified Campton forester was hired to fully assess the forest and present options to the Commission for moving forward. These ranged from doing nothing (and letting the forest continue to decline) to making a clear cut.

The Conservation Commission discussed each option with the forester and decided that a "Shelterwood Cut" would be the best approach for this forest under its current conditions. This approach would serve to revitalize it for its future potential. Only a portion of the forest would be cut, leaving some healthy trees to provide seeds for regeneration and preserve some wildlife habitat. Tree tops and branches would be removed from the felled trees, and placed on the forest floor to provide nutrients to the soil and ground cover for small wildlife. This is the same type of timber cut that was conducted by the state a few years ago on the adjacent Blair State

Forest, which surrounds the Pattee forest on the south and west sides. The trees cut (mostly white pine) would go to a mill to create building materials.

A local Campton logger was hired after a sealed bidding process, and as soon as winter was over, work began. The market for pine was the highest it's been for some time, so this increased the proceeds, which went to the Town's Conservation Fund.

The Campton Conservation Commission is pleased to note that grass seeding in the section of the field used as a log yard has taken hold nicely. The forest floor has tree tops and branches that will decay for soil regeneration, and new pine seedlings are already beginning to take hold. They will become the trees of a future harvest.

In the coming months and years, you will be able to see the forest grow as you continue to travel along Blair Road in Campton.



These white pine logs, harvested from Pattee Conservation Park, are destined for a local sawmill.



This is what the forest at Pattee Conservation Park looked like this spring, after completion of a shelterwood cut. White pine seedlings have already since begun to regenerate.