

Potomac Conservancy, Frederick City, MD-DNR, and AmeriCorps Team to Train Wildfire Crews, Save Local Oak Trees

In early March 2007, AmeriCorps*NCCC volunteers from the Perry Point, Md., campus donned safety helmets and revved up chain saws to help manage vegetation that is choking an important woodland area in the Frederick Municipal Forest. The forest, also known as the Frederick City Watershed, protects the city's water supply at Fishing Creek Reservoir and other tributaries.

As a part of their training, the volunteers undertook what is known as a "crop tree release," which clears competing vegetation that is stifling the growth of the nut bearing trees in the Frederick City Watershed. This action also lessens insect and disease damage, decreases the risk of wildfire, and adds to the diversity and sustainability of the watershed forest.

After the training, the AmeriCorps volunteers headed to the Gulf Coast region to help with relief efforts for Hurricane Katrina. In July 2007, the crew will return to the Frederick City Watershed for 1-2 more weeks of crop tree release and skill building. Additionally, in the event of a major wildfire, the crew will be deployed to assist in fighting wildfires around the country.

Recovery from Gypsy Moth Devastation

The City of Frederick owns approximately 7,000 acres of land on east side of Catoctin Mountain, which protects the city's water supply at Fishing Creek Reservoir and other tributaries. In the 1980s, the forestland was subjected to extensive gypsy moth infestation, which destroyed most of the larger hardwood trees. Some trees were salvaged, which reduced the fire hazard and allowed for a diverse regeneration of hardwood species. Unfortunately, the unsalvaged areas did not produce many oak and hickory trees, which provide valuable food for wildlife.

This crop tree release project will be an ongoing activity in the Frederick City Watershed for the next two or three years, or until the recommendations of the Forest Management Plan have been completed. Crews for Penn State - Mont Alto campus and the Maryland Conservation Corps will also contribute to the completion of the Frederick crop tree release project.

*Project partners included Potomac Conservancy, Maryland Department of Natural Resources-Forest Service, AmeriCorps*NCCC, FISTA, the City of Frederick, the National Park Service, and the USDA Forest Service.*

