News from the

Quiet Corner

Issue 14 | Fall 2019

BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE YALE SCHOOL FORESTS

About the Quiet Corner Initative

The Quiet Corner Initiative (QCI) supports local livelihoods, sustainable forest management, and rural economic development by building relationships between local landowners, conservation and forestry professionals, and the students and faculty of the Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies. Thank you to our alumni and the rest of the Yale community for their support.

A Note from the QCI Manager

Happy Fall!

As always, it's been a busy season for QCI. We hosted former CT DEEP Commisioner Robert Klee in October for a talk on state-based responses to climate change, and then continued our climate change series with a field-based forest management workshop led by Mark Ashton. We also hosted a very successful Women's Chainsaw Safety Training in partnership with the Forest Stewards Guild.

There have been some changes to our team here at the School Forests. Former QCI Manager Jess Wikle started her PhD in applied silviculture for climate change at the University of Vermont – we miss her but are so proud of her! I took over in September and have loved getting to know all of you. Frank Cervo, who completed the Master of Forestry program with me in May, is our new Forest Manager.

We have lots ahead, including a wildlife tracking workshop and a continuation of our climate change field series. Check out our save the dates for those events in this newsletter. Also stay tuned for a new digital map of the interpretive trail at our Red Front lot, coming this spring (see the Research Spotlight in this newsletter to learn about Red Front). I look forward to seeing you around the forest!

Rosa Goldman
Quiet Corner Initiative Manager
Yale School Forests

Tri-Lox: designing with northeast forests

Jessica Lloyd, *Assistant Forest Manager, MF '20*

On a cool Fall weekend in October, the Yale School Forests hosted the Fieldworks summit in collaboration with Tri-Lox, a design firm from Brooklyn that offers sustainable wood products. The event brought together students and professionals from fields that don't often get a chance to interact – foresters and designers - but work on opposite realms of the wood production cycle. Architects, foresters, landscape designers, engineers and craftspeople were there to share their industry experience and further understand how each of us can advocate and use the decisions we make in our respective fields to make our work with wood more sustainable.

The event started with a tour of the Yale-Myers Forest led by the Director of Forest and Agricultural Operations, Joe Orefice, and the Forest Manager, Frank Cervo. The participants were guided through the layers of history that have shaped the forest - from indigenous land use in the region, to the early colonists that cleared the land for agriculture, and the current regeneration techniques used by the present-day management to ensure the harvesting practices leave the forest in a better condition. A saw mill demonstration followed that highlighted the special characteristics of a black birch tree. We watched as each piece was cut and revealed new designs in the wood; each knot and stain telling a story that the designers could retell to their clients about life in the Quiet Corner of Connecticut.

In the evening the group gathered in the camp classroom to learn more about Tri-Lox's innovative approach to building local wood economies. The presentation highlighted the ways in which designers can collaborate with local forests to drive positive social and environmental change. The night culminated with a feast hosted by the Highlands Dinner Club, with food sourced from the region and foraged from the Yale-Myers forest, further highlighting the many ways to think about sustainability. The summit ended with a roundtable discussion to think about sustainability and to answer questions like - what is sustainable wood, and how can we go beyond sustainability?

Dr. Joseph Orefice points out texture of black birch
Photo Credit: Irina Anisimova

The designers began to make the connection about where the materials they use in their building projects come from and what to consider in order to source these materials more sustainably. However, as a forester I was surprised to find how little thought I had given to what might become of the logs after leaving the school forest, when I had been so mindful to select which trees to harvest. Conversations with the designers helped me envision the array of possibilities that awaited – the new shapes they would be carefully crafted into, the many ways in which the wood could be pieced together to take on new structure and forms, and the stories they would tell of the forest they came from.

An Introduction to Silvopasture

Dr. Joseph Orefice, *Director of Forest and Agricultural Operations, Ph.D., MF '09*

Cows grazing at Hidden Blossom Farm; Photo Credit: Dr. Joseph Orefice

The Quiet Corner Initiative branched out this August to co-host a field-based workshop focused on livestock production in silvopastures. This workshop was held on my property, Hidden Blossom Farm in Union, CT and was organized by the Quiet Corner Initiative, Connecticut Resource Conservation & Development's Soil Health Initiative, and the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS). The focus of the event was on the agroforestry practice of silvopasture. I am establishing silvopasture on the farm because of its ability to simultaneously provide shade and forage for cattle while also serving to increase the health of the farm ecosystem.

Silvopasture is the sustainable integration of livestock, forage, and trees on the same unit of land. It differs from the common (and destructive) practice of keeping livestock in the woods because silvopasture is managed so that light reaches the understory to allow grass growth and in that livestock grazing is managed to ensure soil, forage, and tree health. Silvopasture has gained much interest in the last decade because of its potential to sequester significant amounts of carbon on farmland while also creating resilient and ecologically sound agroecosystems. However, farmer adoption of the practice is slow due to a number of reasons, including a lack of knowledge on how to create and manage these systems. Hidden Blossom Farm has strategies in place to demonstrate and trial innovative silvopasture practices in ways that contrast the damages left on the land from a century of non-silvopasture grazing of cows in the woods.

I began the event with an introduction to silvopasture to help differentiate the practice from other more harmful livestock practices. Bill Purcell of the NRCS followed up the introduction to silvopasture with a detailed overview of prescribed grazing concepts that focus on production of forage and soil health. The group then headed off into the field to, yes, watch grass grow. More accurately, the emphasis of the first field session was to see how managed cattle grazing techniques and timing can be used to alter the competitive dynamics of pastures to encourage forage production, avoid soil damage to trees, increase animal welfare, and encourage soil health.

The day's afternoon was split into four sections. I led the first section of the afternoon, which showcased a destructive legacy of livestock grazing and forest high-grading land prior to current ownership and how Hidden Blossom Farm will use silvopasture to restore forest and soil health. Andrea Urbano, CT DEEP Forester, led a discussion in the woods about silviculture and forest management. Jeff Jourdain, Consulting Forester, complimented this discussion with more specifics on managing trees within silvopastures. Jim Hyde, the CT State Agronomist with UDSA NRCS, demonstrated soil sampling techniques farmers can use to assess the health and nutrient dynamics of their forests and fields. The group then headed to see the fencing and planting techniques Hidden Blossom Farm has set up to demonstrate how trees can be established and protected (silvopasture created) in treeless pasture. The day wrapped up with an exercise on tree selection for silvopastures and in-field discussion of audience members actively practicing silvopasture.

Overall the workshop was a great success due largely to the enthusiastic engagement shown by the 60 attendees. Many farmers indicated that they plan to integrate silvopasture techniques on their own properties as they work to actively improve their land management. If you're interested in learning more about silvopasture and other forms of agroforestry, do not hesitate to get in touch with the Yale School Forests. The Quiet Corner Initiative is discussing future agriculture related workshops, such as a livestock fencing clinic, a maple sugarbush management workshop, and event this spring focused on climate change and soil management.

Research Spotlight

Caroline Borden, *Yale College '20*

I spent the month of July counting plants. Every morning, I'd drive five minutes down a winding forest road, stroll along a leafy path, and settle in a small clearing under the dappled sunlight, clipboard and measuring tape in hand.

The site that I worked on is called "Red Front," an oak-savannah woodland plot in the heart of the Yale-Myers Forest. It has a complex ecological history, shaped by generations of Quiet Corner inhabitants. Originally an old field pine forest, the site was first cleared in the late 1700s and converted into a pasture. The pasture was eventually abandoned, and an oak-hickory forest began to grow in its place. The stone wall that enclosed the livestock still stands today, a legacy of the forest's human inhabitants. But I was there to study a different legacy, one that was introduced to the site only recently: fire.

The Red Front site had its first run-in with fire in 1996, when a research team led by my advisor, Mark Ashton, implemented a small-scale, controlled burn and monitored the forest succession following the fire. In the ensuing decades, the site has been burned several additional times, and its vegetation has been surveyed at intervals of one, three, and most recently, thirteen years after the controlled burn.

In the coming months, I plan to bring together decades of data collected by a generation of researchers to paint a cohesive picture of the post-fire landscape. My research explores the potential for fire to promote greater vegetative diversity and investigates the longevity of this ecological impact. It also tackles the broader question of how ecosystems respond to human-induced disturbances.

The history of fire in New England forests is often framed as the coevolution of the land and its human inhabitants. Indigenous populations and later European settlers used fire as a tool to shape their landscapes to suit their needs, altering the floristic composition in the process. More recently, studies in the Yale-Myers forest have focused on fire as a means to restore the forest to an earlier form and to preserve species that may otherwise be lost. Through this research, I hope to weave another thread into the complicated story of the people, the forest, and the fires of the Quiet Corner. In the meantime, I'll refrain from lighting any more fires in your backyard.

Forest Crew: Summer 2019

Reid H Lewis, *Assistant Forest Manager, MF '21*

This summer, nine students came to the Yale-Myers Forest to learn firsthand what it means to practice sustainable forestry. These nine were the most recent group of a long line of foresters who come to YMF to sleep in bunks and wield paint guns: the Apprentice Forester Program at the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies. The Forest Crew of 2019 had the great fortune of calling Becca Clarke, Jenny Katz, Thomas Launer, Reid Lewis, Jess Lloyd, Ki'ila Salas, Sara Santiago, Jack Singer, and Rob Turnbull its members. Hailing from across the northwestern quarter of the world, the 2019 Crew began making Camp their home in late May. Hammocks sprung up between beams while plans for gardens began to take shape. Soon we were joined by Forest Ecology interns, researchers, and our wonderful chef Javier Gonzalez. Books on the to-read list were finally opened, and everyone entered the long political drama of winning the dogs' affections.

Before we knew it, the weeks were filled with lectures, workshops, and long days in the rain. We learned how to fell a tree with a chainsaw and, with apologies to your suspension, to dig waterbars in the road. We learned to call the Turkey Hill division home as we acquainted ourselves with its valleys, turns, and boundaries.

With roads and boundaries in tip-top shape, Frank Cervo, Joe Orefice, Jess Wikle, and Mark Ashton began to show us the foundations of sustainable forestry: the 'Science of Place.' First, lie down in soil pits to feel their texture and moisture. Then, bury your nose in a book to go back thousands of years into the land history. Laura Green helped us with the next step: let the region's plants tell you where you stand. Our own Rob Turnbull (Turner, in some circles) led the next topic, a rapid-fire tour of birds and bird homes in the region.

With these ecological basics under our belt, it was time to go out and see where in the forest we should treat. We quickly came to realize that finding the right stand in a 1,000-acre division was no easy task; we sampled the Turkey Hill division for an entire week before deciding the proper place to conduct a treatment. Once we learned the finer strokes of silviculture (thinning and regeneration treatments) from Dr. Ashton, it was time to grab our ~~brushes~~ paint guns and leave our mark.

By the end of the summer, we had marked six prescriptions, four sales, 348,000 board feet, and over 2,000 trees. The summer, however, was much more than timber values on a spreadsheet. It was a summer of rain in the mountain laurel, soft serve in a mug, and TEDx talks in the library. Sometimes it was a summer of joy and laughter; sometimes of exhaustion and stress. We came to the forest to learn and practice sustainable forestry, and we succeeded - our marks have been left on the landscape. Some of these marks are blue and yellow; a willing upon the forest by our paint-gunned hands. Others are far more subtle: a book added to the library; a rock beside the fire; crushed leaves on a forest road; or turned rocks in a swimming hole. Be it paint on a tree or a redirected north arrow, we hope our legacy will be a good one.

Harvest Fest 2019: Thank you to our Quiet Corner neighbors and partners for making the festival a success!
Photo Credit: Jeamme Chia

Forest Crew, Summer 2019
Photo Credit: Ki'ila Salas

Interested in Conserving your Land?

QCI is exploring funding opportunities to support landowners in the region interested in protecting their land. For more information, contact Rosa Goldman, QCI Manager, at rosa.goldman@yale.edu.

---- Save the Date! ----

February 22, 2020
- **Winter Wildllife Tracking Workshop**

April 5, 2020
- **Climate Change Field Series, Part 2 - Soil Carbon & Agriculture**

Spring 2020 - Date TBD!
- **Regional Conservation Options Roundtable**

Address

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Stay Connected

Contact QCI at: quietcorner@yale.edu

For more information about the Yale School Forests' Quiet Corner Initiative, please visit our website at: qci.yale.edu or follow us on facebook at "Yale School Forests."

Dr. Mark Ashton lectures during Climate Change Field Series, Part 1

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