



Department of Conservation
and Recreation

Winter 2023-24

Conservation Connections

DCR Land Protection Program News

Dear Friends,

We hope you are enjoying your winter. The LPP has had a great second half of the year.

The CR Stewardship Program continues to have two permanent staff people: Caroline Raisler, CR Stewardship Coordinator, and Sasha Auer, CR Stewardship Planner. Mark Kresge had a wonderful season as our summer Seasonal CR Monitor, meeting many of you out in the field. Great news! He has returned as our winter Seasonal CR Monitor.

And more great news! We are currently in the process of hiring a second permanent staff person, another CR Stewardship Planner.

Jennifer Howard continues to lead the LPP, which encompasses both CR Stewardship and Land Acquisition. Our four Land Protection Specialists continue to do great work.

So far this fiscal year, they have closed on one CR – and it's a big one! After many years of work, DCR and Essex County Greenbelt Association now co -hold a CR on 2,066 acres of Lynn Woods. The City of Lynn and Lynn Water and Sewer Commission gifted this CR, making sure that this property is protected from development and open to the public for passive recreation in perpetuity.

See you in the woods sometime soon!

CR Stewardship Program Staff

The newsletter for
owners of land
protected by a
Conservation
Restriction (CR) held
by the Department of
Conservation and
Recreation (DCR)

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Nature Corner

MA Old-growth Forests

Old-growth forests (also known as late seral communities) in MA are few and far between, but they do exist! Although old-growth definitions vary, these areas a) are without a history of intensive human uses such as agriculture or timber harvesting, b) contain at least some trees >200 years old, and c) have several generations of trees. Most forests in New England are made up of trees that are around 70 -100 years old due to reforestation that followed the intensive agriculture and timber extraction that occurred in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.



Old-growth forest
Photo by Bob Leverett

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Forest Stewardship Plan Cost-share Program

DCR's Forest Stewardship Program supports a property owner's desire to practice long-term care of their woodlands. Working on a ten-year Forest Stewardship Plan (FSP) with a Massachusetts Licensed Forester offers an excellent opportunity to learn more about your woodland and can help guide your management decisions.

Many of our CRs require FSPs, which need to be renewed every 10 years. Other CRs do not require FSPs, but it is still a great idea to consider hiring a forester to develop one, especially if you are considering managing your forest.

DCR Service Forestry has a cost-share program to help with the cost of completing FSPs.

All Massachusetts landowners with at least 10 acres of land are eligible for cost-share for a new Forest Stewardship Plan, but only landowners with a state-held CR or WPR on their property are eligible for this funding for renewing their plans. There is also additional cost-share money available to add a section to your FSP about bird habitat or climate adaptation.

For more information about FSPs, see the [Forest Stewardship Program website](#).

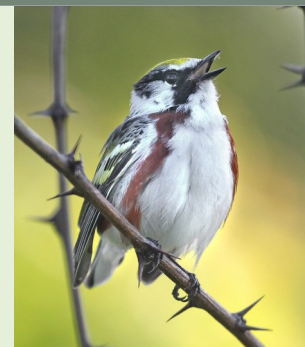


Photo by Alan Schmierer

Landowner Spotlight

Words of wisdom, stories, and land protection strategies from our CR landowners.

Interview with CR landowner Christodora

The Christodora CR in Florida, MA has a mostly forested landscape, a meadow that contains a few old orchard trees, a beautiful beaver pond, and a small stream. The adjacent Manice Education Center, one of Christodora's facilities, manages the CR property as part of its outdoor education program. See christodora.org for more info.

Can you tell me a little bit about your organization?

Christodora as an organization is in its 126th year of existence, having been founded in 1897. The Manice Education Center has been around since 1983, and is the flagship program for Christodora, acting as an integral part of our ecosystem of programs both in MA and throughout the five boroughs of New York City. Our organization's mission is to encourage the positive academic and developmental growth of New York City's youth through stimulating educational and challenging outdoor programs.

What kinds of programs does the Manice Outdoor Education Center offer?

Manice operates as a field trip program for New York City school groups during the spring and fall seasons, and as an immersive, wilderness-focused overnight camp during the summer. These programs give students the opportunity to learn about environmental science concepts, identify their own unique leadership styles, and build their capacity for outdoor and backcountry skills through multi-night backpacking and canoeing trips. Field trip participants come for 3 days, 2 nights, and summer camp sessions run between 7 and 16 days long.



What are some of the outdoor activities taking place in the natural areas?

Backpacking, canoeing, camping, and trail maintenance all take place in the surrounding areas. In addition, classes such as macroinvertebrate sampling, organic gardening, primitive shelter building, orienteering, and forest ecology are taught outside on our property.

How does accessing the natural areas on the property benefit the participants in your programs?

It's more than beneficial; it's integral to giving our students the experience they seek year after year when they choose to return. There are very few places within New York City where our learners have the opportunity to go canoeing, hike along forested trails, or learn about ecosystems in such an immersive, experiential way.

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Landowner Spotlight cont.

How do you feel about having a CR on your property?

Christodora is all about helping young people from the city discover the joy and wonder of the natural world. To be able to have a CR on our property, it gives those youth the opportunity to view not only what an ecosystem can be, but an exemplary version of it. We are able to show them a functioning ecosystem full of Berkshire-area flora and fauna, and having the CR on our property is a huge part of that.

Old-growth forests cont...

The few remaining areas with old-growth forests are typically on steep slopes. It's possible that there are undiscovered old-growth forests in Massachusetts, so be on the lookout! Things to look for:



Old-growth Forest Photo by Bob Leverett

- Multiple canopy layers and variation in tree size and density
- Trees may be large, but not always
- Gnarled crowns and sinuous branches
- Tree trunks that are tall and cylindrical, with little to no taper
- Platy or unusual bark: as trees age their bark gets increasingly platy and sometimes sloughs off on one side, becoming often unrecognizable from typical bark from younger trees of the same species.
- Snags and downed wood in all stages of decay (both important for many animal, plant and fungi species!)
- Pits and mounds (often): Trees fall over (e.g., during a storm), bringing their roots up to the surface to create the mound and leaving a pit where their roots were anchored
- Areas without stonewalls or historic features such as cellar holes

Old-growth forests tend to have great structural diversity and high ecological function. They also store large amounts of carbon due in part to the many layers present (downed wood, deep layers of organic matter in the soil, snags, trees of all sizes, etc.). Although creating true old-growth forests takes centuries, there are opportunities for landowners to create or enhance old-growth characteristics on their forest land using either passive management (allowing natural processes to dictate), or active management, which can be used to accelerate certain aspects of old-growth structure, like the addition of downed wood. Management can involve a number of different strategies including:

- Identifying patches with old-growth characteristics to remain intact, and using active management to enhance old-growth characteristics of adjacent areas
- Designating legacy trees that will live out their natural lifespan
- Felling or pulling over some large trees to increase the component of large, downed wood on the forest floor
- Retaining existing snags and potentially creating additional snags
- Increasing heterogeneity of tree sizes, ages and spatial arrangement using silvicultural prescriptions that emulate natural disturbances.
- Cutting competing trees on three sides of large trees to accelerate tree growth

Invasive weed control is also an important tool that can be used for both passive and active management to promote old-growth characteristics since invasive plants can reduce biodiversity and prevent regeneration of native tree species. As with any activity on CR-protected land, be sure to check your CR language to ensure any specific management activities are permitted.

To learn more about old-growth forests and managing forests for old-growth characteristics, visit [Old-Growth Forests: A Literature Review of the Characteristics of Eastern North American Forests](#) and [Restoring Old-growth Characteristics](#)



Invasive Jumping Worms

Jumping worms (*Amyntas* spp.) are an invasive worm that can significantly alter soil structure and chemistry and negatively impact flora and fauna. Although they were brought to the US from Asia over 100 years ago, their expansion has been rapid in recent years, and increasing moisture and temperatures and longer frost-free periods have likely accelerated this in the northeast and elsewhere. Unlike European earthworms that burrow deep into the soil bringing nutrients in the form of their castings down to where many plant roots can access them, Jumping worms reside in the top few inches of the soil and deposit their castings on or near the surface. They have voracious appetites, eating organic matter such as leaf litter, and can be densely packed. High densities of worms can cause the soil to become loose, which can prevent some plant species from being firmly rooted and make the soil susceptible to erosion. An infestation of jumping worms can also inhibit plant germination and generally impact the health of plants that need leaf litter to retain soil moisture. Although the jumping worms cannot survive a New England winter, their tiny cocoons can.



Jumping worm

Photo by Tara Sprague

Any soil moved from one location to another can start a new jumping worm infestation, whether it be contaminated mulch, potted plants, potting soil, gravel, etc. A person could potentially spread them by not cleaning their hiking boots before hiking too. There are no safe recommended chemical or biological means to eradicate them yet, however, for initial small invasions some people have had success by killing the worms by hand and solarizing the area with plastic (heat above 103 degrees can kill cocoons). Research is currently underway to determine other control methods.

Currently, the best method to deal with jumping worms is to **prevent** their spread: either don't bring soil, potted plants or mulch etc. onto a property from elsewhere, or ensure that the material supplier is aware of jumping worms and has taken the necessary precautions to kill any jumping worms and their cocoons. When possible, plant bare-rooted plants.

The easiest way to tell if an area has jumping worms is to look for soil that has the appearance of coffee grounds. Adult jumping worms have a creamy/cloudy-white to gray clitellum that is smooth and encircles the body, compared to regular earthworms that have a pink clitellum that is raised off the body and does not go all the way around it. Younger jumping worms can be harder to identify, however, be suspicious of any worm that is near or at the soil surface. It may or may not thrash about if you pick it up.

For more info visit the [UMass website about Jumping Worms](#) and the [UMass Invasive Jumping Worm FAQs](#)

DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND RECREATION

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