



CONSERVE WILDLIFE
FOUNDATION OF NEW JERSEY

August 24, 2011

Ponderlodge Reforestation Project Grant Report

In the spring of this year Conserve Wildlife Foundation of New Jersey (CWF) began work using funding from Conservation Resources to help reforest 2 acres of old fairways at a former golf course called “Ponderlodge.” The site is located within Lower Township in Cape May County. It is managed by New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) as a wildlife management area. Since its acquisition in 2006 the site has been prized for its size, location on the Cape May Peninsula, and its value to migratory birds as a place to “rest and refuel” during migration. We have been working closely with DFW to reforest many of the old fairways there.



Reforestation of this old fairway will provide habitat for migratory birds and other wildlife.

Much of the habitat on site is rapidly changing. The old fairways that were once heavily managed as dense cool season are now reverting back to forests through secondary succession. Early successional species like black cherry, mulberry, sassafras, and sweet gum are now found in many of the old fairways. The field that we have chosen to reforest has little to no natural regeneration (*see photo above*). There are three different soil types on site and consist of Dennisville sandy loam (1.6 acres), Hammonton sandy loam (1.3 acres), and Berryland & Mullica loam (.1 acre). The hydric conditions of these soil types are typical of the outer coastal plain in New Jersey, Dennisville soils are well drained, Hammonton soils are moderately well drained, and Berryland are very poorly drained.

Prior to the 1970's much of the area was forested habitat. Most trees are mature and are comprised of various species of oaks and pitch pine. From an aerial image taken in the 1930's you can see that much of the site was forested (*see map below*). Since the 1970's the area was purchased and developed as a recreational area for a wealthy family and business owner. On one portion of the site the owner built a mansion, lodge, tennis courts, baseball field, swimming pool, a man-made pond, and a 9-hole golf course. Over time the course was expanded to 18-holes with many sand traps and ponds on each of the fairways. In 1991 the Ponderlodge Golf Club was opened to the public. The site was actively managed as a public golf course until 2005 when the owners of the site went bankrupt.

In 2006, it was purchased by New Jersey Green Acres Program and turned over to NJFW. Since then the site has been primarily managed for wildlife habitat. From its



acquisition the DFW has sought to restore much of the habitat on site, including the removal of the old buildings on site. They also created a “plan” to restore much of the habitat on site which includes the enhancement or creation of grasslands, wildflower meadows, scrub-shrub habitat, and reforesting many of the old fairways. In the spring of 2011 the old

buildings were successfully demolished and removed from the site. CWF began reforesting fairways there in 2009 and will continue to assist the DFW with restoration efforts at Ponderlodge. Over the next 10 years and perpetually the site will be managed for wildlife, especially migratory birds. The goal is to have a variety of different habitat types that benefit large diversities of wildlife. One key component is to plant native species that provide fruit or berries and seeds for songbirds while they rest and refuel during fall migration.

In late April 2011 we planted approximately 600 “bare root” seedlings on 1.5 acres. Trees were grown in New Jersey at the NJ State Forest Nursery in Jackson, New Jersey.

Species planted include:

- ▶ Pitch pine (*Pinus rigida*) - #75
- ▶ White pine (*Pinus strobus*) - #100
- ▶ Willow oak (*Quercus phellos*) - #75
- ▶ White oak (*Quercus alba*) - #100
- ▶ Persimmon (*Diospyros virginiana*) - #100
- ▶ Beach Plum (*Prunus maritime*) - #100
- ▶ Northern bayberry – (*Myrica pensylvanica*) - #50

Survival of seedlings at this site has been difficult over the past few years. In the past we’ve planted seedlings at a high volume of around 500 stems per acre. This year we monitored the site periodically throughout the summer for survival of the seedlings. A number of seedlings did not survive the hot and very dry conditions observed in lower Cape May County.



This fall, when weather conditions are more favorable, we plan to plant another 500 seedlings to help boost survival rates at the site. After planting, the seedlings will be protected using 24" tree tubes and weed mats will be placed around the seedlings to help reduce competition and enhance the trees survival rate. I believe that once we get seedlings to become established on site its effectiveness to sequester carbon dioxide will be great.

Map of soils on site:



Contact Us:

Ben Wurst, Habitat Program Manager
Conserve Wildlife Foundation of NJ
2201 Rt. 631
Woodbine, NJ 08270
609-628-2103
Ben.wurst@conserwewildlifenj.org