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New York State Forest Action Plan, 2010 (Formerly known as 2010 Statewide Forest Resource assessment and Strategy)

Portraying Forest Action Plan Relationship to National Priorities for Forests

The following provides a sampling of forestry accomplishments and outcomes resulting from actions taken by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and/or other forestry organizations in New York. These actions, undertaken during the period of 2010-2015, directly support National Priorities for Forests identified by the USDA Forest Service.

National Priority 1.

Conserve and Manage Working Forest Landscapes for Multiple Values and Uses

Issue Addressed:

3, Sustainable Forestry Practices

Strategy Implemented:

3.4, Increase incentives and reduce costs for private forest landowners to promote and implement sustainable forest management activities.

Action:

3.4.1, Improve Forest Tax Law program to reward active forest management and promote greater participation in such program.

Accomplishment/Outcome:

As directed by the Governor's 2015 State of the State Action Agenda, New York State DEC worked with stakeholders to develop a proposed revision to the state's Forest Tax Law 480-a. The proposal includes major changes to program entry and administration that will serve to reduce costs to landowners, reduce administrative burden for DEC foresters, and allow for increased number of acres enrolled in the program.

Issue Addressed:

1, “Keeping Forests as Forests” – Retaining New York’s Forests

Strategy Implemented:

1.1, Retain forests across New York State

Action:

1.1.2, Reduce threat of subdivision & land use change on private forestland by:

- Expanding State purchases of working forest conservation easements from willing sellers; and
- Pursuing public/private regional or statewide forest easement program partnerships w/non-governmental organizations & local governments.

1.1.4, Permanently protect critical forest resources and values through fee-title public acquisitions of targeted, high-value forestlands

Accomplishment/Outcome:

Since 2010, DEC has protected more than 75,095 acres in fee and 118,417 acres through conservation easements. Of these new acres, approximately 26,895 acres were added to the state forest system and are actively managed for forest products. Most of the conservation easement acres are working forest conservation easements that are managed for forest products by the underlying fee landowners.

National Priority 2.

Protect Forests from Threats

Issue Addressed:

5, Water Quality and Supply

Strategy Implemented:

5.1, Protect high quality watersheds, shorelines and riparian areas.

Action:

5.1.9, Continue to promote the state's timber harvesting BMPs to protect water quality.

Accomplishment/Outcome:

In 2011, DEC worked with the Watershed Agricultural Council, New York City DEP and Empire State Forest Products Association to revise the "New York State Forestry Best Management Practices for Water Quality" BMP Field Guide. Various forestry stakeholder groups with distribution channels for the guide were solicited to contribute to a printing run of 3,000 copies making the purchasing of the field guide economical.

Issue Addressed:

7, Forest Health

Strategy Implemented:

7.4, Support and Improve Wildfire Management Services

Actions:

7.4.1, Improve local fire departments ability to effectively contain wildfires w/in the first operation period w/out loss of life, injury or excessive property damage.

7.4.2, Understand the dynamics of wildfire occurrence as reported by fire departments & forest rangers, & modify management strategies accordingly.

7.4.10, Utilize fire occurrence data from fire departments & forest rangers to assess trends in wildfire occurrence.

7.4.11, Assess wildfire investigation & burning law enforcement for adequate effectiveness & setting of annual priority goals.

Accomplishment/Outcome:

In 2010, new open burning regulations were implemented prohibiting open burning from the New York spring fire season of March 16 through May 14 based on the previous 25 years of forest ranger wildfire reporting and the previous 10 years of fire department wildfire reporting. The result of enforcing this new regulation has been a 37.3% reduction in total spring wildfires for all of New York when 2010-2014 fire occurrence statistics are compared to 2005-2009 statistics. This results in an average of 1,228 fewer fires in New York each year as compared to the previous five year history.

Issue Addressed:

5, Water Quality and Supply

Strategy Implemented:

5.1, Protect high quality watersheds, shorelines and riparian areas

Action:

5.1.3, Protect, retain and increase forest lands along riparian corridors and shorelines

Accomplishment/Outcome:

New York State's Trees for Tributaries program engages volunteers in restoring thousands of feet of streamside buffer through tree planting using native bare-root stock from the Saratoga State Tree Nursery. The program provides land owners and local governments with low-cost or no-cost native planting materials and free technical assistance. Coordinating with local, state and federal agencies, Trees for Tribes focuses on comprehensive watershed restoration designed to protect the "green infrastructure," the first line of defense against storm and flooding events, as well as property, water quality, fish and wildlife. Trees for Tribes promotes best management practices for communities and encourages new programs, policies and investments in tributary protection. The DEC Division of Lands and Forests has worked to expand the Trees for Tributaries program to be a statewide program, and is currently active in the Hudson River Estuary, Mohawk River, Susquehanna River, Genesee River and Lake Champlain watersheds. In 2014 funding was added to the state's Environmental Protection Fund for Restoration Planting, which supports the Trees for Tributaries program.

Issue Addressed:

7, Forest Health

Strategy Implemented:

7.1 Fight invasive pests & diseases.

Action:

7.1.1 Develop & implement systematic statewide early detection program to minimize amount of time between infestation & detection.

Accomplishment/Outcome:

Established detection protocols and early detection support through DEC, DAM, OPRHP and local PRISM participation. Statewide trapping for Exotic pests, EAB, ALB and thousand cankers disease beetle vectors.

Action:

7.1.2 Develop rapid & long term response capabilities at the State & local levels to minimize degree of impact.

Accomplishment/Outcome:

Established trained teams of personnel to identify hazards, risks and implement initial actions through skill development with chainsaws, tree felling, pesticide applications and deploying monitoring tactics like traps and designed surveys.

Strategy Implemented:

7.2 Address catastrophic natural events.

Action:

7.2.1 Develop abilities to quantify severity & extent.

Accomplishment/Outcome:

Trained initial detection and response crews within DEC, Cornell Cooperative Extension and OPRHP to identify agents and implement recognized survey and detection procedures for new forest health risks. This capability has dramatically increased our awareness of and capacity to mitigate newly found forest health agents.

National Priority 3.

Enhance Public Benefits from Trees and Forests

Issue Addressed:

3, Sustainable Forestry Practices

Strategy Implemented:

3.4, Increase incentives & reduces costs for private forest landowners to promote and implement sustainable forest management activities.

Action:

3.4.5, Work with stakeholders to become actively and quickly engaged in improving forestry incentive programs and targeted funding in the next federal Farm Bill.

Accomplishment/Outcome:

DEC Forest Stewardship Program worked with the NRCS State Conservationist to establish a Forestry Sub-Committee of the State NRCS Technical Committee. Sub-Committee work, including several forestry stakeholder interests, involved modifying EQIP Forestry state and local ranking questions to better reflect forestry resource concerns in New York. In addition, changes in cost share allocation percentages aimed at stretching EQIP program dollars were recommended and accepted.

Issue Addressed:

9, Urban Tree Canopy & Green Infrastructure

Strategy Implemented:

9.1, Engage and education communities in the importance of urban forestry and green infrastructure

Action:

9.1.1, Expand assistance programs to increase tree canopy in local communities, stressing health and societal benefits of trees

Accomplishment/Outcome:

Provided over 30 workshops focused on local needs. Educated over 1,000 urban forestry professionals, municipal workers and tree enthusiasts. Assisted over 1,000,000 more people from 2014-2015.

Issue Addressed:

9, Urban Tree Canopy & Green Infrastructure

Strategy Implemented:

9.3, Develop a statewide database of community tree inventories

Action:

9.3.1, Develop program with the goal of assisting and ensuring every community consistently digitizes street tree inventory data and paper inventories

Accomplishment/Outcome:

Offered annual grant program stressing urban forestry best management practices. Projects totaling over \$6 million dollars funded projects to plant trees, inventory street trees, write management plans and maintain the urban forestry. Inventory grants are structured to maintain consistent collection of data statewide to create a statewide urban forestry inventory system.

Issue Addressed:

5, Water Quality and Supply

Strategy Implemented:

5.1, Protect high quality watersheds, shorelines and riparian areas.

Action:

5.1.5, Promote conservation easements and acquisition, including community forests

Accomplishment/Outcome:

The Rensselaer Plateau Alliance (RPA) worked with members of its community to find land and funding to establish a community forest on the Rensselaer Plateau. Their application to the U.S. Forest Service Community Forest Program ranked number one in the country and received a grant for 50% of the purchase price. With a loan from The Conservation Fund, the RPA acquired the parcel in 2014. The Rensselaer Plateau Community Forest will serve as a demonstration forest and training site for chainsaw safety and best forestry practices. The Empire State Forest Products Association and New York Logger Training will begin using the Community Forest as a training site. RPA is expected to hold many of their educational and informative program events, and other outings at the community forest. The Community Forest will be open to the public year round, for recreational activities.

Issue Addressed:

5, Water Quality and Supply

Strategy Implemented:

5.1, Protect high quality watersheds, shorelines and riparian areas.

Action:

5.1.5, Promote conservation easements and acquisition, including community forests

Accomplishment/Outcome:

DEC has continued its work through the New York State Conservation Partnership Program (NYSCPP), a public-private partnership between DEC and the Land Trust Alliance that invests in New York land trusts. Grants enable local organizations to strengthen urban, rural and suburban, land conservation and public outreach programs, build community partnerships and implement best business practices. Grants are funded through the NYS Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) annually. The Conservation Partnership Program is nationally recognized as a model for leveraging public and private funding for communities in their efforts to advance open space, forest, farmland, and resource conservation goals as part of the 2009 New York State Open Space Conservation Plan. The NYSCPP is managed by the Land Trust Alliance in coordination with DEC.

Since 2010, the Conservation Partnership Program has awarded \$7.47 million in grants for 363 projects benefiting land trust organizations across the state. This investment has leveraged more than \$7 million in additional funding. The funds have helped create employment and advancement opportunities in the conservation field and helped local communities permanently conserve more than 13,000 acres of forests, farmland, wildlife habitat, recreation areas and urban open space.