

Mower Tract Ecological Restoration on the Greenbrier Ranger District

2009 Accomplishments

In the summer and fall of 2009, the Greenbrier Ranger District (GBRD) planted nearly 1,800 native plants on the Mower Tract. All plants were propagated from local seed source by the Natural Resource Conservation Service's Alderson Plant Material Center (PMC), thanks to FY09 NFN3 funding. Partners involved in plant material collection included the Alderson PMC, Forest Service, Nature Conservancy, West Virginia Highlands Conservancy, United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge, Mountain Institute, and West Virginia Division of Natural Resources (WVDNR). The native species priority list was developed in collaboration by the aforementioned groups, with additional input from the Ruffed Grouse Society. Special emphasis was placed on species most advantageous for pollinators or wildlife. Fast growers, including common elderberry, scarlet beebalm, and big tooth aspen have been planted on the Mower Tract. The objective of the project is to restore native flora on previously strip-mined benches that currently are dominated by a thick, non-native sod layer. This restoration work will greatly benefit high-interest species including the cheat mountain salamander, northern flying squirrel, snowshoe hare, white-tailed deer, black bear, golden eagles, woodcock, ruffed grouse, saw whet owl and a number of pollinating animals by providing a variety of food sources and niches. Once native species are established, the restoration site will develop into a native seed source. Short term benefits are already being realized as wildlife grazing and pollination has already been observed this summer season. Additionally, bigtooth aspen in particular will help further the goals of programs and organizations for high priority game species, such as the Woodcock Management Initiative (WMI) and Ruffed Grouse Society. In the next 40 years, a vast improvement in natural biodiversity is expected as the restored vegetative community proliferates.



Figure 1. Bigtooth aspen are native to the MNF and grow quickly to shade out invasive grasses and provide a food source and habitat.



Figure 2. The benefits of planting native species on the Mower Tract are not limited to wildlife. Pollinators will be attracted and participate in the development of a viable native seed source.

Year Awarded: initial award in 2009

Project completion: est. 2012

Report number: 1 of 4

Expenditures (through 10/2009):
FY09 funding \$15,000, expend. \$15,000 \$0 remaining
•**Total funding \$15,000, total expend \$15,000;**
•**\$0 total remaining**

Partners: WVDNR, USFWS, USDA-NRCS Alderson Plant Material Center, Nature Conservancy, West Virginia Highlands Conservancy, and Mountain Institute.

Contact Person & phone number: Greenbrier District Ranger (304) 456-3335



Monongahela National Forest
Greenbrier Ranger District
Hwy 250/92, PO Box 67
Bartow, WV 24920