

Ecological Restoration on the Mower Tract within the Monongahela National Forest, WV¹

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Abstract: Green Forests Work in partnership with the US Forest Service, Appalachian Regional Reforestation Initiative, West Virginia Division of Natural Resources, NRCS Plant Materials Center, and the Central Appalachian Spruce Restoration Initiative has implemented an ecological restoration project on 2,600 acres of mine impacted land in the Monongahela National Forest. The project is located on Cheat Mountain, which traverses the entire length of central Randolph County, WV. This high elevation site was historically a red spruce-northern hardwood ecosystem prior to mining and logging activities. The red spruce ecosystem of the Central Appalachians is characterized by exceptionally high biodiversity and is a priority for conservation and restoration. The project area (Mower Tract) was mined for coal in the 1970s. During reclamation the site was returned to approximate original contour and planted with non-native trees and grasses. Restoration activities were initiated in 2009 to reduce impacts from the mining and to restore the red spruce ecosystem. A holistic suite of restoration strategies including soil decompaction, wetland restoration, woody debris loading, and planting of native trees and shrubs have been employed. To date, this partnership has performed restoration activities in over 500 acres of the watershed, created over 400 vernal pools/wetlands, and planted over 250,000 native trees and shrubs. Objectives achieved through implementation of this project will minimize impacts from past mining activities and help conserve and ensure long-term viability of the important plant and animal species associated with this high elevation forest and associated wetland communities.

Additional Key Words: Forestry Reclamation Approach, vernal wetlands, red spruce

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