



Environmental Quality Incentives Cost-Share Program

Project Success Stories

Forestry Topic FT0009

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A sustainably managed forest is an investment; the returns include income, clean air, clean water, wildlife habitat and aesthetic benefits. The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) can improve a forest landowner's "return on investment" by covering 75 percent to 90 percent of the costs associated with

sustainably managing forest stands – planting trees; controlling invasive plant species, and improving wildlife habitat. The following "success stories" portray real-life experiences of Virginia forest landowners who have used EQIP cost-share assistance to accomplish sustainable forest management activities.

Partyka Property

Submitted by Greg Estoll, forester

Ms. Partyka's goals for managing her beautiful Burke's Garden property are to maintain the health and function of the forest, as well as the pastures, while conserving soil and water resources. Her primary objectives are to provide quality wildlife habitat; maintain a diverse herbaceous layer in the forest, and manage the value of her timber as a long-term investment. EQIP forestry cost-share funds have helped Ms. Partyka with these goals and objectives, by helping to defray the costs of hiring contractors to complete a number of forestry projects.

Since 2005, all livestock have been fenced out of the woods – a practice that benefits both the livestock and the timber. Ms. Partyka hired a forester to remove all trees of poor form or undesirable species. These trees were removed by girdling with a chainsaw, most of which are now dead and decomposing slowly. In areas where there were few desirable trees to leave as the next timber stand, a mix of hardwood trees were underplanted. Ms. Partyka also used EQIP funds to establish a riparian buffer along streams and wet areas on her property. Although some of these trees and shrubs are suffering from deer grazing at the top of the shelters, many trees have been able to pass deer height.



*In this timber stand improvement project, buckeye (*Aesculus octandra*) was removed due to its lower than average timber value. The dense vegetation growth on the forest floor has occurred since the livestock were fenced out of this woodlot.*



Several years have passed since these undesirable trees were girdled – the trees will now decompose slowly, providing valuable wildlife habitat.

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Minick Property

Submitted by David Richert, RC&D forester

Jim and Sarah Minick are Wythe County forest landowners who have been improving their timber stands using EQIP funds since 2005. With guidance provided by the Virginia Department of Forestry, the Minicks have implemented the timber stand improvement projects themselves. Each EQIP forestry project has funded 10 acres of timber stand improvement, at a pace of three to five acres per year – a manageable pace for the Minicks. Now in their third EQIP forestry project, the Minicks have improved 30 acres of forestland, and eventually hope to improve all of their 125 wooded acres.

While timber stand improvement is a primary objective, the Minicks have also used cost-share funds to implement other forestry projects. Earlier EQIP projects provided funding assistance to convert more than a dozen acres of marginal pasture to a mix of hardwood and pine trees. Now more than four years old, this conversion is showing positive results – trees fully emerged from tree shelters and young pines taller than the surrounding grasses. In addition to establishing a productive forest for eventual timber harvest, this conversion reduced the Minicks' bush-hogging workload, a maintenance practice that demands a lot of time in the middle of an always-full summer schedule.

The Minicks credit the EQIP projects for giving them incentives and deadlines to complete their timber stand improvement projects. When asked what they liked best about the EQIP project, the Minicks responded that they have enjoyed learning more about their forest. Another big incentive is the results – seeing how quickly the forest responds to a relatively small amount of management. Without EQIP funding for these projects, the Minicks would probably still have done a little timber stand improvement, but, according to Jim Minick, “Not nearly as much. The EQIP funding is definitely an incentive and a big help.”



Growing conditions for these trees have been improved by removing undesirable species and poorly-formed trees.



Reducing canopy cover can also promote regeneration – these seedlings (oak, hickory and red maple) will eventually become the next timber stand.

For more information about the EQIP cost-share program, as well as other landowner cost-share programs, and to see if you qualify for funding assistance, contact your local Virginia Department of Forestry (VDof), Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) or Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) office.



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