

Sandy Mush Forest Restoration Coalition

August 1, 2019, 6 - 9pm

Sandy Mush Community Center

NOTES

Copy of original [Participant Agenda](#)

Facilitation Team: Nick Biemiller, Forest Stewards Guild; Lang Hornthal, EcoForesters; Tracy Kunkler, Circle Forward

Notetaker: Gabby Hovis, EcoForesters

List of Participants

[List of volunteers for mapping project](#)

[Slide deck](#)

Tasks

- Nick will follow up about scheduling the next meeting (mid-Sept).
- People can send Nick any initial thoughts about a Community Gathering event, to be held in November (?) Like, what can you teach or what would you be interested to learn? (next step: set up a work group for the event)
- Lang will follow up with mapping project volunteers (link above)
- Nick will lead on translating the community input received tonight into a framework for creating an action plan. The Coalition will use this framework to create their action plan.
- Terri Wells wants a summary document to share with Sandy Mush Community Center board (Nick)
- Nick will summarize the value propositions
- Give access to the slides
- Nick will send follow-up email to all participants, summary of outcomes, next steps
 - Create shareable Google Drive for participants
 -

1. Welcome and Introductions/Relationship building and sharing stories

Themes about What We Have in Common

Small groups shared their answers to these questions: Why do we value forests in Sandy Mush? Why are we here? These are some of the themes we found in common, captured on post-it notes:

Sense of Place

- Home
- Appreciate diversity of flora & fauna
- Love the country
- Used to live off land

- History of land use
- Land has supported generations
- Appreciation of Sandy Mush beauty
- Love of land
- Change and Continuity

Value ecosystem services

- Non-timber resources
- Carbon sink
- Wildlife habitat
- Clean water
- Want to be able to enjoy hiking
- Want healthy forests that will survive
- Forest Restoration
- Profitability

Challenge of invasives

- Solve Common problem of invasives
- Challenging topography and invasives
- Invasive Species!
- Hate non-native invasives
- Education on Exotic Invasives
- Education on how Invasives spread
- Which invasives are the highest priority?
- Eliminate seed source
- Early detection
- Financing

Working Together

- Community issue
- Strength in numbers (Pests & People)
- Busy!

Hopes and Fears about a Sandy Mush Forest Restoration Coalition

(These can be accountability measures for the coalition as we go: ask, how are we doing in regards to our hopes and fears?)

Fears

- No Snacks!
- Not being able to sustain interest and drive long-term
- Long-term and widespread use of herbicides - wildlife, landscape, watersheds
- Not being able to follow through

- How it will be paid for
- Grant money actually used for work on the ground with landowners
- Cost-share not possible for some landowners-still a cost

Hopes

- Get people that aren't here interested.
- Hearing from the community
- Collaboration
- Learn how to manage the forest
- Community takes the time to learn
- Learning culture
- Develop workshops - free for landowners, community sharing knowledge
- Realistic expectations about invasives control, not eradication
- Keeping invasives out of places where we don't want them, forests, special areas
- Forest management combined with a thriving community

2. Defining the scope of the problem

Presentations by Steve Duckett, Andy Tait, Nick Biemiller, and Lang Hornthal

[Slide deck](#)

Some Comments and Questions from coalition participants

- How severe is Japanese knotweed?
- What is the role of fire in controlling invasives and is it practical?
- Sandy Mush many years ago had way more pasture/agricultural land. These areas were eventually abandoned. Abandoned areas regrow as unmanaged forests that are perfect for invasives to move into.
- Interested in the difference in invasives. Species differences and treatment differences
- Oriental bittersweet is the perfect enemy. There is nothing you can do to it that it doesn't like. Breaking the root system brings it back. Need to have a plan of action, especially for this species.
- What is the federal government doing in Pisgah and Smokies and the extent of invasives in these areas?
- Federal Government needs a reward for people who help to control invasives due to the economic losses these species have created.
- Invasive Plant Medicine. May find that there is an economic purpose for these plants. Utilize these plants. Creates an incentive to harvest.
- Native wildlife does not get the right nutrition from these plants. Junkfood for wildlife. Lowers their immune system. Death of animals from invasives. Harms wildlife in many ways.
- There are people in the community that can teach and there are people that want to learn

Dimensions of the Issue, from Coalition Participants:

Goals for this Initiative

- Biologically Diverse Forest
- Diversity of land uses, recreation, timber, ag, etc.
- Restoration – Restored out of sync habitats
- Maintained/Restored profitability of the land
- Sustainable Ecology
- Watershed health/well-being/high water quality
- Ecological health/well being
- Documentation of old homesteads, Restored history of Sandy Mush,
- Preservation of cultural sites, Interpretation
- Being an example for the rest of the community. Bringing the community together, collaboration. Join the drive to work on invasives. Seeing that our steps have success.
- Communication between community members, churches, clubs. Clear communication in all channels of communication.
- Support the politicians that support what we are doing.
- Lessen the threat of climate change
- Sense of place, Community health
- Restored/Maintained value to the people of the community
- Economic vitality
- Resilient Forests
- Quality of life
- Landscape connectivity.
- Preserved specialized habitats, mountain bogs, etc.

Threats to Goals

- Invasives creating a monoculture
- Invasives species in the way of land being profitable. Loss of sustainability of the forest
- Is the government waiting for old timers to die? To bring in nuclear waste.
- Politics getting in the way

Other Contributing Conditions

- Invasive Species
- Climate Change.
- Droughts and floods
- Wildfire
- Land use change, development

Possible Strategies

- Increased communication exchange, collaboration

- Outreach effort to the professors of economics, to find out what economics values we have at Sandy Mush
- Defining invasives as resources, producing income
- Get research, involve grad students
- Connecting people to the environment
- Integrate land uses and making them mutually beneficial
- Know the history of the land
- Threats bring the community together (history of nuclear waste threat, 1986) Environmental threat. Use the example.

3. Defining the Mapping/Modeling Project and nominating a mapping work group

Presentation by Wade Johnston

[Link to List of Volunteers for mapping project.](#)

Some qualities Wade is looking for in volunteers to help him:

- Are informed about how invasive plants are spreading
- Have a background in forest management or natural resources
- Personal experience with battling invasive species
- Familiarity with plant identification and Sandy Mush

4. Exercise: What's in it for me (to be part of the Coalition)?

Consulting Foresters/Private Businesses

- Identify mitigation options for Forest Stewardship Council Controlled Wood Program
 - Mapping
 - Funding options
- Data and information for land planning
- Economic feasibility study
- Investments in community, timber sale feasibility
- Educational opportunity
- Collaboration with other businesses
- Balancing complementary and collaborative business strengths
- Risk monitoring
- On the ground treatment of invasives

Community Members with Forestland

- Identify resources and strategies to control invasives
- Benefit timber growth and yet limit
- Healthy forest legacy for future
- Encourage neighbor collaboration for the benefit of all
- To realize our interconnectedness- water and sense of place
- Strengthening relationships between people

- Will encourage multi-purpose usage
- Encourage wildlife corridors
- Increase affordability
- Community spirit
- Community involvement
- Knowledge sharing
 - Approaches to restoration
 - Technical knowledge
- Gain a combination of optimism and moderation
- Involve/inform wider community
 - Ecotourism
 - “Forest bathing”
- Momentum and continuity of the projects
- Understanding historical continuity of problems/solutions
 - The old practices- good and bad
- Fire plan, fuel management
- Sharing labor and expertise

Public agencies

- Provide research-based information to landowners
- Use Sandy Mush Gamelands as an educational venue
- Positively impact wildlife habitat
- Increase landowner outreach
- Identify resources available to landowners

Nonprofit Organizations

- By working together, increase monetary capacity for actions in the community
- Mapping tells a story- many stories brought together
- Ecological literacy
- Successes/failures could be a model for other communities
- Fulfills out strategic plan- resilient ecosystems
- Steward protected and unprotected lands
- Community building among environmentally aware individuals, landowners, and other connected to the land and environment
- Prevents duplication of effort- more focused
- Facilitate ecosystem information sharing
- Opportunity to take action towards our mission: “walking the walk”
- Mutual support through partnership and collaboration

5. Vision and Mission

We ran out of time to comment on these, but the decision was to send the drafts out before the next meeting, so people can come prepared to comment.

6. Next Steps and Closing

- Would like a newsletter, blogs for when to treat invasives, meetings, etc.

- At some point, it will be good to do outreach to elected officials, let them know about our coalition.
- People can send Nick ideas for a Community Gathering event, to be held in November (?)
- Nights to have more community involvement, because they don't conflict with other community commitments and people are most likely to be available: Thursday, Friday, Saturday daytime (Maybe not Friday) Nick will follow up about scheduling the next meeting.
- Next meeting will be about framing the Action Plan, based on information gathered this evening
- Send Title, Vision, Mission in advance of meeting