

## Description of the Timber Stand Improvement-2015

### Background:

Phase I of the 2015 Walpole Town Forest timber stand improvement (TSI) project began in the main section of the Town Forest (TF), west of Washington Street near the Water Department, during the week of December 14, 2015 and will continue through December and perhaps extend into January. This harvest was prescribed in the Town Forest Management Plan, which was updated in Spring 2010. Two of the 106 stands identified in the Management Plan are the subjects of this harvest. In January work will shift to the section of the TF on the other side of Washington St.

On November 14 and again on November 28 two informative walks were organized by the Town Forest Committee (TFC) through these sections of Town Forest and offered to the public. These walks were publicized for several weeks in the Walpole Times. About ten people attended these walks. The walks were an opportunity for townspeople to meet Phil Benjamin, a State Licensed Forester. Phil has worked with the TFC for several years and has also worked with Norton, MA, Rochester, MA, and numerous private land owners for his expertise in timber harvesting operations. A Forest Cutting Plan was formulated, submitted to the state Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), received approval and a permit was issued to Walpole, based on the Plan.

For about two hours Phil described how forests are "managed" to ensure the overall health of the forest by selectively clearing certain trees. This process will promote species diversity, remove unhealthy trees, thin dense stands, and open the forest canopy, so that sunlight can reach the forest floor to help promote and facilitate new growth within the forest. Many people had questions about the process and after listening to Phil speak to the group, there was an understanding and appreciation for the need to perform the harvest and also confidence in the competence of the individuals involved.

### Details of the TSI:

A landing area (a staging area) has been created, inside the Town Forest, near the Water Department. This is where the harvested logs will be stacked prior to being moved to a saw mill. Once the operation is complete, this area will naturally revert back to part of the wooded forest.

Dan Reed, a logger from Taunton, Massachusetts was selected by the TFC after bids had been circulated and the work had been viewed by other loggers, to perform the timber harvest. He runs a family owned business that has been working in the industry for several generations, and comes fully qualified and highly recommended for his fine work. Reed Logging Co., follows the markings of the forester's Plan, and then brings the selected logs of White Pine, Red Oak and Black Oak to a saw mill. Other tree species without lumber value, included in the overall cutting plan, are sold as pulp wood.

Red pine in particular was targeted in this harvest. A fatal blight (a fungus) is affecting red pine in southern New England and the decision was made to harvest the red pine now, while the trees still have value.

Estimated yield for the current timber harvest is:

- 38,105 board feet of White Pine.
- 22,595 board feet of Red Pine.
- 2,915 board feet of Black Oak.
- 1,205 board feet of White Oak.
- 260 board feet of Red Maple.
- 63 cords of fuel wood.

## **Town Forest Charter:**

The Walpole Town Forest Committee, following the original intent of the Walpole Town Forest Charter from 1916, receives the monetary value of the timber to pay for the ongoing maintenance and improvements of the forest. Timber prices vary with time. This year's TSI was called for by the TF management plan, but also timed to capture optimal value for the red pine while the trees are still viable. The TFC and our forester are most interested in the overall health of the forest, not maximizing income from a TSI. All proceeds are deposited into the established Town Forest Trust Fund, through the Walpole Treasurer's Office, and are utilized throughout the years to pay for re-planting, trail maintenance and other activities in the forest as a great recreational asset of our Town. After expenses, this year's project will net between \$2,000-3,000 in revenue for the Town Forest Trust.

## **What to Look for in a TSI:**

The Reed's are cautious in their practices. During one of the walks through the TF east of Washington St with Phil Benjamin, he pointed out the remnants of previous TSIs and the damage left behind by those loggers. These include scarred trees.

You may see trees labeled with a "B" in blue paint. This means a "bump" tree, or a tree that is used as a pivot point when dragging trees to the landing area. These trees get damaged, but will be removed. Bump trees from previous harvests were left behind and the scarring has diminished the value and health of those trees.

Also, the Reeds use slash as ground cover which provides traction for their machines, which helps the slash decompose more quickly, which returns nutrients to the soil and also helps soil stay in place while new growth takes hold.

The openings created in the forest canopy where trees are removed allow sunlight to reach the forest floor, which promotes new growth. This also increases age diversity in the forest, which is desirable since it makes the forest more resilient to disease outbreaks.

## **Future Plans:**

As part of the celebration of the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Town Forest, to be held on May 1, 2016, we will be organizing the planting of several hundred trees in some of the areas currently affected by the TSI.

For further questions, contact [Steve Cyr](#), chairman of the TFC.

A copy of this document can be obtained from the Town Forest website:  
<http://www.walpole-ma.gov/town-forest-committee>

