

UVM CLASS COMPLETES LAPLATTE RESTORATION PROJECT

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Four years after John and Sally Guttler decided to create a forested buffer zone along the LaPlatte River on their Hinesburg property, the final trees and shrubs have been planted with the helping hands of a UVM class. Bill Keeton and Mary Watzin's class on restoration ecology accepted the project of planting the last 800 seedlings along some 2,000 feet of the River just down stream from Hinesburg village.

Through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program and the USDA Conservation Reserve Program, the Guttlers agreed to establish a 35-foot forested buffer zone along almost a mile of the LaPlatte River to help improve water quality and wildlife habitat. Buffers act as filters for pollutants in stormwater runoff and help trap sediment before it reaches the River.

The Hinesburg Conservation Commission (HCC), a partner in the restoration plan, and many community volunteers, had already planted 875 trees and shrubs over a three-year period. Some bank stabilization work was also completed with grants awarded to the HCC from the Vermont Agency of Transportation and the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources.

This spring, 800 trees remained to be planted on the Guttler property. Planting would have taken three more years at the current pace. In stepped the Lewis Creek Association (LCA), which has partnered with UVM classes on many projects. LCA coordinated the planting project with the class as they developed a plan for the project including a budget, labor needs, selection of the tree species, planting densities, and logistics.

On April 30, the class was ready to plant, and completed the project in a superbly organized fashion. Professor Watzin said that using projects like this in the course give students the opportunity to participate not just in the design of a plan but to actually implement it and leave something substantial behind. Andrew Mahon, a junior in the Environmental Science Program, echoed the sentiments of other students in his

class when he said that, "This project gives us a chance to put what we're learning into action."



Professor Bill Keeton goes over final details of the tree planting plan with the UVM restoration ecology class.

Professor Keeton hopes the students have learned the overall strategy of such a project: planning, putting it into effect, and then monitoring it. He says the students will also have learned "how this one small project fits into the bigger picture of the restoration of the Lake Champlain Basin."

As part of their project, the class has created a plan that includes recommendations for the site in the future. The HCC hopes to work with other property owners along the LaPlatte River to help restore water quality and wildlife habitat.

For more information, visit www.lewisecreek.org.