



Forests Are Part of our Story: Enhancing Forest Resilience throughout Northeastern National Parks

Rachel Swanwick
Forest Stewards Guild
Northeast Program Manager
FEMC, November 20th 2025

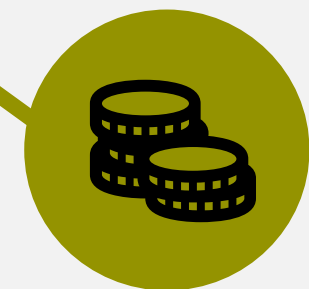
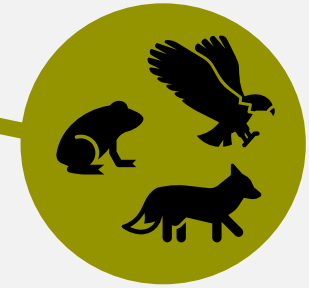
Forest Stewards
Guild



Do forest management practices within park forests lead to unique ecological outcomes compared to surrounding forests?



Photo Credit: NPS, Saratoga National Historic Park



Background

- NPS Inventory and Monitoring (I&M) Northeast Temperate Network (NETN)
- ~1500 NPS I&M forest plots across 39 Eastern National Parks
- Study findings:
 - Higher tree species richness
 - Higher % of rare species
 - Greater structural complexity



Contents lists available at [ScienceDirect](https://www.sciencedirect.com)

Forest Ecology and Management

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/foreco



Eastern national parks protect greater tree species diversity than unprotected matrix forests

Kathryn M. Miller^{a,b,*}, Brian J. McGill^b, Brian R. Mitchell^c, Jim Comiskey^d, Fred W. Dieffenbach^e, Elizabeth R. Matthews^f, Stephanie J. Perles^g, John Paul Schmit^f, Aaron S. Weed^e

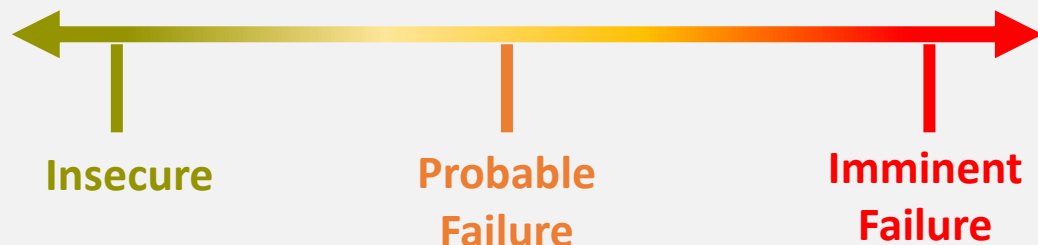
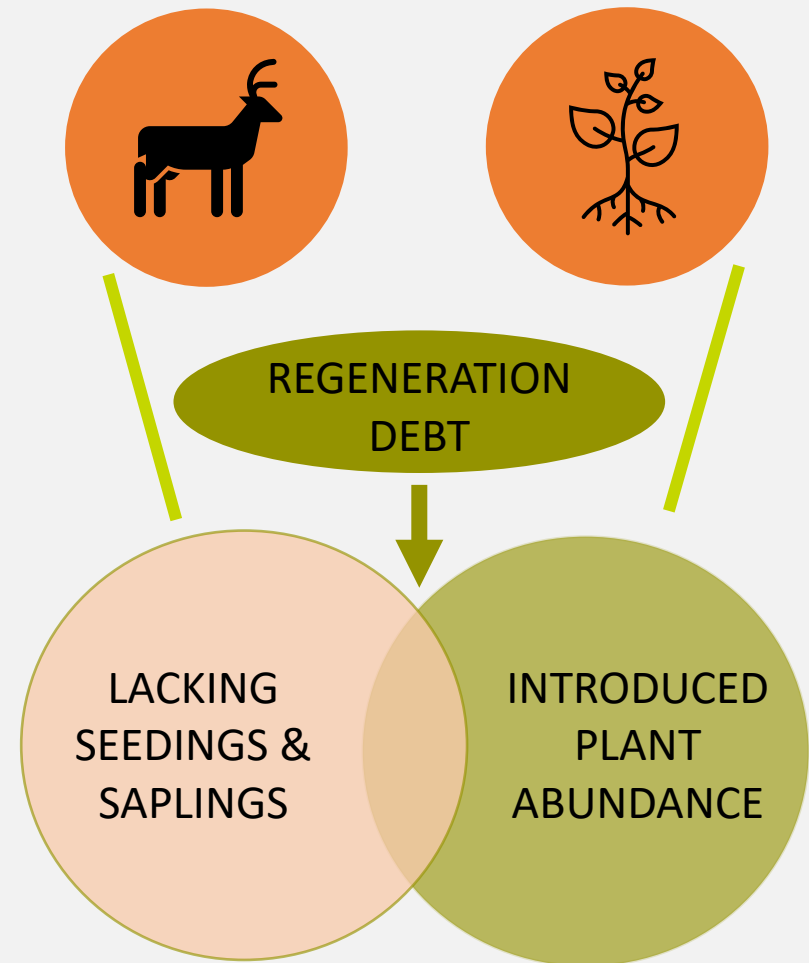


Photo Credit: NPS, Kate Miller pictured, NETN forest health monitoring crew studies a plot in Acadia National Park.

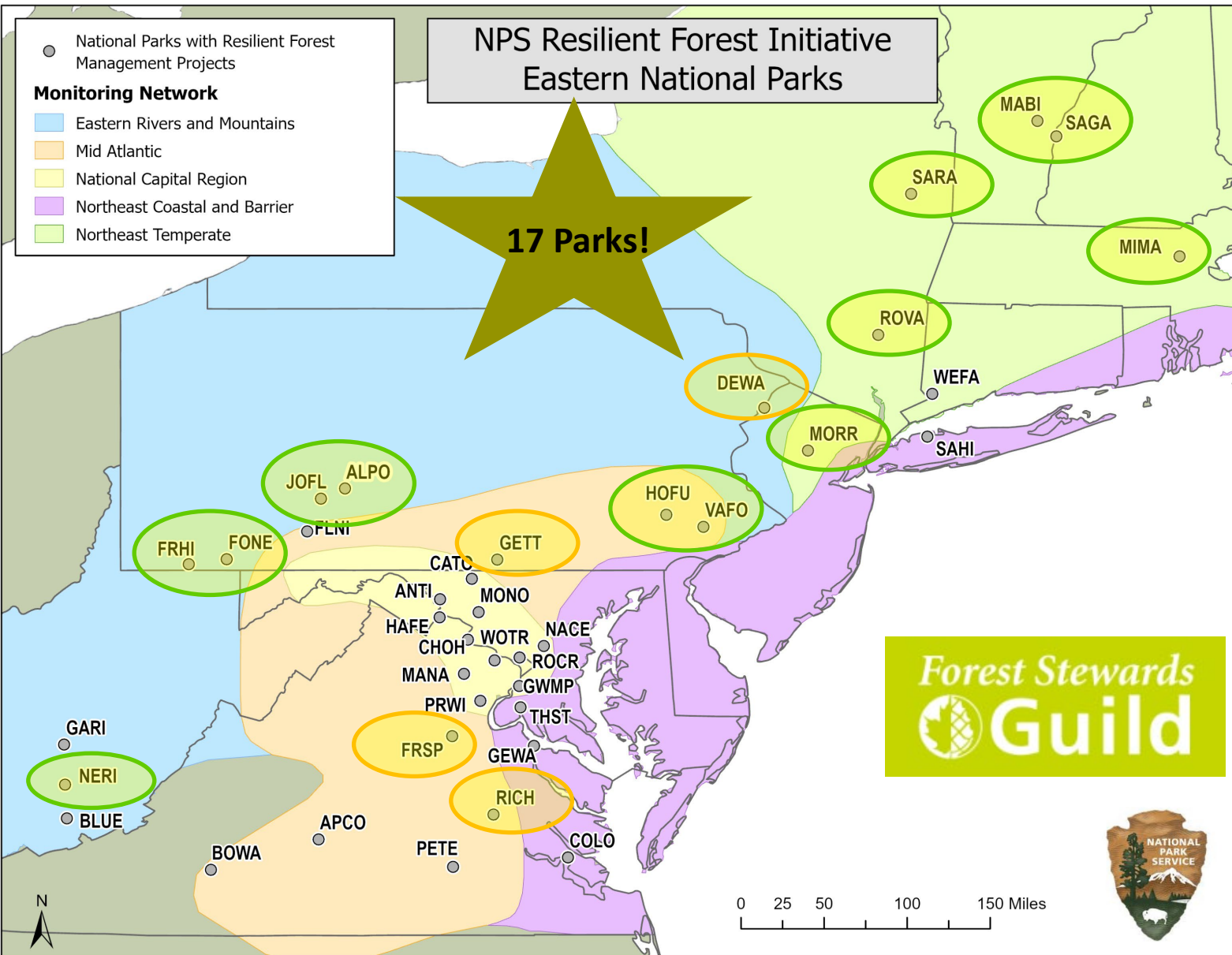


Background

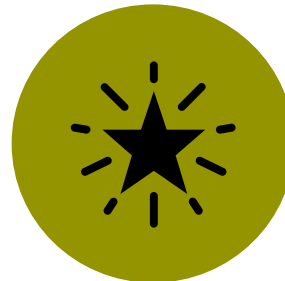
- Same monitoring data identified concerning region-wide trends
- “Regeneration debt” (Miller & McGill 2019)
- 39 national parks rated for regeneration status



Resilient Forests Initiative (RFI)



- Reverse forest regeneration failures
- IRA & BIL funded
- Partnership with Forest Stewards Guild
- Priority for management



RFI Project Scope

Management in up to 39 parks

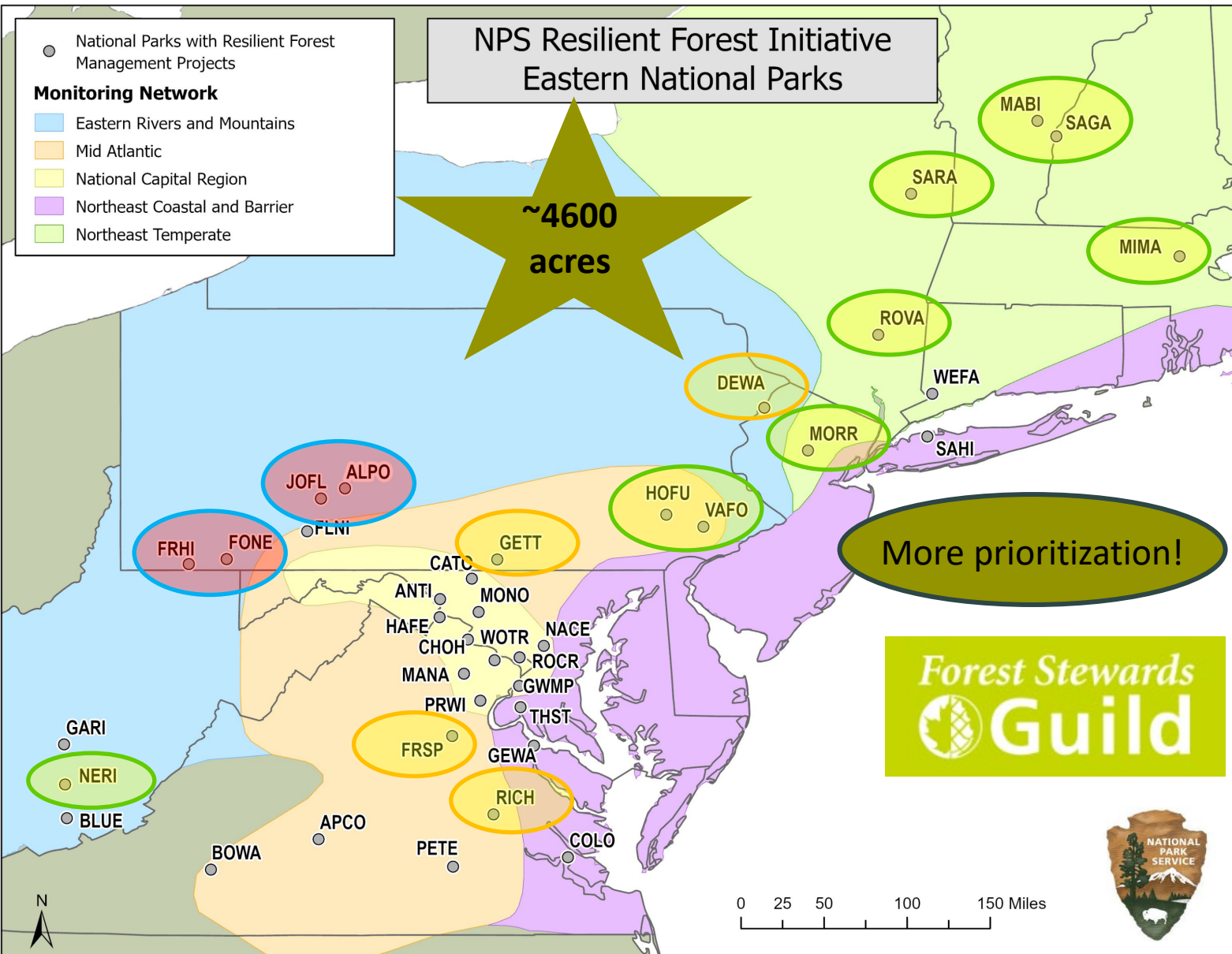
- Guild provides project & contract management, planning, implementation, monitoring, and outreach
- Supporting local workforce development

Forest resilience projects:

- Introduced plant treatment
- Native tree and shrub planting
- Beech control
- Protection native regeneration
- Deer protection



Resilient Forest Initiative: Eastern Region Update



Projects Completed:

4 parks
500 acres restored
200 trees planted

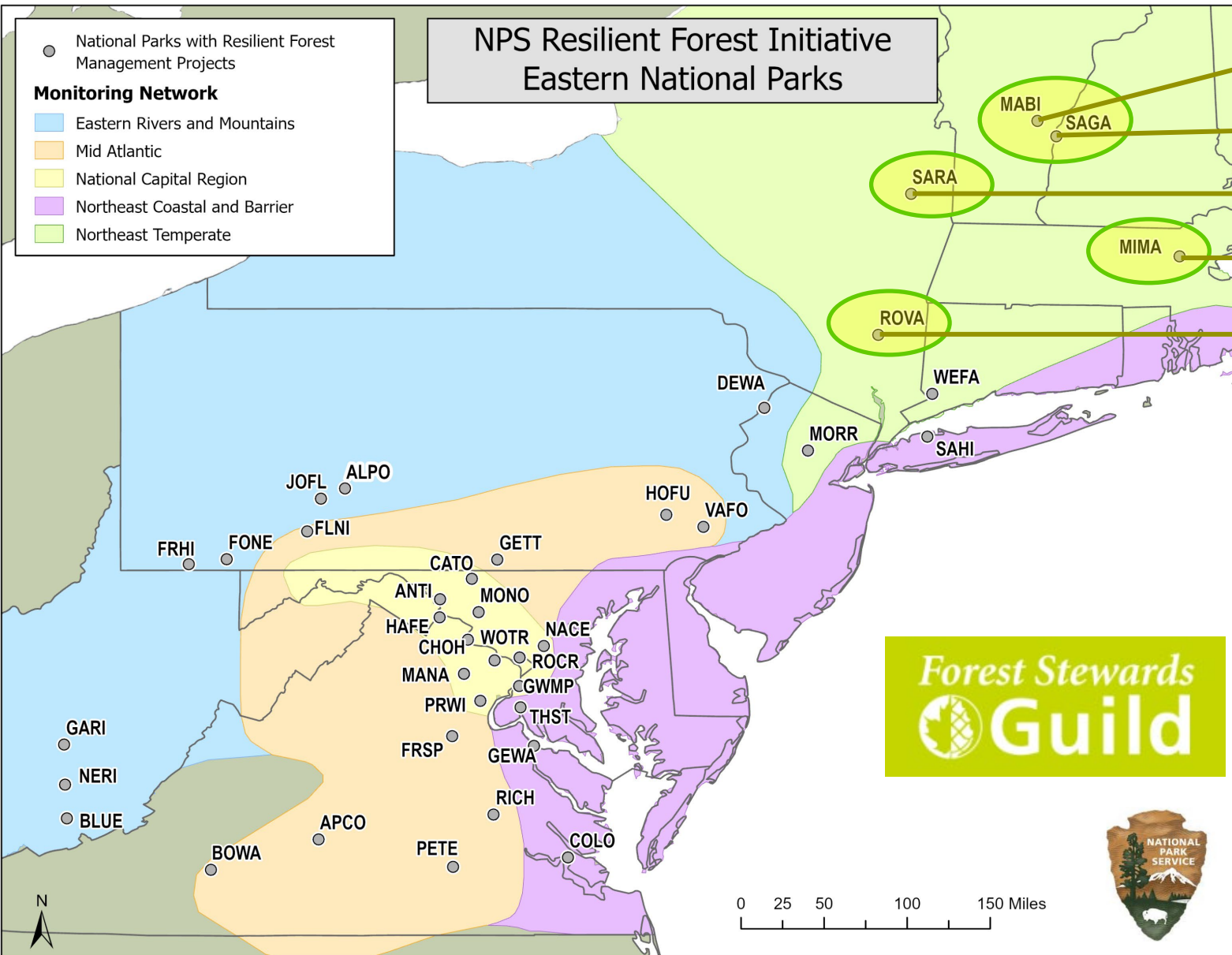
Projects In Progress:

9 parks
1,400 acres in active restoration

Projects Out to Bid:

4 parks
2,750 acres targeted

Resilient Forests Initiative: Northeastern Region Update



Marsh Billings Rockefeller NHP

Saint Gaudens NHP

Saratoga NHP

Minute Man NHP

Roosevelt Vanderbilt NHS

Introduced Plant Control

2025-2027

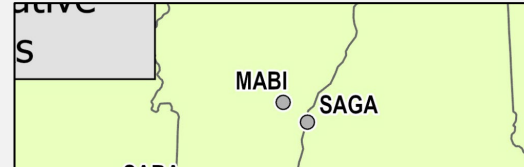
Planting

2028-2029

Acres in Restoration:
~270



RFI: Home of Franklin D. Roosevelt NHS



Acres in Restoration:
~17 acres

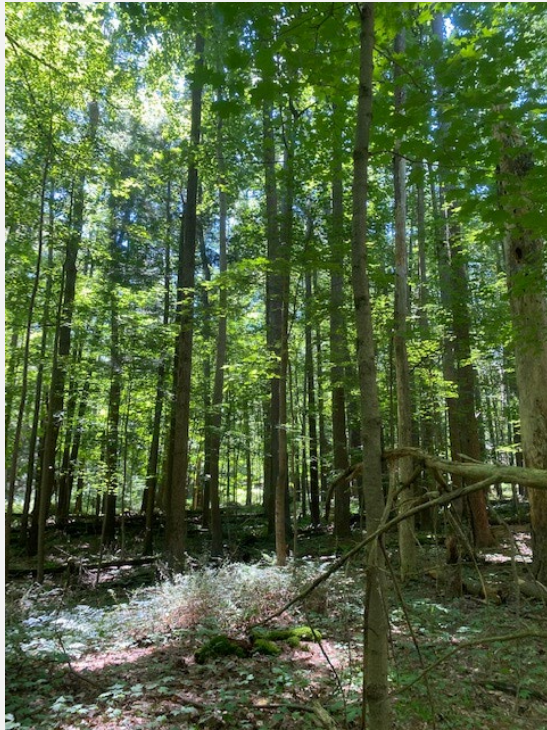
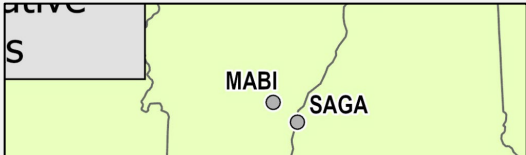


Photo Credit: NPS



RFI: Minute Man NHP



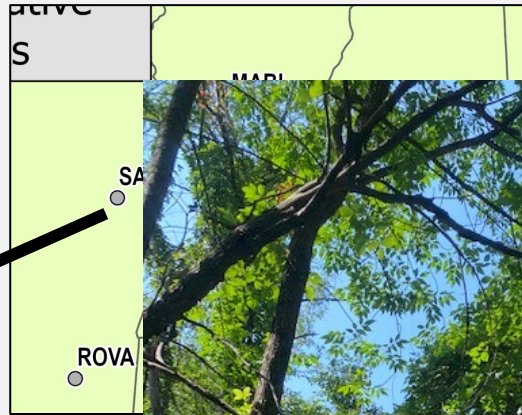
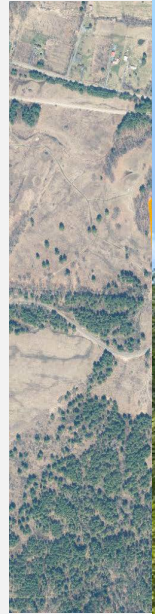
Acres in Restoration:
~30 acres



Photo Credit:
NPS



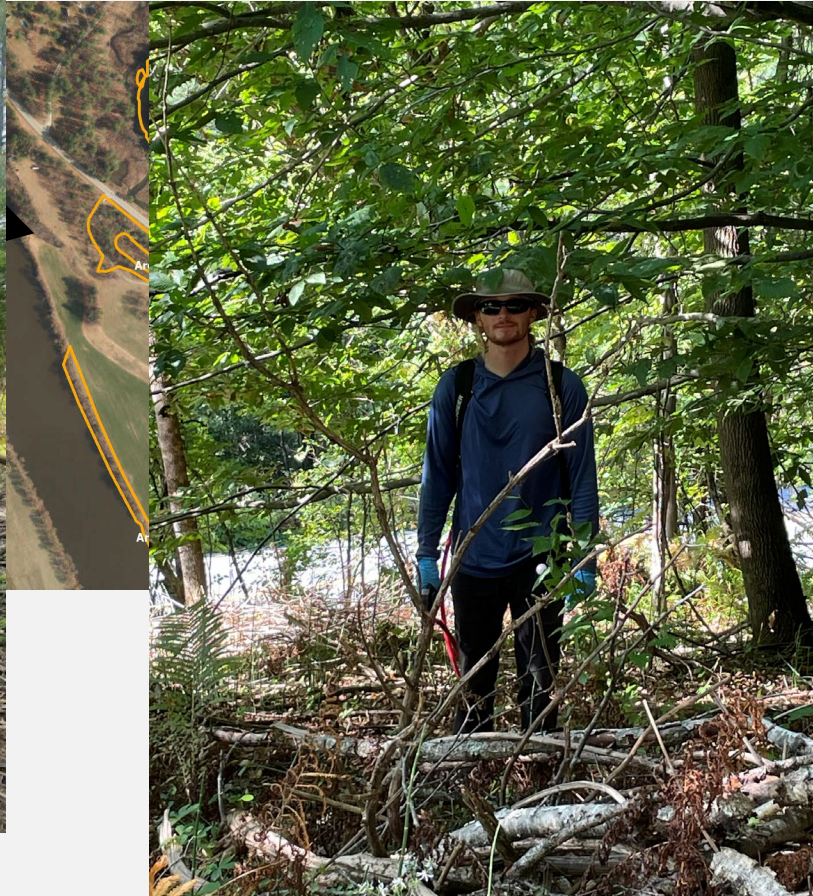
RFI: Saratoga NHP



**Acres in
Restoration:**
~160 acres



RFI: Saint Gaudens NHP



Acres in
Restoration:
~24 acres



RFI: Marsh Billings Rockefeller NHP



Acres in
restoration:
~40 acres



RFI Looking Ahead

- Closing out year 1 of 3 for introduced species management
 - ~270 acres across 4 parks
- Beginning contracting phase for native tree and shrub planting
- Site inspections ongoing
- Exploring opportunities to promote early career workforce development



RFI Lessons Learned

- Allocate time for flexibility
- Partnership is key
- Streamline processes
- Communicate, communicate, and communicate some more!



Thank You!

Sarah Hagan

Matt Piccarello



Stephanie Perles

Kate Miller

Aaron Weed

Camilla Seirup

Brian Mitchell

and all local park
staff!



Want to learn more about
the RFI?

Visit the RFI website!

Team at Redstart NRM



References

- Miller KM and McGill BJ. 2019. Compounding human stressors cause major regeneration debt in over half of eastern US forests. *Journal of Applied Ecology*. 56:1355-1366 <https://irma.nps.gov/DataStore/Reference/Profile/2278320>
- Miller KM et al. 2018. Eastern national parks protect greater tree species diversity than unprotected matrix forests. *Forest Ecology and Management*. 414:74-84 <https://irma.nps.gov/DataStore/Reference/Profile/2251773>

