

Executive Summary

Final Report

2017 NSFC Tree Planting and Fencing Program for Private Landowners



Photo by Heideman



Photo by Palecek
"Legacy for grandsons"



Photo by Sullivan
"Tending to white pine"



Photo by Wiinanen
"Area Enclosure"



Photo by Schelmeske
"White pine in woods"



Photo by Soposi –Red oak planted
with NSFC-provided crew

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2017 NSFC Tree Planting and Fencing Program for Private Landowners

Objective of Program: Provide low-cost fencing to private landowners along the north shore. Landowners will plant and fence from 10 to 15 trees per acre to help restore conifers and other trees to the north shore landscape.

Funding: The 2017 tree fencing program was funded by a \$45,000 grant from the Weekes Family Foundation and \$8,600 in funding from Sugarloaf: The North Shore Stewardship Association.

Project Results:

In Summary: The 2017 NSFC planting and fencing program was very successful. Demand for the program is clear, with twice the amount of fencing and three times the amount of participants as the 2016 program. Over 2500 trees were planted and fenced with the materials supplied, and another 8,000 trees were planted (but not fenced) by program participants. Participants were nearly unanimous in their appreciation and positive comments on the program. (See Appendix of full report for participants comments to the Weekes Family Foundation). We hope to continue the program in future years and are also seeking additional grantor organizations to expand the program.

Total no. of participants: 97

Total no. of fence rolls provided: 512

Total no. of trees planted: 10,550

Total no. of trees fenced: 2550

Species planted: (in descending order of number planted) White Pine, White Cedar, Red Pine, White Spruce (generally not caged) Tamarack, Red Oak, and other species.

Exclosure type: The vast majority used only single tree exclosures. Several participants used both individual tree and small area exclosures. Two participants used a combination of single tree and large area exclosures, and one used only large area exclosures.

Participants requesting/receiving planting assistance: 3. Five people initially requested assistance, but one was unable to plant this year and will do so next year. The other did not follow-up with arranging for assistance. Of those who received assistance, one had several larger trees planted and required two days of assistance.

Participants wanting to participate next year: 75% of participants responded that they wished to participate in a 2018 planting/fencing program (if it is available). Several of those who stated that they did not wish to participate next year explained that they either could not plant and fence this year, or they had fencing left over that they would use next year.

Participants that did not plant this spring: Several participants responded that they did not plant and fence trees during the spring and summer, but would either be planting/fencing in late fall 2017 or in spring 2018. We estimate that this equates to approximately 200 total trees will be planted and fenced by these participants.

Survival success from 2016 fenced trees: Of those participants who also participated in the 2016 program, 18 people reported a 1st year survival success of greater than 80%, and 5 reported a survival rate of 50 to 79%.

Participant Info:

- **Owners having a management plan:** One third of participants had a forest plan for their lands (stewardship, NRCS, consulting forester's plan) or had participated in Sugarloaf's Lost Forest program.
- **Landownership size:** Average size was 30 acres, but this average was skewed by a few ownerships that had hundreds of acres. 38 participants owned 1-5 acres; 25 participants owned 6-

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19 acres; 23 participants owned 20-79 acres, 11 participants had ownership greater than 80 acres. The largest ownership was 380 acres.

- **Proximity to Highway 61:** Participants were equally divided as to their proximity to Highway 61, with roughly one-third stating their lands are immediately adjacent to the highway, another third stating their lands were “in view” from the highway, and the last third stating their lands were “more distant” from the highway.
- **Amount of fence purchased:** The lowest number of rolls purchased by a participant was 1 and the highest number was 15 (several people requested a higher amount, but we capped the maximum at 15.)

Comments and suggestions received from participants and changes for future programs:

- Respondents were very complimentary about the program, and thanked the Weekes Family Foundation for their generosity in funding the program.
- Many responses said that the program was “good, just as it is.”
- Most frequent suggestions for improvement were:
 - **Rebar:** Comments that rebar is too long, and too heavy to carry any distance into the woods. *For next year, we will look into shorter length rebar.*
 - **Zip ties vs Wire:** In the past, we have recommended using wire to attached fencing to the rebar, or to just thread the rebar through the fencing mesh. Several folks mentioned that they use plastic zip ties which are much easier to use and install. *For next year, we will look into providing plastic zip ties..*
 - **Tree Mats:** The tree mats we acquired this year were not exactly what we ordered. Several people questioned whether they were water permeable and would allow enough moisture to get to the seedling trees. Fortunately, it was a very wet year. Others commented that they may allow voles to nest under the mat and chew on the seedlings. Still others commented that they may be more hassle than they are worth. *For next year, we will ensure that mats are made from water-permeable landscape fabric and mats will be optional for those who wish to use them.*
 - **Earlier Notification:** Some people wanted earlier notification of acceptance into the program and notification of pick-up dates and locations. This would help they secure trees before they are sold out, and be able to pick up fencing at more appropriate times. *For next year, we will shoot for earlier program announcement, selection notification and we hope to have a commercial business pick-up site in Two Harbors similar to the existing site in Lutsen.*
 - **Fence Installation:** One person commented that a diagram on how to install fencing would have been helpful. *Our emails directed people to our website that contained such a diagram as well as a video on how to install fencing. For next year, we will put more emphasis to this.*
 - **Expand the area of consideration for the fencing program:** One person asked that we include the area of the lower north shore watershed to encourage a more diverse forest in this area also. *The NSCF area ends at the St. Louis/Lake County line, and will not be enlarged in the immediate future. However, other programs that assist in planting and fencing are available for the lower north shore watershed area. DNR private lands forestry, Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) programs, and South St. Louis County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) programs.*

Fencing Procurement: Through Izak Hansen Hardware in Lutsen, MN, Sugarloaf/NSFC purchased of 512 rolls of 2”x4” mesh fence that is 6 feet tall along with 4,100 pieces of 7 foot rebar to anchor the

fencing, 2050 fabric matts and approx. 9,000 mat pins. Cost per package averaged \$79.60 and was sold to landowners for \$25.00 per package.

Fencing Disbursement: This year, there were 2 fencing pick-up locations, adopting the suggestions from many of 2016 participants to have another location closer to Two Harbors. Izak Hansen's continued to be a main pick-up location and Gooseberry Falls State Park offered their maintenance area as a second pickup point. Hansen's hardware made 2 deliveries to the Gooseberry site, which operated for 3 consecutive Saturdays in April and May 2017 and was staffed by NSFC members. Approximately 2/3 of participants received their fencing from Hansen's and approximately 1/3 from Gooseberry.

Advertisement of Fencing Program: Promotion of the program was greatly increased this year. A news release to area newspapers, periodicals, and radio and television stations on March 3, a full month sooner than last year's program kick-off. An email news letter announcing the program was sent to NSFC's mailing list of 206 individuals on March 3. Sugarloaf sent an email blast to approximately 250 of members shortly thereafter. Follow-up emails were sent informing potential participants of where to purchase tree seedlings or get them for free. Advertisements were purchased and ran in two North Shore newspapers and Northern Wilds magazine, all of which also ran news stories about the fencing program. NSFC Coordinator was featured in a 20 minute program about the fencing program on WTIP public radio out of Grand Marais. Due to the success of the publicity campaign, the number of participants and fence rolls requested quickly exceeded our supply. The Weekes Family Foundation added additional funding that enabled a doubling of the initial supplies to 512 rolls of fencing, so that all people requesting fencing could receive up to a maximum of 15 rolls each.

Enrollment Period: The enrollment period ran from March 3 until April 7, 2017.

Selection Notification: Individuals selected for the program were notified on April 12, 2016. Instructions were customized for those participants picking up at Hansen's Hardware and those picking up at Gooseberry Falls State Park.

Payment for Fencing: Payment for fencing was done through the NSFC website, with a Paypal link to Sugarloaf. Cost to landowners was \$25 for each fence roll package. This was essentially an agreed upon 1/3 retail cost and ensured that participants "had skin in the game." Vouchers to be redeemed at Izak Hansen's Hardware or Gooseberry Falls State Park were emailed to landowners once payment had been received, usually that day or the next. Landowners were required to present the voucher when picking up their fencing. Participants were required to pick up their fencing by June 15. (A few exceptions were made due to family emergencies and hardships). All landowners did pick up their fencing.

Verification of Planting: As part of the initial agreement, landowners agreed to provide photos or have a site visit to verify their planting and use of fencing. On August 12, a email requesting two photos of the erected fencing, and participation in a survey on number and species of trees planted, and other information was sent to all participants, with an RSVP deadline of August 30. On August 30 and September 1, a reminder was sent to those persons who had not yet responded, and extending the response deadline to Sept. 13. A final reminder was sent on October 8 to the 18 people who had not yet responded, again extending the deadline to October 11. The email also stated this was the last reminder and deadline extension and a non-response would result in ineligibility for any future fencing program. Seven people responded to the survey and 11 did not respond.