

Northern white cedar swamps are a natural community type found throughout New England, including some small examples here on North Haven. As the name implies this community type is dominated by Northern white cedar (*Thuja occidentalis*) trees and is generally found on sites with poorly drained and shallow soils. Cedar swamps provide important habitat to a variety of coniferous forest specialist bird species, rare plant species and critical winter habitat for white tailed deer (especially in more Northern climates). NHCP is fortunate to have an example of a Northern white cedar swamp on its Mill Stream Preserve. A majority of the cedar trees are reaching maturity and due to a number of factors including excessive deer browse and aggressive competition by the invasive species glossy buckthorn, there is little to no natural cedar regeneration. Past management activities including land clearing for agriculture and harvesting of cedar trees here on North Haven and throughout New England, have greatly reduced the number and acres of Northern white cedar swamps. The wood of the cedar tree is rot resistant and was/is used for a wide variety of products, from fence posts to cedar shingles. When stands of cedar are harvested, they typically do not come back as cedar stands so promoting cedar regeneration is challenging.

NHCP has developed or is in the process of developing management plans for all of its properties. The draft management plan for the Mill Stream Preserve lists the conservation and restoration of the Northern white cedar swamp natural community type as a key objective for this property. NHCP will begin work to meet this objective starting this spring. The primary methods used to complete this goal will be implementing efforts to control buckthorn through cutting larger stems at breast height and pulling smaller stems. Northern white cedar trees will be planted in the treated areas. NHCP is going to use the experimental technique of constructing “slash walls” in an effort to protect the newly planted trees from deer browse, though traditional fencing will be used on a portion of the planting. The use of slash walls, especially after commercial harvests is a growing land management technique and are typically constructed around areas to be planted. The walls are up to 10 ft tall and made of wood and brush (slash) left over from a timber harvest. Research has shown that these slash walls are both effective in promoting regeneration by reducing deer browse and more cost effective than installing and maintain traditional fencing. [I will again make the case for simply leaving brush, downed trees and other coarse woody debris in the forest as it not only benefits forest soils and health but has also been proven to discourage deer browse and promote regenerations]. NHCP’s slash walls will be more moderate in height as we will be making them by hand out of the cut buckthorn and brush from blowdowns. Though these slash walls may less effective than taller ones, our hope is that they will still reduce browse. A portion of trees within the slash enclosure will be protected using traditional fencing. NHCP will compare the rate of browse between those trees with traditional fences and those with only the slash walls to measure the effectiveness of this technique.

The Maine Conservation Corps (MCC) crew that will be working with NHCP in April will help with this effort. NHCP will also be hosting a volunteer workday on April 20 from 9:00 am to 12 noon at the Mill Stream Preserve for those interested in seeing and/or helping with this restoration effort. The primary objective of the day will be to plant cedar trees within the slash enclosures. For more information on NHCP’s Northern white cedar swamp conservation and restoration project or any NHCP programs, call 207-867-2113 or email [nhcp@northhavenconservation.org](mailto:nhcp@northhavenconservation.org).