



NJ Invasive Species
Strike Team

FoHIVOS
FRIENDS OF HOPEWELL VALLEY OPEN SPACE

We Need Your Support!

We are thankful for another productive year of protecting our flora and fauna from the impacts of invasive species! With a host of amazing partners, we've eliminated thousands of invasive populations through our US Forest Service Landscape Scale Restoration Grant and completion of fourteen contracts across the state. Outreach and training included our annual professional conference, community field workshop, and two dozen other outreach events reaching 1,100 people.

Our work could not be accomplished without the support of partners and individuals like you. Please consider donating this holiday season to help us accomplish even more in 2024!



Click or Scan above to Donate!

Special Updates from 2023

Legislation -- We were an active participant in engaging with conservation partners, the nursery trade, and legislature to improve proposed legislation to regulate the sale of invasive species and form an NJ Invasive Species Council to coordinate statewide action. We are hopeful that legislation will pass this year!

Kudzu -- Along with NJ Audubon and US Fish & Wildlife Service, we finalized a statewide assessment. We have confirmed 32 populations -- 4 of them are now considered eliminated and we're closing in on another 8 populations!

You can read more about our 2023 progress [here](#).

Michael Van Clef

Mike Van Clef, Ph.D.
FoHVOS Stewardship Director
Strike Team Program Director

Thank You for an Amazing Potluck!

In October, our annual potluck including 30 people was another fun and delicious event - thank you to Richele and Craig Lieboff for being such gracious hosts!



Check out [photos](#) of the event/food, maybe you'll find an interesting dish to serve at the upcoming holiday gatherings!

Live and Learn

This month's Live and Learn is provided by Robert Aluck from the Sourland Conservancy. Rob describes their massive tree planting program, inspired by the loss of our ash trees. He emphasizes various ways to protect seedlings from overabundant deer – something of interest to anyone that wants to grow a tree anywhere!



Oh Deer

By Robert Aluck
Sourland Conservancy

Anyone familiar with the Sourland Region knows that it's a special place filled with natural wonders—great and small—with effects that stretch way beyond its borders. The uniqueness of the region is why the Sourland Conservancy (SC) was created in 1986, as a group to advocate for this special place. As time went on and the needs of the region shifted, what started out as a regional advocacy group, is now geared towards combating the current ash

die out and its effects on the local ecology.

As a staff of six, we rely heavily on our interns, volunteers, partners, and the surrounding community to achieve the often lofty but necessary goals we set for ourselves. Since 2019, SC has planted over 35,000 trees at over 50 sites. The upkeep of these sites is a difficult task that requires different methods of maintenance across the region, ultimately predicated on the forethought of proper site planning and the help of the entire Sourland Community.

Since SC is still a fledgling in the world of stewardship, we are always learning new techniques to overcome different challenges as they arise and setting a new bar for how far we can push ourselves. One major lesson we have learned is that in ecological restoration, the problems faced are often not static but constantly changing.

Over time, we have recognized that the biggest challenge to contend with is also one of the cutest: deer. To say the deer population within the Sourlands is a bit out of control would be an understatement—it is currently about ten times the amount of a healthy population.

What this means for the forest:

- Any emerging native seedlings get eaten almost immediately.
- There is a massive generation gap with no seedlings to replace older trees.
- Invasives have little to no competition.
- Other native fauna gets eaten out of house and home.

What this means for us:

- We spend up to ⅓ of any given project's funding on deer protection.
- We sometimes have to get creative.

In areas with recently disturbed soil or post-agriculture, our use of plantings protected by tubes is ideal since there is little worry about ruining any mycorrhizal networks established. Another benefit of tubing is the ease of maintenance of any invasive species that the planting may be competing with. In areas of older growth or herbaceous plantings we have begun experimenting with various fencing methods running from circumference and height to accessory deterrents.



Large plastic fencing installation with our volunteers

The most cost efficient fencing we have tried has been black plastic fencing,

where we use trees as posts and avoid breaking any soil used for support structure. The issue with this fencing is its fragility, so proper planning in areas of minimal falling debris and consistent monitoring are necessary. The benefit of this fencing is that if there is damage by a branch falling, it is often easily repaired with simple twist ties.

In areas where constant monitoring is challenging, we prefer metal fencing—but it costs more per square foot. And while this fencing is able to handle more growth from vine plants or falling branch damage, it is more difficult to transport and often relies on metal posts being installed for proper structure, making it less ideal for old growth forests.



Small circumference metal fencing plot

With the weight and cost of metal fencing being high, we've seen success using creative and affordable deterrent accessories—like flagging tape. Flagging tape allows for the installation of shorter fencing with wider circumference while saving money. It has been used successfully at one of our Somerset County locations, where we planted 800 wetland flower plugs granted by Xerces Society. With the flagging tape woven across the surface of these fenced-in areas, the deer are less likely to try and jump over the shorter fencing due to their cautious nature. While this is currently the only site where we have used this method, we plan on using it at future sites where needed.



Fencing allows for healthier growth by supporting natural regeneration and maintains an enclosure with plant species that are genetically predisposed to do well within that region. Fencing also helps create more variety by allowing both saplings and herbaceous plants to grow, something tubes can't do. One of our happier successes came with the growth of *Platanthera lacera*, which naturally began occurring at one of our older fencing locations. Two other successes we have had are with *Lobelia cardinalis* and *Gentiana andrewsii*.



Lobelia cardinalis (left) and *Gentiana andrewsii* (right)

The ultimate solution to this problem would be a healthy deer population, but until that happens, utilizing deer protection efficiently and community efforts to maintain the land are our best solutions.

Upcoming Events

Please contact [Mike](#) if you are interested in attending any of the following scheduled events.

Stay Tuned for upcoming events in 2024 !

Volunteer with us!

Looking for a volunteer opportunity?
The NJ Invasive Species Strike Team is the organization for you!
Visit our sign up genius below to share your interests with us.
Contact mvanclaf@fohvos.org for more information.

I'm Interested!

Volunteer Stewardship Teams Information

Consider a Membership Donation

The Strike Team needs your help to fight invasive species throughout New Jersey. By making a membership donation, you directly fund our efforts to keep invasive species at bay and protect our native plants and wildlife. Donate through the link below!

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