

A Beginning: the First Five Rumney Natural Resources Educational Tours

The Rumney Natural Resources Network (RNRN) has been conducting educational tours/workshops to highlight the value of natural resources to be found in the town. RNRN is a collaboration of the Rumney Natural Resources and the Working Environment Committee - an outgrowth of the May 2007 Rumney Profile meetings - which co-ordinates the tours; the USNH Cooperative Extension; the Rumney Conservation Commission; the Baker River Watershed Association; and HHP, a Henniker forest products company with large holdings in Rumney.

The first 2007 tour; Bugs in the Baker:

On July 7, 2007 thirteen hearty souls, ages ranging between single digits and 70+, gathered at the Rumney rest area on Rte 25 to conduct a 'Streamside Macro-invertebrate Survey'; we counted and identified bugs that we caught in the Baker River. PSU Professor Emeritus Larry Cushman, representing the Baker River Watershed Association, first gave a short introduction, then divided us into six groups consisting of a 'shuffler' and a netter; the shuffler's job was to stand a foot or two upstream of the netter and shuffle the rocks in front of the lowered net. Each team caught bugs (for exactly 10 minutes) from several different sections of the river, depositing their catch into a container. We then gathered at one of the picnic tables, and, with the help of a picture key, each team identified and counted the number of each type of insect they had captured. The nymphs and larvae of stoneflies, mayflies, caddisflies, dragonflies, and midges were among those bugs identified, counted, and categorized as being rare, common, or dominant. This and other classifications were then used to calculate a water quality score, which was then translated to a 'good' rating for this section of the Baker.

All agreed it was a fun way to spend an hour and a half on a Saturday afternoon; the bugs got dumped back in the river – catch & release!

The second 2007 tour; A Walk in the Woods:

On Saturday, August 15th, some thirty or so participants enjoyed a guided tour, "A Walk in the Woods", through the HHP-owned forest on Stone Hill Road, Rumney. This second in a series of informative sessions organized by the Rumney Natural Resources Committee was led by Don Winsor, forester for HHP, a Henniker lumber company, and Nory Parr, USNH Cooperative Extension Forester.

Participants learned about the value of well-managed forest lands to animals, birds, and insects; to the community; and to the forest products industry. Forestry practices, such as thinning, pruning, and releasing valuable trees were explained. Landowners got valuable advice on how to begin managing their own forest lands for multiple use: the availability, e. g., of grants from various state and federal agencies for such things as releasing wild apple trees; how to best release desirable species; what plants, such as hawthorn, black cherry, and apple are most useful to wildlife; where to find and hire a forester to guide the process, etc. An added benefit for all was the cardiovascular workout from hiking 'The Oak Loop'.

The third 2007 tour; A Flood Plain Forest

In the Baker River watershed, land that is frequently flooded is rich in natural resources: productive soils for farms and woodlands, indigenous plants, wildlife habitat, and buffering for clean water. These sensitive areas also provide recreation and aesthetic charm for communities along the river and its tributaries.

On Saturday, September 15, the Rumney Natural Resources Network hosted the third in an ongoing series of demonstrations highlighting Rumney's natural resources. A small number of participants (it rained – hard) enjoyed an informal and informative workshop about soils; river dynamics; flood plain plants and animals; and forest, field, and habitat management given by Nory Parr, UNH Cooperative Extension Forester at the Hendsey Tree Farm on Quincy Road.

The fourth 2007 tour; Baker River Erosion

The Rumney Natural Resource Network conducted the fourth in its series of natural resources informational events: "Evaluating Erosion" on the Baker River on Saturday, November 10th. Led by four of our own Rumney experts Nick Luhtala and Cal Perkins, both retired from the Soil Conservation Service; Nory Parr, UNH Cooperative Extension Forester; and PSU Professor Cushman for the Baker River Watershed Association, the event was held at Cal Perkins' Prospect Hill Road property.

Twenty four participants observed the results of nature's impact on the Baker River. We learned about ways to ameliorate or prevent possible damage and threats to property, homes, infrastructure, water quality, riverbanks, and surrounding lands; some of the rules, permits, and procedures that must be followed in maintaining or developing riparian lands, and the required permitting processes; the agencies that can help landowners with the permitting process; and enjoyed a 'cool' day by the Baker together. Toward the end of the presentation we were all treated to the sight of a doe and her yearling 'daughter' crossing the Baker in full view about 150 yards upstream of the group.

The fifth tour and the first in 2008; Vegetation Management

Timber harvesting is an important part of tending national forests to provide multiple benefits to the citizens, communities, economy and environments of the White Mountain region in New Hampshire.

On Saturday, January 26, 2008, twenty one people visited an active logging operation on the WMNF in Rumney intended to maintain forest health, provide wood products for business and consumers, and enhance wildlife habitat. The tour focused on the reasons for cutting, local forest industry needs for raw materials, the in-depth process of administering a timber sale on public lands, and the consequences of applying multiple use forestry across the forest landscape.

The session ran from 9 'til noon. Nory Parr, USNH Cooperative Extension Forester; Ed White, Forester for Cersosimo Lumber (buyers of this sale unit); Dan & Mike Clark (Loggers from Warren contracted by Cersosimo); and Roger Boyer, USFS/WMNF Pemi District Ranger were present to explain and answer questions about natural resource conditions and management. This workshop was an informal opportunity for Rumney residents and others to better understand the importance of the WMNF to Rumney – it covers 42% of the town land base – and the sustainable utilization of natural resources in the town and region.

More to come: Watch for notice of a visit to a local maple sugarin' operation on March 30, then in May we'll try to catch a great performance: 'The Dance of the Wild and Wary Woodcock'. As for past outings, posters and handouts will be posted at local stores, the Post Office, and the town offices, with notices also in the *Rumney Register*, the town website, www.rumneynh.org, and the *Plymouth Record*.

The tours/workshops are a series sponsored by the Rumney Natural Resources Network. Each workshop is an opportunity to learn more about the natural world surrounding us right here at home, and how we are using our local natural resources in business and play. These tours/workshops are not intended to lecture, influence or promote any specific agenda; they are for the purpose of providing you with information to increase your understanding of the area in which you live, work, and play.