

[From Winter 1995-96]

Donations Can Make Rehabilitation a Success!

During the spring of 1994, the southern pine beetle (SPB) infested several wooded areas of the refuge. Intensive efforts to control the SPB were made by refuge staff through strategic cutting and removal of infected trees. Treeless buffer zones were created to flank and halt the advance of the army of beetles. The advance of the beetle was so rapid that breach of the strategic cuts was eminent. New infestations arose due to aerial attacks in areas far from the original infestations, which divided refuge attack forces. In a response to overwhelming odds, the refuge called upon an outside contractor to utilize hydro-axes and log skidders to even the odds. Numerous infected and uninfected buffer trees were felled and removed from the refuge during the renewed effort. With reinforced efforts, the SPB advance has been slowed and contained in many areas due to the revitalized refuge attack. Throughout this winter and spring, refuge will continue to crush the advances of the SPB and forge on to containment.

Does this sound like the nightly news broadcast? Well, even if you are not intrigued by military strategies or the nightly news, the effort to control the SPB has been a war waged by refuge staff against the beetles. Many hours of intensive labor to stop this nemesis have been devoted to this operation, and the maintenance staff should be commended. Currently, the beetle is in remission, but has not been completely defeated. Refuge staff will continue to fight the spread of the beetle during the spring of 1996.

The path of devastation will require rehabilitation of the beetle-torn areas. Refuge Manager Schroer is planning a new beginning for the affected areas through planting young water oak saplings. By planting the young hardwood trees, the cut areas will be more resistant to SPB infestations by creating natural diversity within the wooded areas. SPB is specific to conifers and does not attack hardwood trees, which provide natural buffers within the forest to stop rapid advances of attacking beetles. Monotypic stands of pine are very susceptible to SPB attack and need species diversity and reduced density to strengthen their resistance against SPB. The oak saplings will also provide mast for the endangered Delmarva Peninsula fox squirrels and will encourage them to return to their former areas.

A successful planting effort occurred during Day (April 22) this past spring due to a wonderful outpouring of donations and volunteers. The refuge will be purchasing more water oak saplings to rehabilitate the remaining areas. Saplings being purchased are trees that are eight to ten feet tall to ensure high survival of the saplings. This increases the cost per tree considerably. Refuge funding has been limited, so many areas remain unrehabilitated and need attention. Since Earth Day, the refuge has received over \$7,500 in donations for sapling purchases. However, since the cost of the mature oak saplings is approximately \$40 each, a sufficient number of saplings can not be purchased. The refuge will gladly accept any donations toward the purchase of oak saplings to facilitate completion of the rehabilitation effort. The trees will be planted during February by refuge staff, and protective wire enclosures will be placed around them during Earth Day by volunteers. Rehabilitation of the damaged areas is far from complete. Additional effort and

support are needed. The rehabilitation of the SPB damaged areas is an important project towards the recovery of the refuge. So join the cause through donations and volunteer effort during Earth Day on April 22!

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