

FEATURED HABITAT PROJECT

Daugherty Ridge Ruffed Grouse Habitat Project Downeast Lakes Land Trust, Grand Lake Stream, Maine



RGS and AWS Regional Wildlife Biologist Andy Weik is pictured with volunteers at the Daugherty Ridge Ruffed Grouse Habitat Project.



The Daugherty Ridge Ruffed Grouse Habitat Project began in 2011 when local Grand Lake Stream residents and Ruffed Grouse Society volunteers identified Daugherty Ridge as having been a good place to find ruffed grouse in the past, but which rarely harbored them in recent years. The 101-acre stand was a mix of poor quality beech, hemlock and birch. The RGS worked with the Downeast Lakes Land Trust forester to develop a forest management plan for the parcel that would regenerate the stand into improved habitat for ruffed grouse, American woodcock, white-tail deer and numerous other game and non-game wildlife that need early successional forest. The long-term goal for the unit is to have the forest composed of a multi-aged mosaic of two to five-acre, even-aged patches, in other words equal parts of patches that are 1 to 10, 11 to 20, 21 to 30, and 31 to 40 years old. Log landings are seeded to a clover mix to provide nutritious leafy green food source. The forest adjacent to and surrounding this unit will be in an all-age mature state that will provide additional winter food resources for grouse, hard and soft mast, and cover for a variety of wildlife.

The first harvest, consisting of 13 patch clear cuts totaling 40 acres, was completed in 2012-13 using a state-of-the-art, cut-to-length harvester and forwarder, with contributions from the Maine Drummer Fund and the Wildlife Management Institute, and funds from the Natural Resources Conservation Service to

make the timber sale a break-even proposition. Most of the harvest was accomplished during winter months to maximize stump and root sprouting of hardwoods the following spring, and the local deer herd quickly made use of downed tree tops and limbs as winter browse. The response from birds has been quick as well: grouse have started using the regenerating cover of Daugherty Ridge again, and woodcock were using all 13 patch cuts for courtship displays this past spring. The next timber harvests are scheduled for 2022.

Since 2004, the Downeast Lakes Land Trust acquired nearly 34,000 acres of industrial timberland to the west of Grand Lake Stream, as the "Farm Cove Community Forest", and the Trust continues to add acreage. Wildlife habitat and public recreation are now top priorities in management of the property, along with a sustainable timber economy. The Trust's forest management plan integrates habitat planning and timber management and uses grouse as a one of its "focal species", in this case, representing all wildlife that benefit from patches of young forest.

For more information about the Downeast Lakes Land Trust, see www.downeastlakes.org. Grand Lake Stream has long been a popular hunting and fishing destination in eastern Maine. For information on lodging see www.grandlakestream.org/accomodations.htm and for guide services, see www.grandlakestreamguides.com. 🐾