

# Continuing the Commitment

While there is always some sense of closure when a workday is finished, restoring and protecting aquatic systems requires an ongoing commitment. Stream conditions must be monitored to see if projects are having the expected results and whether modifications or additional projects will be needed. Restoration sites must be inspected to see whether maintenance is needed (e.g., new plantings of streambank vegetation, repair of instream structures). Continued vigilance will be needed to protect the rehabilitated stream from damaging activities in the watershed. Stream restoration is not a one-time activity.

## Recognition

Most of us thrive on recognition, especially when it is given in public. When a person is publicly recognized, it conveys the idea that he or she is special and that his or her contribution is truly appreciated. It generates a sense of well-deserved pride in contributing to something worthwhile. As a result, recognition is a valuable tool in maintaining support for your restoration initiatives. Appropriate recognition can fuel enthusiasm in ways nothing else can. It is also an extension of the common courtesy due to all those who help in your efforts.

Many kinds of recognition are available. Some examples are letters of appreciation, mention in the Tree Farm newsletter, and recognition at a formal event such as a project dedication.

- You will want to send letters of appreciation to those who have donated money, equipment, materials, and food or have otherwise contributed to your project.
- Sending a letter of appreciation to the agencies that have provided technical assistance gives them valuable feedback.
- Some state Tree Farm programs have awards recognizing outstanding efforts by Tree Farm members and other partners. These awards can offer a good way of giving special recognition to those who go beyond the call of duty in making your projects succeed.
- If you have a state Tree Farm newsletter, it is worthwhile

to mention the project and give credit to your volunteers and partners. This kind of public recognition not only strengthens morale, it also keeps all of your members aware of the good work Tree Farm can accomplish through the efforts of dedicated partners.

- Post-project stream events also offer a good chance to celebrate when a project is completed and recognize the people who made it happen. Project dedications can make for good publicity in the local press and give you the chance to thank contributors, volunteers, landowners, and other partners in a public way.
- Depending on the setting, you may want to consider a small sign at the project site, so that visitors can learn about the restoration project and the various groups that participated. Signs should recognize major contributors, partners and volunteers. They can range from simple markers for the project to more extensive interpretive and educational signs. If you do use a sign, make sure it is well constructed and look after its maintenance. Your agency and other partners may be willing to share the costs.

Also, remember to keep your partners aware of the benefits of their efforts that your post-project monitoring may reveal. If trout populations jump in an improved stream reach, include a mention in the state Tree Farm newsletter and pass on a letter of thanks to partners, letting them know of the ground-level improvements their contributions helped produce.

## Monitoring

Post-project monitoring allows you to identify improvements in the stream's condition. By comparing this information to your pre-project assessment, you can characterize the changes your project has made, document your successes, and garner support for additional restoration work in your area. Equally important, monitoring will let you see where projects may have run into problems—if your project fails to result in the anticipated improvements, or if it has

unexpected side effects. You can then address these problems and change your restoration strategy. Often this will require only fine-tuning, but at times a new limiting factor or a harmful side effect may show up, requiring a major change in approach.

Your monitoring should be thorough and ongoing. Plan to make a brief visual assessment shortly after the project is complete to see if the stream is adjusting as expected. After a brief initial review, more thorough monitoring should be done on a regular basis (at least once a year). Depending on the flow patterns of your stream and the nature of your efforts, the changes caused by your project should become clear within a year or two. This gives the stream time to adjust to your project and come to a new equilibrium — hopefully in a significantly healthier state.

You should monitor a variety of physical and biological stream characteristics, beginning with measures reflecting the limiting factor(s) identified in your analysis. Has the project made progress in addressing the prob-

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lems limiting trout production? In addition, you should do general ecological monitoring to see more clearly the overall impacts of your project. Look at the wide range of factors you examined during assessment. This should include surveys of fish populations in your stream. After all, healthier fish populations are “the proof in the pudding” for a habitat improvement project.

As with your original assessments, you will need expert assistance (most likely from your state fisheries agency and/or federal land managers) to conduct an ongoing monitoring project. ***Arrange for cooperative monitoring efforts before, not after, you conduct your project.*** If you do not make an up-front commitment to monitoring, and get a similar commitment from your partners, there is a good chance that post-project assessments will fall through the cracks.

Remember, monitoring is not just important to assess the results of your project and make any adjustments that

may be appropriate—it also has great educational value. What you learn from your successes and failures will make your chapter’s future restoration efforts more effective.

## Maintenance

Regular maintenance may be required for many types of projects, from cattle exclusion fences to instream structures. Repair work takes time and money, so be sure to consider maintenance needs in your project plans. You may want to include a state or federal agency in your follow-up plan. If so, be sure that the agency dedicates sufficient funding for maintenance and monitoring of the project.

Different projects need different levels of care. In the case of structures, the more complex the project, the more maintenance it is likely to need. However, even biological restoration, such as planting streamside trees, requires attention for a while—for weed control, replacement of plants that have died, or thinning to avoid competition among plants as they mature.

Habitat restoration projects are tangible evidence of Tree Farmers’ commitment to the future. The projects put Tree Farm in the public eye, and the product of that work will be around for a long time. Few things are as obvious and permanently on display as the results of a well-conducted and maintained project. The level of your continuing commitment will reflect on

Tree Farm. Make sure the results are something you can be proud of in years to come.

## Holding the Line

When you have made a significant investment in improving aquatic ecosystems and their watersheds, you must continue your work to ensure that new developments or practices do not undo the good that has been accomplished. There is nothing more frustrating than guiding a stream to recovery, only to see new actions reverse the progress you have made. It will take continuing vigilance to prevent pollution, habitat alteration, poorly planned development, and other activities that could once again degrade the rehabilitated stream. Protecting the rehabilitated stream over the long haul will be difficult, but lasting success requires a continuing commitment to protect the improved resource. The benefits to your stream will be well worth the effort.