

Corps involved in ecosystem project

By JoAnne Castagna, Ed. D.

New York District is funding the Frost Valley YMCA Model Forest project in upstate New York. Several ecosystem research projects are being conducted in the forest that are investigating a host of different things regarding water quality and timber harvesting. The SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry in cooperation with the U.S. Geological Survey have set up a weir in the forest. It's collecting data on the nitrate levels, temperature, sediment loads, and macroinvertebrate levels before, during and after timber harvesting. This provides scientists an idea of the impact harvesting has on water flowing through the forest.

In 1998, under the Corps' New York City Watershed Environmental Assistance Program, the Frost Valley YMCA was chosen to be one of several watershed locations to host a model forest or a "living classroom" to serve two purposes – to educate forestland owners about how to implement voluntary practices to prevent non-point source pollution during timber harvests and to keep forests working through management and sustainable harvesting so that people can afford to pay their taxes and hold large tracks of land.

The model forest officially opened in the fall

of 2003 and it's continuing to be developed by a team of specialists from various agencies including the Watershed Agriculture Council, the project's manager, Frost Valley YMCA, SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry, USDA Forest Service, U.S. Geological Survey, New York City Department of Environmental Protection, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, Catskill Forest Association, Cornell Cooperative Extension and is being funded by the Corps' New York District.

The model forest educates landowners, foresters, timber harvesters, and students regarding techniques that will help them to responsibly manage forested lands without degrading the habitat or water quality.



Photo: NY Watershed Agricultural Council

Along the road, students read educational signs and panels, visit kiosks and witness demonstrations.