

The Renewable Resources Extension Act (RREA) Program at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, FY 2008

Renewable Resources Extension Act (RREA) program funds allocated to UMass Extension provide education and materials that address critical issues of importance to landowners, natural resource professionals, conservation organizations, natural resource-based business, and municipalities. Each dollar in RREA funds typically leverages between \$5 and \$10 in state, private, and/or local funds. In recent years, RREA funds were used to support the following activities.

- **The Keystone Project** trains community opinion leaders in a 3.5 day retreat style program. Cooperators agree to return to their communities to promote forest conservation. We surveyed cooperators from the past 20 years to determine their level of activity over the last twelve months. Keystone Cooperators report volunteering more than 23,780 hours – the equivalent of almost 12 FTEs; discussing forest conservation with 6,830 friends, neighbors and citizens; and making 1,023 referrals to forester, land trusts and informational sources. The mean number of years since training was 9.4 years ago, with a median of nine years.

<http://masskeystone.net>

- **ACORN** (A CoOperative Resource Network) is a USDA CSREES NRI integrated research/extension project to research the use of the internet as an effective outreach tool in reaching more and different landowners and promoting cooperation. Results from the ACORN online survey show: 53% of respondents have had no previous contact or experience with traditional activities or sources of information; two-thirds of users are over 50-years old; 40% of ACORN visitors are female; one-third of visitors have considered cooperation based on ACORN. <http://www.massacorn.net/index.html>



Keystone instructor working with community opinion leaders

- **Conservation Assessment and Prioritization System (CAPS)** Ecological assessments using CAPS were completed for 112 communities in western and central Massachusetts. The



Developing a comprehensive wetlands monitoring and assessment program for Massachusetts

results of these assessments were posted on the www.masscaps.org web site as GIS data and maps for each of the 112 cities and towns. The CAPS assessment is the basis for generating “Important Habitat Maps” for use by Conservation Commissioners in implementing the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act. MassDEP also has adopted CAPS as the basis for its comprehensive wetlands monitoring and assessment program.

“Our towns are small, with limited resources, and largely volunteer municipal officials. This can help them make better and more informed conservation decisions.”

– CAPS Collaborator

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