



CONSERVATION EDUCATION — Success Story
Frost Valley Environmental Education Center

INTRODUCTION & PROJECT DESCRIPTION —

The Environmental Education Center at Frost Valley YMCA in Claryville, NY in the Catskill Mountains was funded by a \$14,000 conservation education grant from the USDA Forest Service in FY 2001 to develop, in cooperation with FS scientists from NERS Hamden, CT, experiential modules for demonstrating forest biology and ecology principles and players to forest visitors. The major focus of the modules will be on forest health and non-native invasive species. The modules will be linked to the 2-hour forest ecohikes that are part of the Center’s program curriculum. Some modules will have games built in to reinforce the learning concept.



ACCOMPLISHMENTS — All of the proposed modules (11) have been outlined and several are in the development stage and will be ready for use this spring. Two modules are species (trees and insects) identification keys and a third will focus on detritivore insects involved in litter decomposition. A fourth module (A Rotten Story) on wood decomposition has been established showing rotting logs of 4 species

(beech, birch, hemlock and sugar maple) in increasing stages of decomposition. Piles of logs 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 years old (since cutting) are in place in a circle and labeled by age and species. Each year a new pile (1 year old) will be added to the circle until eventually a series up to 10 years old will be represented. After that, when a new pile is added, the oldest logs (11 years) will be transferred to the center of the circle for hands-on activities with the rotting wood. This module will demonstrate wood decomposition and the fungi associated with it, as well as differences among tree species in rates of decay.

Other modules will focus on non-native invasive species, specifically beech bark disease, hemlock woolly adelgid, and Japanese barberry; and on concepts of tree and forest health, specifically wounding and discoloration, characteristics of tree health, measures of forest health, and forest/tree health - what’s your perspective - whose tree is it anyway?

These modules will be connected eventually to interpretive trails being developed in a model forest at Frost Valley with funds from other grants.

CONCLUSIONS — We are in the initial stages of development but several modules will be available for use by Frost Valley staff to test this spring and summer. We can potentially reach 35-36,000 yearly visitors, half of which are youth, and 30% of which are underserved youth. That’s exciting!

For more information, contact:

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