

East Haddam Land Trust tackles restoration project by the Eightmile

In the winter of 2022-23, the stewardship team of East Haddam Land Trust (EHLT) removed many of the large, dead, or dying spruce trees at our six-acre Ayers Preserve.

The spruce had been planted there decades ago when the former property owner tried to start a Christmas tree farm on the land, which abuts the Eightmile River. Over the years, the trees had crowded out much of the natural growth.

After consulting with the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection on woodlands restoration, volunteers cleared two areas, each about a quarter-acre. Using downed logs and brush, they built slash walls — barriers to keep deer from browsing. Volunteers also removed invasive vines and plants during the unusually warm winter. Then, in mid-July, they installed wire cages around young oak trees to further protect against deer browse. Funding for the fencing came from the Lower Connecticut River Land Trust.

Why take on all this work? Oaks are vital to our native wildlife. They support more caterpillars and insects than any of our other native tree species. They also give shelter to birds, and the adults feed caterpillars to their young. In yet another 'gift' to the forest, acorns are tasty food for local wildlife.

It will take years for this work to pay off, but EHLT takes the long view when it comes to restoring land to a healthier state.