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## **Critical Habitats Workshop to be Held in New River Valley**

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An article in the last issue of Forest Landowner Update (“Natural Areas Stewardship on Private Forest Land”) raised the possibility that critical habitats on private forest land deserve special attention. If landowners are interested in conserving these critical habitats, they need to know what these critical habitats look like, and how to identify them. Once identified, other questions remain. How does one evaluate the condition of these critical habitats? What actions (if any) are needed to maintain or restore these critical habitats?

Maintenance of these critical habitats may require little additional input of time or energy. On some sites, simply continuing the current management strategies and allowing natural processes to continue may be enough to conserve the critical habitat. In other cases, however, these critical habitats may need deliberate and intensive management actions to restore natural processes. These actions include invasive species control, assisting with the regeneration of native plant species, reducing deer herbivory, or prescribed burning. Natural areas management prescriptions can be site-specific, complex, and adaptive - restoring some critical habitats can require creativity and determination.

Landowners who are interested in the possibility of natural areas management should attend a critical habitats workshop in Galax, VA on April 20, 2006, from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. This free workshop will showcase several critical habitats in the New River Valley, with an emphasis on stimulating interest among landowners and natural resource professionals who advise landowners. The field trip component of the workshop will highlight management efforts on private and public land: invasive species control, prescribed burning, and reducing deer herbivory. The slideshow component will be a virtual tour of other critical habitats in the New River Valley. There will be ample opportunity for participants to discuss innovative conservation strategies for these critical habitats.

This critical habitats workshop is organized by the New River Roundtable Forestry Committee, a group committed to conserving water quality, wildlife habitat, and biological diversity in the New River Valley.