

ODNR Helping Restore American Chestnut Trees to Ohio Landscapes

COLUMBUS, OH – The Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) recently planted American chestnut trees at three sites on department-managed lands. The Gorge Overlook area at Mohican State Park, the Scioto Trail State Forest fire tower and the Waterloo Wildlife Area were selected for a reforestation project that is part of a state and regional effort to re-establish the native American chestnut trees in partnership with The American Chestnut Foundation (TACF).

“We are happy to be a part of helping to return the American chestnut to landscapes across Ohio and the region,” said Robert Boyles, ODNR deputy director and state forester. “The American chestnut was such an important component of our country’s eastern hardwood forest, and that is why great efforts are being made to resurrect this great tree to our woodlands.”

ODNR staff from the divisions of Forestry, Ohio State Parks and Wildlife conducted the plantings, with volunteer assistance from the Mohican Trails Club at Mohican State Park. Approximately 1,000 seedlings were divided among the three sites. Tree shelter tubes were installed on the young trees to provide a greenhouse-like atmosphere and offer protection from wildlife browsing and to promote growth and increase seedling survival.

The year-old seedlings were donated by TACF, and the foundation is dedicated to the restoration of the American chestnut through scientific breeding and cooperative research. These seedlings, known as “Restoration” chestnuts, were bred at TACF’s Meadowview Research Farms in Virginia and were grown at the Clements State Tree Nursery in West Virginia.

Native populations of American chestnut were devastated by the chestnut blight disease that was introduced to the U.S. during the early 1900s. Chinese chestnut is highly resistant to the blight, and it has been successfully bred with American chestnut to provide resistance while retaining the favorable properties of the native American species. The hybrid Restoration chestnut seedlings are 94 percent American chestnut and 6 percent Chinese chestnut.

The American chestnut was a stately, fast-growing native species that reached more than 80 feet in height. It bears fruit in about five to eight years, and until its decline in population, provided important food for bear, deer, turkey, squirrels and other wildlife. The lumber was lightweight and highly valued for the grain, ease of working and rot resistance. Sprouts from native tree stumps can grow to 30 feet before they die back from the chestnut blight, which is

still present.

The Restoration chestnut tree plantings will be monitored and maintained by the ODNR Division of Forestry and the Ohio chapter of TACF. For more information on the American chestnut restoration efforts, visit the TACF website at acf.org.

The ODNR Division of Forestry works to promote the wise use and sustainable management of Ohio's public and private woodlands. To learn more about Ohio's woodlands, visit the ODNR Division of Forestry's website at forestry.ohiodnr.gov.

ODNR ensures a balance between wise use and protection of our natural resources for the benefit of all. Visit the ODNR website at ohiodnr.gov.