



FLOODPLAIN BUFFER PLANTED

Thanks to a grant from the Lake Champlain Basin Program, 5 Americorps volunteers with the Student Conservation Association (Molly Snedden, Wayne Champagne, Corenne Black, Massey Burke, and Sarah Auer), and assistance from the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service, eleven acres of floodplain farmland belonging to Jerrold and Debbie Sherman in Wadhams was planted to shrubs and trees during the last part of April and first week in May. A total of 7,500 shrubs and nursery trees were planted, along with 125 black willow posts and stakes, and innumerable smaller limbs (called "whips") from an assortment of trees that root from cuttings.

The weather was erratic. Planting began when it was cold and wet. The volunteers camped out in tents at the project site, and Jerrold Sherman quickly supplied them with dry firewood while Debbie fixed food and delivered sweets. Showers didn't stop the work, but a heavy rain on Friday, May 3rd, forced everyone inside to dry out and warm up after the crew leader couldn't hold up her soaked pants and plant at the same time. The conscientious volunteers wanted to complete the project, so they requested and obtained two more days.

Saturday was significantly warmer. People shed jackets and watched two river otters move about in a small tributary next to the Boquet. By this time everyone was totally familiar with the routine: water everything planted the day before, dig holes, put in composted manure, plant and firm down the soil, water, and mulch with hay. Hundreds upon hundreds of seedlings were planted with seeming ease. A blue, blue sky was overhead and the warming sun was lovely. But suddenly a stiff wind blew through the river corridor from the west. We stood stunned, watching all the mulch hay so carefully set around seedlings earlier suddenly rise into the air along with several jackets. Whipped around and around, jackets finally fell to the ground yet the hay



continued to rise and move to the east. Some clumps of hay lodged in high tree tops at the downstream end of the field, but most of the hay kept sailing until we couldn't see it any longer. (Was anyone out enjoying the sun in a lawn chair that day, only to be covered with a clump of hay?) Later one of the volunteers found her tent had been swept up and deposited in an ox bow, along with personal articles left in the tent.

The volunteers' spirits could not be flagged. After a quick lunch and special activities pursued by each (sketching, wildflower identification, and journal writing), they all gathered around their van to dance to radio music. By Sunday late afternoon everything was planted. Ah, springtime and youth!