The Campus for Field Studies at Yale-Myers Forest
A PROPOSAL TO CREATE YALE’S NEXT CAMPUS
VISION

To create a new campus at Yale-Myers Forest to provide Yale College students, graduate students and faculty unparalleled opportunities to engage in dynamic field-based learning and research on conservation and ecology issues toward a more sustainable future.
INTRODUCTION

Situated on 7,840 acres in the northeast corner of Connecticut, Yale-Myers Forest is one of the largest privately held and professionally managed forest parcels in the region, and is the largest physical asset owned by Yale University.

Less than 90 minutes from the New Haven Green, Yale-Myers presents an extraordinary opportunity for Yale to actively engage undergraduate and graduate students and faculty in clinical and professional teaching, research and practice in a biologically diverse and forested setting in close proximity to Yale University.

Previous page: Students head for a day of field studies. Above: Entrance road to main camp.
CURRENT RESOURCES, ACTIVITIES AND USES

Yale-Myers is operated by the Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies (F&ES) and serves as the training ground for master’s students who are apprenticed in timber production, silviculture and sound forest stewardship. The forest is also utilized by faculty and students for a limited amount of teaching, field research and experimentation.

An existing two-acre camp has hosted basic services since the 1930s. Two rustic dormitories sleep 30 students, a common room and commercial kitchen provide space for eating and socializing, and a new classroom provides traditional educational experiences when students are not learning in the field, complete with modern classroom technology. A barn and blacksmith shop provide storage and maintenance needs.

Research on forests, wetlands, ecology, water, wildlife and plants are ongoing at Yale-Myers, but existing facilities are extremely limited and rudimentary. Given Yale-Myers’ proximity to New Haven, an enormous opportunity exists to invest in both the teaching and research facilities to the benefit of all Yale students and faculty, as well as the surrounding community.
David Skelly, Professor of Ecology and Director of the Yale Peabody Museum of Natural History, has performed research at Yale-Myers for almost 20 years. Both F&ES and Yale College students have assisted him in projects like his current one, which explores forest dynamics as a driver of amphibian population extinctions. Utilizing hundreds of amphibian breeding ponds and a wide diversity of upland habitats, Professor Skelly’s lab has found that the wood frog is capable of rapid evolutionary response to changing temperature altered by canopy removal or regrowth. This surprising finding in a vertebrate implies that responses to other thermal changes, such as those associated with climate change, are possible and even likely. The recognition of evolved response could greatly influence estimates of the ecological consequences of climate change.

Max Lambert, M.E.Sc. ’13, Ph.D. ’19 conducts field research under the guidance of Professor Skelly.
During the summer of 2013, Yale College student Kassie Urban-Mead dug deeply into research for her senior thesis at Yale-Myers. A native bee enthusiast, Kassie studied wild bee pollinator communities in old-field meadows across an anthropogenic land-use gradient. The well-known management history and forest context of fields at Yale-Myers Forest were crucial to her search for ecological, life-history and landscape clues to the most important factors that support or disrupt pollinator communities. Under the direction of Oswald Schmitz, Oastler Professor of Population and Community Ecology at F&ES, Kassie’s research found that low levels of habitat fragmentation can in fact support highly diverse and resilient bee communities. Old-field meadows such as those at Yale-Myers provide vital habitat and foraging resources in human-impacted landscapes, supporting wild bees’ ability to continue as important pollinators in both wild and agricultural settings.
PROPOSED NEW CAMPUS FOR FIELD STUDIES

To expand existing teaching and research opportunities for Yale faculty and students, F&ES proposes to create a new Campus for Field Studies at Yale-Myers Forest.

In addition to new teaching positions and curricula, the proposed Campus would add a new timber-frame Auditorium, a three-season “wet” laboratory facility with classroom and storage, a restored historic 1832 French House to provide residential accommodations for researchers, and new field research plots.

The new Campus and lab would enable expanded teaching and research capabilities in many field-based environmental disciplines, including:

- Land conservation and valuation of ecosystem services
- Forest, plant, soil and aquatic ecology
- Sustainable energy, food and natural resource production
- Physical and chemical environmental sciences that focus on the biogeochemistry of terrestrial and watershed systems

Top: The 1832 French House would be restored to provide accommodations for researchers. Bottom: Karin Burghardt, Ph.D. ’16 constructs research enclosures.
NEW PROGRAMS

The proposed Campus would be further enhanced by adding new field ecology programs, research fellowships and community outreach programs, including:

- A research fellowship program to enable doctoral, master’s and undergraduate students to compete for research funds
- A new apprenticeship program to bring master’s and Yale College students to Yale-Myers for specialized mentoring programs in topics like field ecology, natural history and forest management and stewardship
- A field ecology teaching position to ensure that students have ready access to a practitioner in forest management and terrestrial ecology
- A current use fund to promote outreach and engagement with adjacent landowners, providing practical training for students while building capacity for environmental stewardship and conservation in the region

David Ellum, M.F. ’01, Ph.D. ’07 helps a student key plants in the understory.
GIFT OPPORTUNITIES

RESEARCH FACILITIES $2,000,000
Design and build a three-season laboratory to support faculty and student research; restore the 1832 French House to provide researcher accommodations; endow a building maintenance fund and provide for caretaker services.

AUDITORIUM $100,000
Design and build a new timber-frame, open-air Auditorium that would double formal classroom capacity and meeting space at Yale-Myers, and support enhanced undergraduate- and master’s-level instruction.

RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM $500,000
Create a new endowed fellowship to award competitive research grants to doctoral, master’s and Yale College students to conduct work at the School Forests.

FIELD ECOLOGIST TEACHING POSITION $1,500,000
Endow a new practitioner teaching position in forest and field ecology, conservation and natural history for Yale College and master’s students interested in environmental studies, field studies, soils and local flora and fauna.

Virginia Lorne, M.E.M. ’05 delights in her discovery.
FIELD ECOLOGY PROGRAM $500,000
Endow a new ten-week summer apprenticeship program for Yale College and F&ES master’s students in field ecology, natural history and forest management and stewardship. The program also would serve as a practicum for methods in field research, providing practical knowledge in experimental field ecology and methods, with opportunities to participate in ongoing faculty and doctoral research and field data collection. The program seeks to further strengthen the ties between Yale College and F&ES.

QUIET CORNER INITIATIVE $1,500,000
Create a new current use fund to support master’s and Yale College students’ outreach to adjacent private landowners on land conservation, agriculture and renewable energy; provide a coordinated teaching curriculum, including K–12 programs; and create a new base of social and economic data on conservation.

TOTAL $6,100,000

Steven Brady, M.E.Sc. ’07, Ph.D. ’13 arranges larval wood frog cages in a vernal pool.