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The Northern Virginia Conservation Trust works hard every day to protect the natural and unique lands that surround us for future generations. Following the teachings of Aldo Leopold and his “land ethic,” NVCT is striving to develop a deep and thoughtful relationship between people and their natural environment. This relationship is more critical now than ever as we live in a time of intense development, urban sprawl, exploding populations and deforestation.

Throughout my time here at NVCT I have had the opportunity to learn about land trusts and conservation easements, about writing and implementing a land management plan, and what working for a nonprofit organization entails. The land management plan I was tasked with seemed daunting in the beginning: a ½-acre plot of land called Little Falls Forest inundated with eight invasive species that were just running rampant, and in dire need of restoration. I started by researching the processes for removing each invasive species to see what was the best way to clear the area and looked for native plants to reintroduce. Some species like bamboo and Japanese stiltgrass had originated outside LFF but are now a major problem within its boundaries, and that presented complications in the goal of lasting preservation for LFF. The removal and management of invasive species in Little Falls Forest is a long-term plan that will require constant upkeep in order to be successful. In neglected areas, land management requires long hours and in some cases many years before the true success of the project can be seen.

The creation of this land management plan was also an opportunity to communicate with and to educate the surrounding neighbors about NVCT’s mission and the negative effects of invasive species on the environment. I believe that for organizations like NVCT to thrive and continue to preserve the environment local community members need to be aware of their work and believe in it as well. The biggest movements begin with the smallest people and one innovative idea; community organizations, NGO’s and grassroots groups drive the future of environmental conservation, preservation and restoration.

I end my time here at NVCT with new skills in plant and bird identification, a greater knowledge of invasive species and their removal processes, a better understanding of land trusts and conservation easements, and experience writing and implementing a land management plan.

I would like to thank everyone at NVCT for devoting their time and experience to assist in the restoration of Little Falls Forest. Thank you Rentz for guiding me through the process of writing a land management plan, and working to give me a well-rounded view of what it takes to be a land stewardship specialist.

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