**Final Report:**

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| Project Title: | Invasive species management & restoration in Black Rock Forest |
| Brief summary (2-3 lines): | Black Rock Forest will support invasive species management, restoration, and revegetation of forest stands impacted by beech-leaf disease. We will improve forest habitat, engage volunteers and students in invasive species management activities, and mentor a summer intern. |
| Estimated Start and Completion Dates: | 4/15/2025 - 12/31/2025 |
| Total amount requested: | $17,176 |

Black Rock Forest completed the primary objectives of this PRISM-funded project, which were to:

1. Support a student intern engaged in invasive species management, establish baseline conditions in beech forest stands impacted by beech leaf disease, and initiate monitoring to evaluate restoration effectiveness; and
2. Increase public awareness and education through volunteer engagement and collaboration with students.

Black Rock Forest hired one paid summer intern, Piper Jenkins, a college student and returning volunteer, who served as a crew leader for invasive species management and restoration activities. A second college-level intern, Hazel Calway, participated as a volunteer to gain hands-on experience in conservation and land management. Interns supported field implementation, site establishment, and data collection.

Five restoration sites were established in forest stands affected by beech leaf disease. All sites were fenced to exclude deer, invasive shrubs were removed, and 78 native trees were planted to support forest recovery. Baseline forest health data were collected using National Park Service Forest Monitoring protocol in all fenced restoration plots and three paired unfenced control plots. These data will inform future monitoring and adaptive management.

Education and outreach objectives were met through multiple activities. Project updates were shared via social media throughout the field season. In the fall, Black Rock Forest hosted a public outreach event and science chat attended by more than 50 hikers, focused on beech leaf disease and restoration strategies. Project methods, outcomes, and preliminary findings were also presented at the November 2025 Lower Hudson PRISM partner meeting. A detailed summary of project activities and deliverables is provided in the table below.

Reimbursement requests included salary and fringe for the paid summer intern, field supplies for fencing installation and invasive species management, travel costs associated with project

implementation, and administrative expenses. Interns received mileage reimbursement and a small per diem to support participation. Matching contributions included fencing materials, native plant stock, travel costs, and staff time provided by Black Rock Forest (Ashton and Brady). Supporting documentation and receipts are available upon request.

Dr. Isabel Ashton presented the project at the LH-PRISM Partners meeting in December 2025.

| Activity | Deliverable | Final Status |
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| Spring volunteer events | Engage students and volunteers to remove invasive species | 48 volunteers assisted with removal of barberry & privet, planting native trees, & garbage along the entrance roads |
| Recruit and hire and support 1 – 2 summer interns | 1 or more summer intern engaged in invasive species management | Hired and trained two female interns. |
| Establish 5 restoration sites in beech forests | Fence declining beech stands | We established 5 restoration sites within Black Rock Forest. |
| Remove invasive shrubs and other species in restoration sites and the forest and work with the Invasive Species Strikeforce | >3 acres treated for invasive species. | We have eradicated invasive species within the beech sites and worked on invasive control along our main entrance route. The ISF came to Black Rock Forest in September for 2 days removing 1015 stems of invasive shrubs and trees. |
| Plant native species | Plant native trees within fenced restoration sites | ~78 native trees have been planted in 5 beech restoration sites. |
| Monitor restoration effort and forest health | Data summaries of each restoration plot paired with unfenced control | Forest health & monitoring data collected at 5 fenced beech sites; 3 paired controls; 10 random forest plots. Data were summarized and presented at the PRISM meeting. |
| Social media posts | 2 - 3 posts per quarter | Recurring social media posts reached over 10,000 people during the project period. |
| Education and Outreach | >100 students from Newburgh and Cornwall visit BRF and learn about beech leaf disease and invasive species management. | In the Spring, we hosted 30 3rd grade students from Cornwall Central School district to help plant trees and learn about Beech Leaf Disease. The Newburgh summer program was able to visit in mid -July.<br>In September, we showcased the work during a public hike & science chat with 50 attendees. |
| Summarize result and present to PRISM partners | Project summary and presentation | Presented a project summary to ~50 attendees and the partners meeting on Dec 4 |