



# Update to Reading Select Board

March 21, 2023

Town Forest Committee

# Town Forest Committee Update

- ▶ Report on dead pine tree removal
- ▶ Report on invasive plant control
- ▶ Status of ARPA funds approved by the Select Board for Town Forest work
- ▶ Need to investigate if policy changes should be developed to reduce conflicts between residents and commercial dog walkers with large groups of unleashed dogs



Red pine trees in the Town Forest are dying due to climate change and invasive plants are widespread



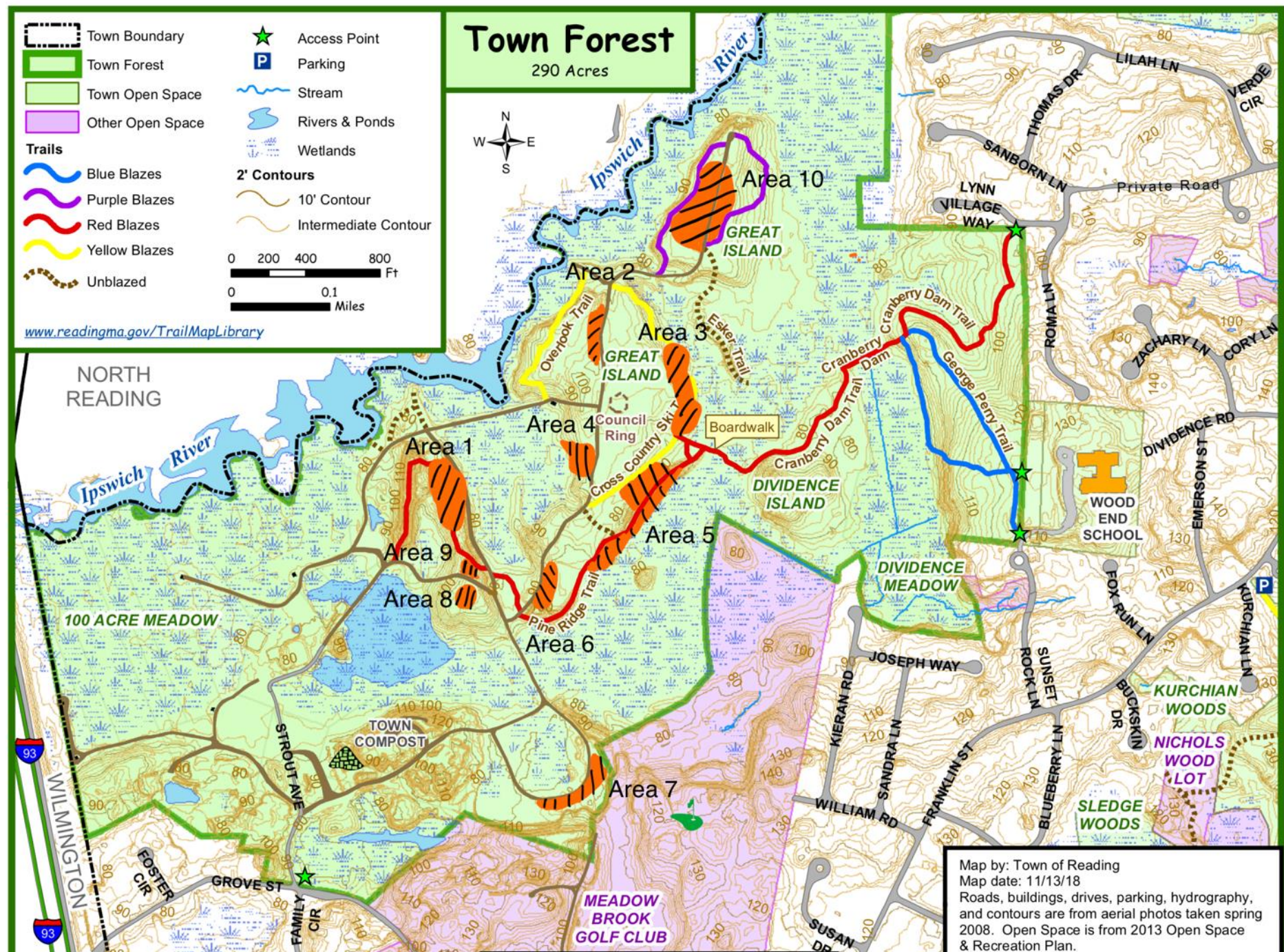


# The Problem - Red Pine Trees:

- ▶ Red pine trees were planted starting in the 1930s as a resource to be periodically harvested
- ▶ Red pines are suited for more northern latitudes
- ▶ Climate change has stressed the red pines
- ▶ This stress makes the red pines vulnerable to fungus and insects such as pine scale
- ▶ Need to remove the dead trees before they fall and potentially injure users of the Town Forest or catch on fire









# Work to Date:

- ▶ Phase 1 removed dead trees on 4.5 acres in January 2020 at a cost of \$28,400 (Town funds)
- ▶ Phase 2 another 4.5 acres at a cost of \$22,900 January 2022 (Town funds with a \$10,000 grant from DCR)
- ▶ Phase 3 another 4.8 acres at a cost of \$36,493 November 2022 (ARPA funds with a \$10,000 grant from DCR)
- ▶ Projects were bid and managed by Reading DPW





# The Problem - Invasive Plants:

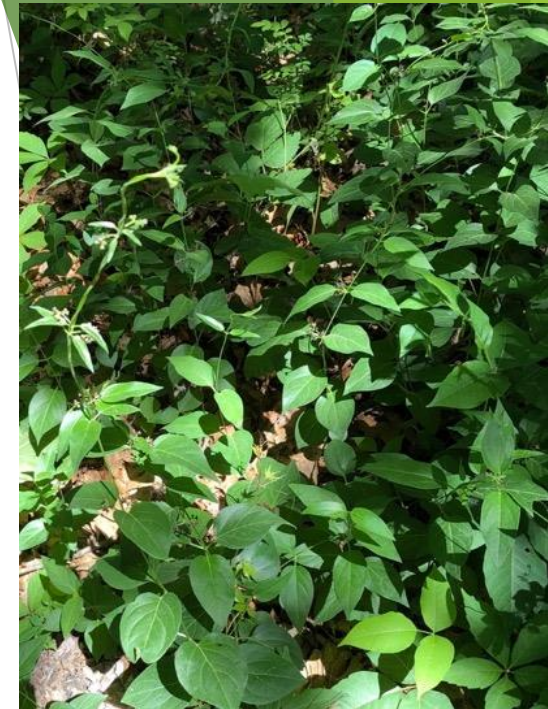
- ▶ Invasive plants such as buckthorn, Japanese knotweed, tree of heaven and black swallow-wort have become firmly established in the Town Forest
- ▶ The adjacent Compost Area is a reservoir of invasives that will spread into the Town Forest
- ▶ If not controlled now, native plants will be crowded out and the Town Forest will be a tangle of invasive plants



Buckthorn



Tree of Heaven



Black Swallow-wort



Japanese Knotweed



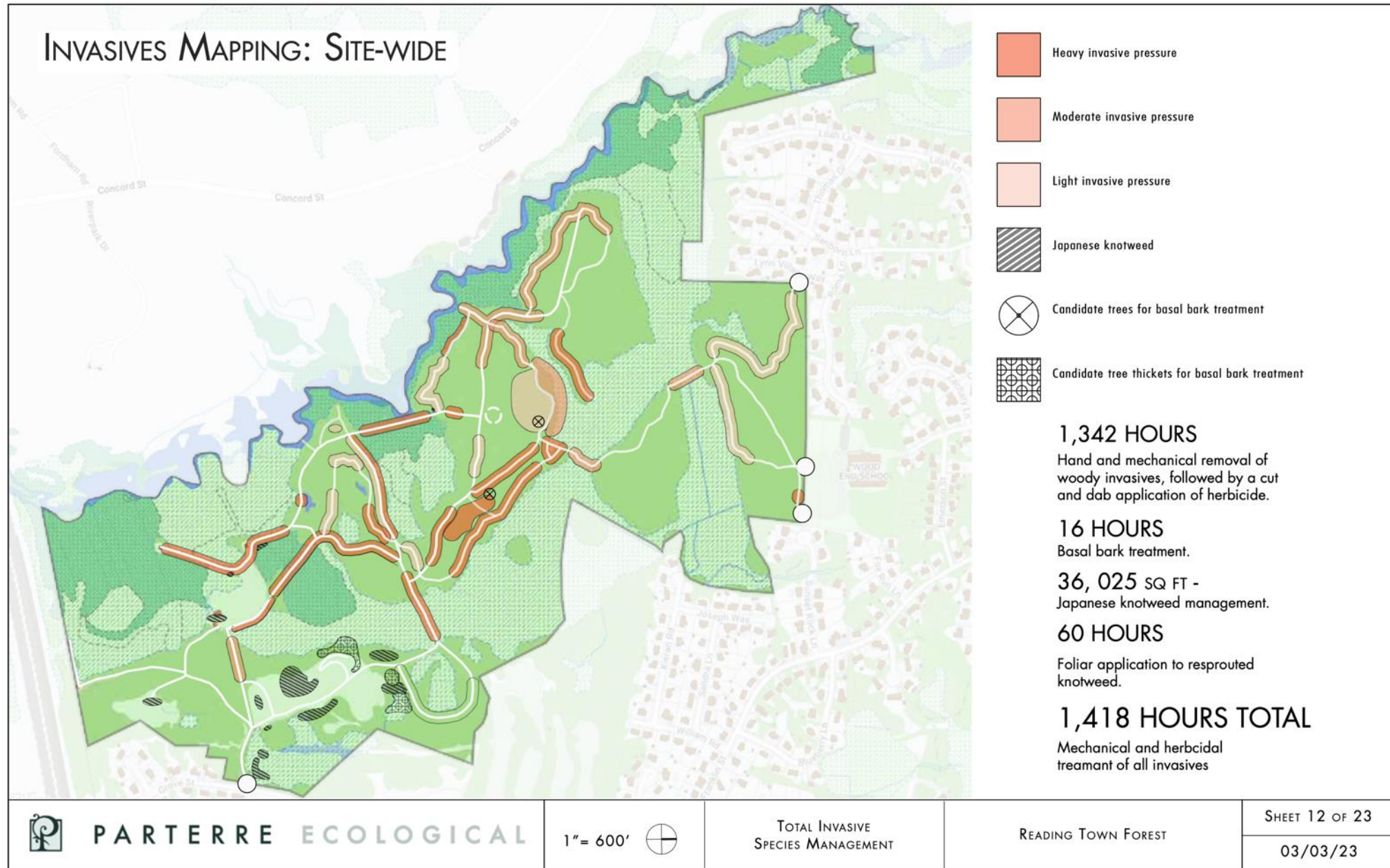
# Invasive Plants Work to Date:

- ▶ Volunteer buckthorn pulling by Scouts, Town residents and others such as Amazon Robotics
- ▶ Phase 1 pilot buckthorn treatment by Parterre Ecological June 2022 at a cost of \$9,545 (Town funds)
- ▶ An invasive plant inventory and management plan was prepared by Parterre in February 2023 at a cost of \$9,575 (ARPA funds) to be used to document the locations of invasive plants and plan control measures including work to be bid to certified applicators





# Invasive Plant Inventory and Management Plan





# Status of ARPA Funds

- ▶ \$100,000 of ARPA funds was authorized by the Select Board for dead tree removal and invasive plant control
- ▶ Spent to date: \$36,068 (dead trees and invasive plants)
- ▶ Current Balance: \$63,932
- ▶ Estimate for Phase 2 of invasive plant control: \$60,000 to \$63,932
- ▶ Additional phases of dead tree removal and invasive plant control will be needed beyond the currently authorized ARPA funds
  - ▶ Phase 4 of dead tree removal should be carried out in FY 2024 at a cost of approximately \$40,000
  - ▶ Phase 3 of invasive plant control will cost approximately \$70,000
  - ▶ Grants will be sought for this work



# Concern with Number of Dogs off-leash per handler

- ▶ Continuing complaints about conflicts between commercial dog walkers with multiple off-leash dogs and the public
- ▶ Current bylaw allows for off-leash when under voice control
- ▶ A recent Facebook post by one commercial dog walker said that:

“I’m a dog walker there [Town Forest] and I bring in 8 off leash and they are all under voice control. There are a lot of people on the trail who are very mean and will treat you this way. I deal with it everyday - just do your own thing and ignore them!”
- ▶ Are the conflicts caused by the dogs not being under voice control?
- ▶ Do members of the public feel unsafe by large groups of unleashed dogs?
- ▶ Are residents safety concerns being ignored?
- ▶ Police limited response due to current bylaw (Town Forest and Conservation Land)
- ▶ The Town Forest Committee investigating policies in other towns and how they handle conflicts



# Summary

- ▶ Dead trees have been removed from 13.8 acres to date
- ▶ Replanting will continue in the areas cleared of dead pine trees
- ▶ The process to control invasive plants has begun and will need to extend beyond 2023
- ▶ The Town Forest Committee will investigate the dog policies in other towns and will explore options to reduce negative interactions with residents



# Reading Town Forest Committee

- ▶ Bill Sullivan, Chair
- ▶ Nancy Docktor
- ▶ Tom Gardner
- ▶ Kurt Habel
- ▶ Bill Hughes
- ▶ Jeff Lamson
- ▶ Tim Kirwan