

## **WOODLANDS PARTNERSHIP of Northwest Massachusetts** **In partnership with the Forest Climate Resilience Program**

### **For More Information, Contact:**

**Andrew Randazzo**

Email: [arandazzo@massaudubon.org](mailto:arandazzo@massaudubon.org)

Phone: 413-252-9534

*Forest Ecologist, Mass Audubon*

**Lisa Hayden**

Email: [lhayden@newenglandforestry.org](mailto:lhayden@newenglandforestry.org)

Phone: 978.952.6856 ext. 121

*Administrative Agent, WP of NW MA*

### **Press Release / Calendar Listing**

**For Immediate Release:** February 13, 2023

## **The Forest Climate Resilience Program Invites Members of the Public to Focus Group *Developing a Northwestern Massachusetts Virtual Forest Center***

Members of the public are invited to attend the first in a series of virtual focus groups about providing forest health information on **Monday, February 27 at 7 p.m.** The Forest Climate Resilience Program is working in partnership with organizations across Northwestern Massachusetts, including the Woodlands Partnership, to develop a Virtual Forest Center (VFC). The VFC will support communities in better understanding threats to their forests, including climate change, and how forest stewardship can help to address those threats. The project team is actively seeking input on what residents would like to see in a virtual forest center. To register or find out more, please reach out to Andrew Randazzo, Forest Ecologist with Mass Audubon at [arandazzo@massaudubon.org](mailto:arandazzo@massaudubon.org) or 413-252-9534, or to Lisa Hayden, Administrative Agent for the Woodlands Partnership, at [lhayden@newenglandforestry.org](mailto:lhayden@newenglandforestry.org) or 978.952.6856 ext. 121. You can also register for the focus group at <https://bit.ly/VFCFocus>.

The Virtual Forest Center will be an online hub of information regarding our local forests. The goal of the VFC is to provide community members and state and municipal officials access to a platform that shares up-to-date information about climate-smart forestry, traditional environmental knowledge, and other pertinent forest stewardship topics. This event will be the first in a series of four focus groups. Participants can join for a single event or engage across multiple sessions. Translation of focus group events is available upon request.

The Forest Climate Resilience Program is led by Mass Audubon in partnership with the Woodlands Partnership of Northwest Massachusetts, Northern Institute of Applied Climate Science, Massachusetts Woodlands Institute, The Nature Conservancy, and the New England Forestry Foundation. The integration of traditional ecological knowledge into the program is led by the Ohketeau Cultural Center. The program assists municipalities in planning and implementing practices that help forests cope with climate extremes (adaptation) while also locking away greenhouse gases that cause climate change (mitigation). This pilot program provides technical assistance and support to municipalities in the 21-town region of the

Woodlands Partnership of Northwest Massachusetts, which is also exploring the need for a physical multi-purpose Forest Center to be located within the region.

The VFC is funded through a Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Regional Action Grant, led by the Town of Rowe. The Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) grant program provides cities and towns in Massachusetts with funding to implement the priority actions identified through their local planning process.

