

## Cedar Planting Continues Within the Mason Tract

River conservation groups have completed this year's northern white-cedar planting within the Mason Tract on the South Branch of the Au Sable River. Anglers of the Au Sable, the Headwaters Chapter (Gaylord) together with the Mason-Griffith Founders Chapter of Trout Unlimited (Grayling), The Sierra Club, the Spencer Redford Eagle Scout Project, and the William B. Mershon (Saginaw) of Trout Unlimited, planted a total of 200 cedar seedlings this year, to help begin the reforestation of the native northern white-cedars. Over the last five years over 1,000 seedlings have been planted and protected within the Mason Tract.

The Anglers of the Au Sable group, headed by Jim Shiflett, planted fifty new seedlings in the High Bank area, including Failing's Field. The Headwater Chapter was supervised by Pete Middleton. They planted this year at both Canoe Harbor and Dogtown. Marvin Roberson led the group from The Sierra Club with plantings at Daisy Bend. Marvin installed the first of many 6-foot enclosure to protect the maturing cedars. Scout Spencer Redford of Grand Rapids organized his Eagle Scout Project and accomplished a northern white-cedar planting at Chase Bridge. The Mershon Chapter of TU planted fifty new cedar seedlings at Potter's Landing.

The Mason Tract Northern White-cedar Restoration Project is a component of the "Cedars for the Au Sable" project. This project, which is chaired by Howard N. Johnson and administered by the Au Sable River Property Owners Association, is using an "adopt-a-bank-segment" approach to restore northern white-cedars (*Thuja occidentalis*) to ecologically appropriate sections of the South Branch of the Au Sable River within the boundaries of the Mason Tract. A working partnership has been formed with Huron Pines RC&D and Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Forest Management Unit to help begin the reforestation of native northern white-cedars within the Mason Tract.

Volunteer river conservation groups have been assigned a segment of the river by MDNR Forest Management. The volunteer group will plant and protect a minimum of 50 northern white-cedar seedlings each year for five years in their assigned segment. MDNR will determine the exact planting location of each seedling. Huron Pines RC&D will maintain a schedule of required planting, maintenance and monitoring. The "Cedars for the Au Sable" volunteers will provide the cedar seedlings and all necessary wooden stakes and fencing materials.

Enclosures will be constructed around each seedling to prevent deer browsing of this native tree. Protecting the growing cedars within enclosures will be necessary until the northern white-cedars reach a height to survive deer browsing which is estimated to be fifteen years. In time, these seedlings will grow to mature trees to provide needed shade to maintain the cold-water fishery of the Au Sable as well as ensuring the preservation of the river bank by locking in the soil to help reduce erosion.

The following river conservation groups have been participating sponsors during the past five years: Anglers of the Au Sable, the Headwaters Chapter (Gaylord) together with the Mason-Griffith Founders Chapter (Grayling), The Sierra Club, the William B. Mershon (Saginaw) of Trout Unlimited, Paul H. Young Chapter (Detroit) of Trout Unlimited, The North Branch Boys of Toledo, Ohio, and the Michigan Fly Fishing Club.

The "Cedars for the Au Sable" project has been in existence since 1997 providing over 10,000 northern white-cedars seedlings to river property owners along the upper Au Sable and Manistee Rivers. The northern white-cedars along the river banks provide needed shade to maintain the cold water fishery of the river. The presence of the cedar sweepers at the water line provides protection for the fish, increases

the amount of large woody debris in the water, as well as the preservation of the riverbank by locking in the soil. This one-of-kind project began out of the necessity that there were virtually no natural reforestation of northern white-cedars along northern Michigan rivers. Many believe it is due mainly to the tremendous deer populations in our northern counties. The Mason Tract Northern White-cedar Restoration Project is the first northern white-cedars planting and protection on state owed land.

Picture: P9220208

This northern white-cedar, planted in 2005, is now 20 inches tall. It still needs to be protected from deer browse to help begin the reforestation cedars within the Mason Tract.

