

Chaplin resident has become an expert on conservation

By **TRACI HASTINGS**
Chronicle Correspondent

CHAPLIN — A Chaplin resident has completed training that makes him an expert on conservation.

Christopher Komuves just finished a four-day course in forest and wildlife conservation through the University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension Service at the Goodwin Forest in Hampton.

Now, he's the guy who can help other landowners with questions on the use and enjoyment of their woodlands.

The course was also sponsored by the state Department of Environmental Protection and the Connecticut Forest and Park Association.

Komuves was one of a class of 26 who took the course, taught by forestry professionals from across New England.

The course is part of the "Coverts Project" and participants were known as Coverts Project Cooperators.

A covert is a thicket that provides sheltering cover for wildlife, according to extension coordinator Stephen Broderick, and the new cooperators are now part of a "thicket" of people across Connecticut who work with state natural resource experts and volunteer to assist landowners.

Broderick said there are more than 100,000 woodland owners in the state who collectively own 85 percent of the forests in Connecticut.

Komuves himself owns 80 acres

of forestland and he took the course so he could gain a better understanding of how to manage it himself.

Now that he has 40 hours of training under his belt, he not only knows how to do that, he can impart that knowledge to others.

Komuves is now qualified to answer questions from local residents on a variety of issues, ranging from techniques to clear forestland and other land management practices, to preserving native flora from invasive species.

He even has information on government tax breaks for forestland and estate planning.

Komuves said some of the things he learned in the class were surprising.

"A lot of the right things to do are counterintuitive," he said, which makes his new post as

"covert cooperator" very valuable to people who might take the wrong approach if they didn't have him to consult with him first.

Komuves said there are three state foresters in Connecticut who also answer these types of land management questions, but often residents with questions outnumber those foresters with the answers.

That is why the training course was implemented, so Komuves and the others who took the class can help get those questions answered faster.

"It's a good program," Komuves said.

Members of the community who are seeking advice or information on the conservation or management of forest and wildlife on their property can now call Komuves directly at 455-9839.



Roxanne Pandolfi
Christopher Komuves of Chaplin recently finished a course in forest and wildlife conservation through the University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension Service.

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