

According to my neighbor Tom Soucy, whose land has been in the Vermont Use Value Appraisal program for over twenty years, “responsible forest management is like tending to a garden-an extremely large one. It must be cared for regularly in order to produce something of value.” In addition to a plentiful harvest, forests that are well maintained, ensure wildlife diversity, clean air and water, and contribute to scenic landscapes. However, the tradition of working the land in forests is declining, with most of the owners in the logging business being over 50 years of age. It is time for my generation to understand the importance of forests in our beautiful state of Vermont, in order to maintain the long standing practice of caring for our forests. Well managed forests provide good paying jobs in our state, support a wide variety of businesses, and are the backdrop to Vermont’s recreation and tourism industry.

A major benefit to managing the forests in Vermont, is that it provides many local jobs for hardworking Vermonters. As stated by the North East Foresters Association in their 2013 Report, “it starts with the foresters, loggers, and truckers who manage, harvest, and transport the raw material from the forest to various markets for processing.” This sector provides approximately 900 jobs. Once these natural resources reach their destination, a forest products industry which employs over 10,000 people, starts converting these materials into wood-based products. Not only are jobs created from harvesting trees, but well managed forests add another 10,000 jobs to the recreation and tourism industry. In total, almost 21,000 jobs are the direct result of well managed forests.

In addition to creating jobs, well managed forests produce a diverse mix of products, and generate an annual revenue of 1.9 billion dollars. Some examples include cordwood, wood pellets, and shavings. Cordwood and wood pellets are vital energy resources not only for residents that heat their homes with it, but also for many small businesses. Wood chips are used to heat many of our local public schools around the state along with two biomass electric generating stations, and several industrial sized heating plants. Unfortunately, we are not maximizing the wood that the forests are providing. Statistics in 2013 show that “Vermont’s forests add 2.4 million cords in growth per year while approximately 1.4 million cords of timber is harvested.” This leaves one million cords of wood standing, when it could be used for wood pellets, and shavings, to feed the growing markets in biomass and pellet manufacturing in Vermont.

Finally, Vermont’s managed forests provide the setting for recreation and tourism businesses to thrive. With an annual revenue of 1.9 billion dollars, this category tops the list. Camping, hiking, leaf peeping, downhill and x-country skiing, wildlife viewing, and hunting are the main recreation activities and tourist attractions. Since fall foliage represents 48% of the total income, it is imperative that we have forests that are well managed, for leaf peepers to come see.

Economic factors are not the only reason why we should care about our forests, although it seems today, that profits determine most of our policy and business decisions. There are some things that you can’t put a dollar value on, such as, clean air, clean water, and the sheer beauty that exists in the forests of

Vermont. I don't need a sign telling me that I have entered Vermont after visiting family in Massachusetts, the forested landscape says it all. This is why forests matter the most to me ,and hopefully, they mean something to you.

Name: Sofia Gulick

School Name: 9th grade, Homeschooled

Writing Instructor: Niki Oney