

Membership Newsletter

Vol. 5, No. 8

March 2009

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www.vermontwoodlands.org

2009 Annual Meeting

The VWA Annual Meeting will be held on Friday, April 3, 2009 at the Vermont Technical College, Old Dorm Building on the VTC campus in Randolph Center from 8:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.

The day will begin with coffee and registration followed by presentations by Jason Gibbs, Commissioner of Forests, Parks & Recreation, Steve Sinclair, Forests, Parks & Recreation State Forester, Jonathan Wood, Secretary of Agency of Natural Resources, Barbara Burns, Forests, Parks & Recreation, Shawn Haskell, Fish & Wildlife Biologist, and by the VWA Executive Director. The 2009 activities and plans for 2009 for Vermont Woodlands Association will also be presented. The Vermont Woodlands Association will be

electing their 2009 board of directors. After lunch there will be an awards presentation including five 50-Year Tree Farm Awards to Beechwood Farm, E.B. Hyde, Co., Fred Hunt, Churchill Tree Farm, and Richard Rose, as well as the 2009 Tree Farmer of the Year award.

The meeting will end with Keynote speaker Ted Levin speaking on *Seasons in Vermont from a naturalist's perspective*. Ted is a lifelong naturalist, photographer, author, and commentator on radio and in print.

Cost for the meeting is \$30.00. Registration is enclosed in the newsletter and available for download at www.vermontwoodlands.org.

Level I and Level II Forestry Schools Announced

Vermont Woodlands Association is pleased to announce that it will be holding two Annual Forestry School weekend workshops. We will be offering a Level I session on April 18-19 and a Level II on September 12-13. If you've missed our previous workshops you won't want to miss either of these.

Each workshop will begin with registration at 8:30 AM on Saturday morning and end Sunday at 3:00 pm. Overnight accommodations are available at Hulbert Outdoor Center along with Saturday lunch, dinner and snacks and Sunday breakfast and lunch. No alcoholic beverages will be provided but you may BYOB. Pets are not permitted. The cost of the Forestry School weekend is \$100 per person. To see a full

schedule and to download the Level I registration please visit www.vermontwoodlands.org.

The Level I Forestry School weekend workshop is an excellent opportunity for new landowners or those wishing to learn more about managing their forestland. Each year the program improves based on feedback from attendees. According to most, this is a very inspiring weekend filled with opportunities to learn from experts in forestry and to network with other landowners. Of particular appeal is the evening's informal "fireside chats." The casual and comfortable setting at Hulbert makes it a memorable weekend.

Information on the Level II Forestry School will be available closer to the workshop date.

VWA Membership
Newsletter is
published four
times a year.

2009 Advertising Rates

(per year):

member/nonmember

**Business Card
\$120/\$150**

1/4 Page \$200/\$300

1/2 Page \$360/\$500

**Full Page \$180/\$250
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News from the Tree Farm Program

Looking for a few good people

Al Robertson

The American Tree Farm System is looking for a few individuals in each state to help build a “Grassroots Action Network”. In the past, the meager financial support available to the ATFS meant little practical ability to “rouse” the membership to support policy and political advocacy. Although local political activity by supporting organizations- like VWA - clearly had positive effects on local forestry issues, not much was accomplished at the national level. With the availability of the annuity funding from the Canadian Softwood Lumber Agreement settlement, ATFS has undertaken to build a national, state-organized network of volunteer supporters:

1. Capable of projecting ATFS policy and goals to all elected officials,
2. Challenging forest landowners to become involved,
3. Coordinating and mobilizing letter-writing and calls to officials,
4. Organizing visits to federal elected officials when they are home in the state,
5. Traveling to DC for Fly-ins to our representatives,
6. Organizing outreach efforts to build public support for sustainable forestry and other related policies, and
7. Informing VWA and the ATFS of emerging local and state forestry issues.

ATFS has hired a small, expert staff to build the network, and has already made a difference with advocacies for increased federal funding for family forest land-owners. They are actively recruiting two levels of participation. The first level, “Grasstops Leaders”, consists of responsible individuals willing to spend the time and effort to manage the above activities with VWA. The second level, “Advocates”, are individuals who care about the issues and are willing to place a call or host a field day, but not be willing to be as involved as a Grasstop Leader.

The successful construction of the Network will allow forestland owners an equal and proportional voice to our elected officials that we have long surrendered to organizations that don’t support our values. If you are interested in joining our Grassroots Action Network please call me at (802) 626-3590, or e-mail at pfalz@kingcon.com . Remember, people make the difference, not the organization.



President's Column

Ancient Roads/Unidentified Corridors - Be aware!

Do you know if you have an ancient road/unidentified corridor on your land? Do you want one for access for you, ATVers, jeepers and the general public?

A few years ago I arrived home to discover a line of flagging across my property. Upon investigation, I discovered that the local Conservation Commission had hired a surveyor to relocate a 1790's road of which I was entirely unaware. Since the location of magnetic north has changed considerably since 1790, the surveyor's old compass readings took the "road" up a slope that no horse could ever pull a buggy and then through a swamp. Nevertheless, a relocation had to be negotiated since a municipally never loses a right of way unless legally discontinued.

As more pieces of Vermont were sold, more ancient roads/unidentified corridors suddenly appeared. Landowners, real estate brokers, title searchers, lenders and lawyers became concerned.

After a few years of agitation, the Legislature passed Act 178 - *An Act Relating to Unidentified Corridors* that updated the definition of roads in Vermont. The Act took effect on July 1, 2006.

Unidentified Corridors are town highways that:

1. have been laid out as highways by proper authority through the process provided by law at the time they were created or by dedication and acceptance; and

- 2. do not as of July 1, 2009, appear on the town highway map prepared pursuant to section 305 of this title; and
- 3. are not otherwise clearly observable by physical evidence of their use as a highway or trail; and
- 4. are not legal trails

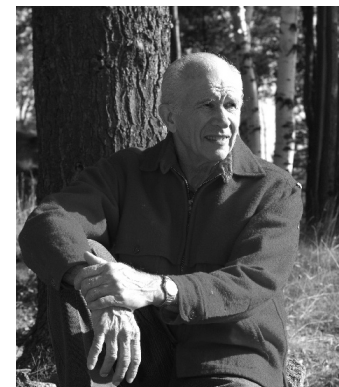
Before July 1, 2009, a select board may vote to discontinue all town highways not included in a sworn description of town roads filed with the town clerk or a landowner may petition the select board for discontinuance of a particular road. However, five percent of the voters may petition for a town meeting to vote on overturning the select board's decision.

If a discontinued road/unidentified corridor is the only access to a landowner's property, the landowner still has a private right-of-way over the discontinued road/corridor.

Any town roads/unidentified corridors not appearing on the town highway maps as of July 1, 2015 are automatically discontinued.

If you think this issue may affect you, for more information go to:
<http://www.vtroads.com/>

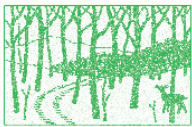
Put Blodgett, VWA President



Put Blodgett

JON GILBERT FOX

Visit our website at www.vermontwoodlands.org for information on the Tree Farm program, workshop opportunities, forestry related programs for students and teachers, and much more.



News from Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation

Ice Damage Recovery: Drawing on the Lessons from 1998

Barbara Burns, Acting Chief of Forest Resource Protection

On the morning of December 12th, many Vermonters awoke to the sounds of branches snapping and trees crashing to the ground. Up to ¾" of ice had coated twigs and branches, taking out power to over 40,000 customers. This time, the southeastern corner of the state was hardest hit.

Ice storms are a fact of life in the north country, and a fact of life for trees that have to survive there, so they've developed a variety of survival strategies. Some aim to prevent ice damage from occurring in the first place. The architecture of fir and spruce branches sheds water before it freezes. Hardwoods shed their leaves so there's less surface area to hold ice. And white pines readily shed ice-laden branches to protect their trunks from life-threatening breakage.

Trees have also developed strategies to survive severe damage, should it occur. Hardwoods can generate new "epicormic" branches anywhere on the stem from buds already buried under the bark or from buds produced as a response to stress. If the top is broken from a softwood, an existing branch will often take over as the new leader so height growth can continue.

A long-term risk from ice damage is the stem decay that can develop from large, open wounds. Key to limiting decay is rapid growth of new wood

over the wound. (The fungi that cause woodstain and decay require oxygen, too.) The best wound closers are vigorous trees: trees that were healthy before the storm and damaged trees that regenerate branches quickly.

In addition, trees compartmentalize wounds internally, producing physical and chemical barriers that limit decay fungi. Some species are better at this than others. Short-lived trees like birch and aspen are generally poor compartmentalizers. On the other end of the spectrum, sugar maple is an excellent compartmentalizer (one reason it can withstand being tapped year after year). For all species, vigorous trees are also the best compartmentalizers.

We've learned a lot about tree recovery since the ice storm in 1998, when damage was extensive in northern New England, New York, and eastern Canada. Research programs were initiated, and the lessons from that storm are helpful to keep in mind when a well-managed woodlot is transferred overnight to a tangle of broken branches and damaged trees.

Most trees survive ice damage. With the exception of paper birch, trees with at least half their branches intact will bounce back quickly. The risk of mortality jumps for trees which have retained

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News from Department of Fish & Wildlife

What is Good Quality Habitat? Examining “Necessary Wildlife Habitat” Functions

by Paul L. Hamelin, Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department

The first article of this series examined habitat at the landscape level, and the second narrowed the focus to the community level. This article will further narrow the focus by examining the concept of “necessary wildlife habitat” from a habitat function perspective. Content is derived from the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department’s Conservation Assistance Project.

The term “necessary wildlife habitat” (NWH) seems redundant, as one would assume that all habitat components are necessary for wildlife to thrive on the landscape. However several environmental regulatory processes and habitat conservation strategies in Vermont recognize that certain habitats, or components, are essential to the perpetuation of a species in the state. Such habitat or components are afforded special protection under Vermont law, once their “necessary” status has been recognized via regulation or case law. As applied in Act 250, Vermont’s land use and development law, NWH is defined as “concentrated habitat which is identifiable and is demonstrated as being decisive to the survival of a species of wildlife at any period in its life including breeding and migratory periods.” Other Vermont regulatory processes which apply the concept of NWH are the Vermont Wetland Rules, and Section 248 of Title 30 V.S.A. 203 (regulation of certain public energy utilities).

The Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department (VFWD) has been reviewing and commenting on Act 250 (and Section 248) applications since the laws were enacted, and has successfully protected various habitat types including **deer wintering areas, mast stands, wetlands** (including bear feeding wetlands and vernal pools), **wildlife road crossings, and habitat for rare and endangered species** (includes high elevation habitat >2500’, heron rookeries, falcon nest cliffs, etc.).

Of course, NWH is found on private land throughout Vermont, so landowners can voluntarily protect and perpetuate these habitats at any time, outside of the regulatory processes. Let’s examine some examples of NWH, and consider how they may be protected or perpetuated by private landowners in Vermont

Deer Wintering Areas

To cope with Vermont’s severe winter climate, deer rely upon availability of special winter habitat known as deer wintering areas (DWA), or more commonly, ‘deer yards.’ A DWA is generally defined as an area of mature or maturing softwood cover, with slopes facing towards the south, southeast, southwest, or even east or west, used by deer on a regular basis to obtain refuge from restrictive snow depths and extreme cold temperatures. Ideally, the evergreens have a minimum of 70 percent crown closure to provide winter shelter, but there are many areas in Vermont where crown closures of less than 70 percent support wintering deer quite well. Browse should be available near enough for deer to travel through snow with minimal energy expenditure.

DWA vary from a few acres to over a hundred acres, and provide deer essential protection from deep snow, cold temperatures, and wind. Forest cover is commonly hemlock and white pine in the southern part of the state, and white cedar, spruce, and fir in the north. DWA can be used by generations of deer over many decades if appropriate habitat conditions are maintained. Deer annually migrate, often several miles, from fall habitats to wintering areas. A single DWA often serves deer from large areas of a town and in some cases from surrounding towns as well. Residential or commercial development within or adjacent to a DWA decreases the amount of winter habitat available to deer, negatively effecting the area’s deer population. Without adequate winter habitat, Vermont’s deer population would be subject to extreme fluctuations due to increased levels of winter mortality during moderate and severe winters. Only 8% of the forested landscape of Vermont has been mapped as DWA, so conserving it is essential to managing white-tailed deer in the state.

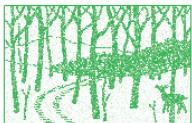
The VFWD maintains a GIS database of mapped DWA. They are included on the Department’s Significant Habitat Maps, available from the VFWD and town and regional planning commissions. However, not all DWA have been mapped. It’s also important to remember that some DWA mapped since the 1960s may no longer exist

continued page 6



ACORN A CoOperative Resource Network
for the WEST and DEERFIELD WATERSHEDS of southern Vermont

Vermont ACORN is a website for woodland owners that contains a monthly feature as well as a wealth of information on forest ecology, tree identification, forest types, wildlife, insects and diseases, invasive plants, recreation and forest management. For more information on ACORN visit www.vtacorn.net.

Ice Damage, *continued from page 5*Quality Habitat, *continued from page 5*

More storm damage resources are at:
<http://www.vtfpr.org/protection/StormResources.cfm>

less than 75% of their branches. Paper birch are at risk if over a quarter of the branches are broken. Survival is worse for any trees with pre-existing problems, like those still recovering from defoliation or with serious logging wounds.

White ash recuperation after the 1998 storm was remarkable. Ash, as well as sugar maple, frequently recovered from the loss of every branch. And yes, sugar maples with no branches did produce sap the following spring, although their yield was reduced to one-third of normal.

Woodstain and decay develop slowly, if at all. The exception, here, are conifers with broken trunks. Since they don't sprout new branches like hardwoods, they deteriorate quickly and they should be salvaged within a year.

Managing for future wood quality will require some clearing. As you'd expect, trees with broken trunks or stem forks are most likely to be degraded. Discoloration in these trees can spread several inches, to a foot or more, per year. Where large branches tore bark off the main stem as they broke, defects can also become serious. But if the trunk isn't wounded, as a rule, decay that happens in branches stays in branches.

As far as damage from this winter's storms, the good news is that trees in Vermont were generally healthy going into the winter. We've had good growing seasons back-to-back, and the caterpillar outbreak is fading into ancient history. Barring another disturbance, most hillsides now dotted with exposed white wood, will be fully green in a few years. There's time to evaluate, weigh options, and, above all, stay safe.

because of changes in forest cover or land use. If you suspect you own an un-mapped DWA, it's recommended you contact the Department.

Mast Stands

'Hard mast' refers to nuts, available primarily from American beech and oaks in Vermont. It's widely considered an important wildlife food source. The reliance of black bear on hard mast is so well established that the VFWD considers areas of beech or oak with a history of bear feeding use to be NWH as defined by Act 250. The availability of hard mast in the fall affects the minimum reproductive age of bears, productivity rates, and cub survival. Female bears exhibit reproductive 'skips' after poor mast years, and fall weight gains are keyed to mast availability. Simply put, these stands of beech and oak used by black bear are absolutely essential for the survival and reproduction of this species in Vermont!

Similar to deer winter habitat and wetlands, significant mast stands are discrete habitat features on the landscape that can be delineated and represented as a polygon on a map. Although beech is a common tree species associated with Northern Hardwood Forest natural communities, concentrated stands of beech that are used by black bears are not common; they represent a small fraction of the overall forested landscape of the state, hence their significance for conservation planning.

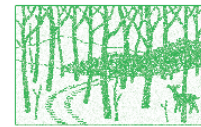
Mast stands considered necessary black bear habitat exhibit some bear scarring made within the past 10 years, and include at least 15 to 25 histori-

continued page 7

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Quality Habitat - *continued from page 6*

cally scarred trees within the stand. Smaller mast stands, however, may also be significant for wildlife and worth considering. Development within or even near the boundaries of a mast stand can diminish the function and use of this habitat.

Connecting Habitat (Corridors)

Connecting habitat (CH) is land that links larger patches of habitat within a landscape, allowing the migration, and dispersal of animals and plants. Riparian habitat along streams and rivers, strips of forest cover between developed areas, and even hedgerows/ fencerows all represent potential CH. Sometimes these areas are called 'corridors' even though they are not always linear, as the term implies.

While movement from one habitat patch to another is obviously important for wide-ranging animals such as bobcats and black bears, it's equally important for animals with relatively small ranges. Spotted salamanders, for example, use CH in spring to move from their hibernation sites to breeding pools. CH is valuable both seasonally and spatially. For example, it may allow black bears to access important food resources during a specific time of year (seasonal), or it may prevent isolation of bear populations by allowing free movement of breeding adults (spatial). Ultimately, CH can ensure that the habitat, movement, migration, and behavior requirements of most native plants and animals are conserved across a broad landscape.

Conserving threads of plant cover within a developing landscape won't maintain an area's ecological values and biological diversity, nor will corridors alone meet the habitat needs of all plant

and animal species in the area. Only in conjunction with the conservation of large areas of undeveloped land with diverse habitat conditions, and the maintenance of a sustainable working landscape, will CH assist in supporting ecosystem functions and related public benefits.

Conservation Strategies

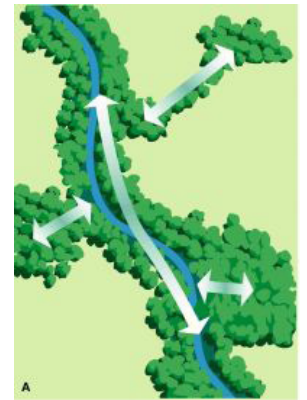
Specific goals and conservation strategies can help conserve NWH on your property, or within your town. Example goals are:

1. Maintain and protect the functional integrity of all DWA, mast stands, or CH on the property.
2. Increase the acreage of NWH under long term stewardship or that's permanently conserved in your town or area of interest. Example Strategies:

a. Locate existing NWH habitat throughout the property using Significant Habitat maps at your Town Clerk's office, and other wildlife-use data. Trained professionals can also help you evaluate the extent to which unmapped NWH exists in the area of interest.

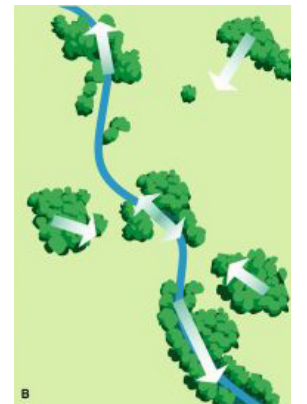
b. Consider the largest, highest quality DWA, mast stand, and/or corridors, particularly those that overlap with other unique habitats or rare species elements, as candidates for a conservation easement.

c. Develop a NWH management plan. The VFWD offers information and advice for developing such plans. A good start is: http://www.vtfishandwildlife.com/conservation_assistance.cfm



Landscape A

Landscapes with (A) high and (B) low degrees of connectivity. Corridors are particularly important for wide-ranging species whose habitat needs are not accommodated by a single patch of suitable habitat. (Source: Federal Interagency Stream Restoration Working Group (FISRWG))



Landscape B



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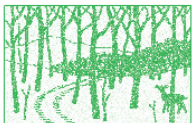
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As a benefit of membership, the Vermont Woodlands Association offers a free subscription to *Northern Woodlands*, a quarterly magazine that offers readers a "new way of looking at the forest." *Northern Woodlands* mission is to encourage a culture of forest stewardship in the Northeast by increasing understanding of and appreciation for the natural wonders, economic productivity, and ecological integrity of the region's forests. Members also receive the VWA newsletter published quarterly and E-News, offering articles of interest and educational opportunities for woodland owners.

New Member Application and/or Donation Form (Renewal notices are sent by mail to current members)

Vermont Woodlands Association is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation whose mission is to advocate for the management, sustainability, perpetuation, and enjoyment of forests through the practice of excellent forestry that employs highly integrated management practices that protect and enhance both the tangible and intangible values of forests—including clean air and water, forest products, wildlife habitat, biodiversity, recreation, scenic beauty, and other resources—for this and future generations.

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