



Membership Newsletter

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September 2010

2010 Tree Farm Convention

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By all accounts, the 2010 National Tree Farmer Convention in Burlington was a whopping success! Almost 400

Tree Farmers from across the nation descended on our fine state. Some of our southern visitors were hoping to escape the summer heat but instead brought it with them.

Vermont's own Thom McEvoy, renowned author, professor, and Extension Forester at the University of Vermont, presented the keynote address on "Why We Need to Eliminate the Property Tax on Forests." Thom also hosted two sessions on land transfer, "Strategies for passing forests within the family" that attracted capacity+ crowds. Other sessions focused on conservation incentives and ecosystem markets; public policy and markets for your wood; federal income tax on timber; review of 2010 AFF Standards of Sustainability for Certification; planning trails to generate recreational income & community goodwill; federal and state tools and programs for private forest owners; and effective advocacy for family forest owners.

With the shift to a summer convention, there were also twenty kids who attended with their families and, for the first time, a Project Learning Tree component was added. The kids had their

own "mini" convention, off-site, complete with private closing banquet.



Thursday's culminating Field Day at Shelburne Farms drew rave reviews. Other than the 95-degree day (we ordered clear skies and no rain but never thought about temperatures) that drove a few to seek the shade of our food tent, the day was absolutely perfect. Marshall Webb and Andrea Van Hoven from Shelburne Farms, Tree Farm committee co-

chair Al Robertson, and many VWA board members worked tirelessly for months to put together a phenomenal program. The fields and forests were alive with activity including all means and manner of skidding, logging, sawing, planting, processing, grading. Vermont craftspeople were well represented with turning, carving, cutting, weaving, and spinning demonstrations. A host of educational activities focused on invasives, soils, ecology, dendrol-



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News from the Tree Farm Program

2010 Tree Farmers of the Year Tour

Kathleen Wanner

More than forty people gathered on Saturday, August 14th under glorious skies for a tour of Beaver Brook Farm, the 2010 Tree Farm of the Year owned by Mike and Vivien Fritz. The Fritz's have owned the 525-acre parcel since 1999 and have been Tree Farmers since 2003.

We met in the barn, an awesome 150-year old, 3-story structure that has hosted many groups during the last decade. Consulting forester Richard "Carbo" Carbonetti talked about the Fritz's relationship to the land, their objectives, and stewardship ethic that has steered the forest management plan. Mike followed up with a discussion on how the working forest is also a community asset, offering recreational activities at no charge. There are 25km of groomed ski trails created from logging operations and 3km of VAST trails through the property. After five decades of posting by the former owners, the Fritz's now allow hunting by permission.

Two concurrent tours took everyone outdoors to see the results of large-scale commercial logging and also small-scale owner logging. Mike and Carbo each led two groups so all would have an opportunity to see both operations. With appetites at the ready, we

sat down to an absolutely wonderful buffet of pulled pork and chicken, salads, and a table full of mouthwatering desserts – all prepared by Vivien. Lt. Gov. Brian Dubie, a Tree Farmer himself, joined us for lunch and offered a few words about his and his family's connection to the land.

We then learned about "orienteeing," a sport that uses a map and compass to navigate through unfamiliar terrain. We were sent off, one at a time, for a firsthand experience. As someone who has not spent a lot of time in unfamiliar woods (even with trails), this seemed a little intimidating to me. I recall as a child venturing into the woods in Pennsylvania where my grandparents lived and coming out about five miles from their home... needing to be "rescued" by a nearby landowner and my parents. I'm pleased to say that this adventure was far more successful. After huffing and puffing my way up a few hills, I made it back to the finish line very excited. In fact, everyone found their way back using the tools we had been given... some in record time and others, like me, lollygagging along.

We again congratulate Mike and Vivien on being the 2010 Outstanding Tree Farm and extend out thanks to them and Carbo for making this a perfect day for all.



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President's Column Bear Neighborhood...

When I was scouting a site for our home, I came across the toed-in footprints of a well-used bear path. I felt guilty intruding in their territory, but it doesn't seem to bother them.

One heavy acorn year, a bear laid on its stomach under a big oak in our back yard, raking in the acorns with its front paws. It had been chased off our porch after getting the sunflower seeds in our bird feeders. But it still wanted those sunflower seeds. Three times it left the acorns and tip-toed around the corner of the house and looked at the feeders, but returned to the acorns. The fourth time it sneaked along and started onto the porch whereupon I leapt out and whacked it with a broom and it ran off grumbling.

We are lucky to have Ben Kilham, a wildlife rehabilitator specializing in bears, as a near-by neighbor. Just east of our house he can scan a valley with his radio receiver, picking up radio-collared bears that he can't receive elsewhere. Consequently, he has been generous in sharing bear experiences with us.

On one occasion we went for an exercise walk with two orphaned bears that Ben had penned up for protection during hunting season. They were tearing apart logs to find grubs when I noticed an earthworm.

I pointed it out to Ben because I certainly wasn't about to put my hand in front of a feeding bear! He picked it up and handed it to a bear who curled it around one claw, sniffed it and put it in its mouth. After tasting, it spat it out in disgust! Ben has found



that bears recognize the smell of suitable food and so he often chews it and breathes into the mouths and nostrils of orphaned cubs to educate them as to what plants to eat.

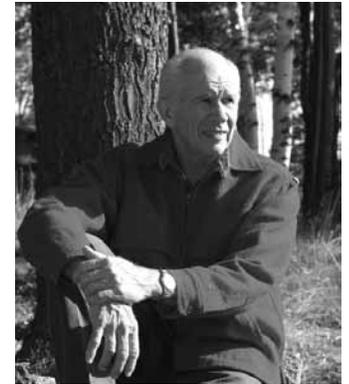
In February of 2008 I was invited to be part of a small group accompanying Ben and a state wildlife biologist to sedate, weigh and measure a bear and her two cubs. It was a miserable site, a slab of rock dislodged from an ice-covered ledge with the bears living in a small corner. Early that summer I went around the corner of our house and met them face to face. All four of us jumped two feet! In July of 2009 mama kicked out the cubs to fend for themselves. One evening she was eating acorns in our front yard as well as trying to reach the bird suet. One cub was hiding in the grass watching and trying to figure out what happened to their relationship. A week later my wife saw mama with a wild male. The hungry cubs ate our second planting of lettuce to the ground.

This past February Ben appeared at our door and asked if I would like to find the same bear and her new den. I jumped at the opportunity and we located her in a snug den about 400 yards from our house with three cubs. In March she was again sedated and while she was measured and a new radio collar installed, I had the once-in-a-lifetime thrill of holding her three cubs inside my shirt to keep them warm.

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Photos by MS Henzey



JON GILBERT FOX

Put Blodgett

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

Forest Health Update

Barbara Burns, Forest Health Program Manager



Hardwood Foliage, Frost, and Thrips

Although many trees have recovered from widespread frost damage in May, the foliage in many stands remains thinner than normal. Thin crowns are particularly noticeable on sugar and red maple, as well as beech and birch.

In all, about 400,000 acres of damage were mapped during aerial surveys. We have conducted ground assessments in over 30 sites. Although frost was the primary cause of damage, evidence of pear thrips injury was present at many of these sites. Thrips feeding resembles late frost damage; trees may have a thin crown, and leaves may appear small, mottled yellow, and distorted. Scars along the veins and leafstalks from thrips egg-laying help distinguish thrips feeding from frost injury. If you run your fingers along a scarred leafstalk, it will feel bumpy.

Although heavily damaged trees re-foliated shortly after the freeze event, dry conditions prevented full expansion of the new growth. Trees with moderate damage may not have re-foliated, and have hung onto damaged leaves all summer. When tree health was monitored following the pear thrips outbreak in 1988, it turned out that some of the worst impacts were to trees with “moderate” damage that did not fully re-foliate.

Yellow, Red and Dead Pine Trees

We are working with neighboring states to follow up on the browning of white pine trees that showed up in May. Brown spot needle blight and the *Canavirgella* needlecast fungus have both been found. By now, most of the symptomatic needles have fallen, and many white pine trees look thin.

Red pine is not susceptible to *Canavirgella*, but is susceptible to the brown spot needle blight. Symptoms from this disease can show up on current year foliage in July, and can worsen

through late summer. In addition to widespread needle blight, red pines are also showing symptoms from recent spikes in pine gall weevil (look for round swellings on the twigs) and *Diplodia* shoot blight (causing death of scattered shoots). Where red pine mortality is occurring, look for evidence of poor drainage (red pine hates wet feet), *Annosus* root rot (look for shelf fungi growing out of the base of the tree...even below the surface of fallen needles), or turpentine beetles (look for gobs of pitch around pencil-sized holes in the lower trunk).

Exotic Beetles

As of this writing, all potential Asian long-horned beetle-host trees within ¼ mile of the original find in Boston have been inspected, and no additional infestations have been detected. The trees that were removed appear to have been infested for just a few years, and the source of the infestation remains unknown. On the good news side, no infested trees have been found in New Jersey since 2006, and only one was found in New York this year.

Emerald ash borer continues to show up in new locations. In New York, there are two new counties. Most disconcerting is the find in Saugerties in the Hudson Valley about 60 miles from Vermont. The detections occurred in campgrounds, reinforcing the importance of the Don't Move Firewood message. If you'd like to help spread the word, details are available through the website www.firewood.vt.gov. The rules for State Parks (firewood must be from within 50 miles) and Green Mountain National Forest campgrounds (firewood must be from Vermont) are the same as last year, and State Parks staff continue to collect well-travelled firewood that cannot be burned within 24 hours.

If there's a positive side, both of these finds were from purple traps, which increases our confidence in their utility. In Vermont, the

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NRCS Forestry Cost-share Shows Increase

Steve Sinclair, Director of Forests, Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation

Forest landowners have a lot to be happy about over the cost-share opportunities funded through the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) this past year. At a recent Technical Committee meeting in Colchester, Vicki Drew, the new Vermont State Conservationist, gave a rundown on the various program funds and allocations.

In VT, a total of 152 Conservation Activity Plans (CAP) were funded. Of those, 129 were Forestry Plans, with another 13 awaiting action! In addition, under the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) there were an additional 45 forestry contracts for practices apart from plans. Between these two obligations, over \$900,000 were set aside for forestry related activities!

In addition, the New England States and NY worked with NRCS to get some forest management funding flexibility, which will be run through the Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP). Called the "Forestry Initiative," funding was made available for stand improvement and erosion fixes on forest roads and landings, in addition to the traditional wildlife habitat practices under WHIP. Vermont approved 96 applications for an additional \$800,000. All told, roughly \$1.7 million went to forestry practices with at least \$500,000 of unmet need remaining in VT.

The NRCS staff did a great job processing all of these contracts, and are very excited about the large forestry demand for cost-shares programs. We had long told them that this existed with the gap left by the loss of Forest Landowner Enhancement Program (FLEP). Vicki Drew, has formally asked that the Department give the Technical Committee a presentation on the state's most recently completed forest resources plan with a goal of having the committee discuss how the landscape needs mesh with the goals of their cost-share programs.

Although there still remains some concerns over the application process and the amount

of 'paperwork,' forest landowners are encouraged to contact their consulting foresters or call their local county foresters or regional NRCS offices to find out what opportunities will be available for the coming year. Let's keep the pressure on to leverage our share of the cost-share funding!

NRCS Conservation Program 2011 Application Deadline is October 1, 2010

Do you need a Forest Management Plan for your wood lot? Need to control an erosion issue on a forest skid trail? Are you interested in enhancing wildlife habitat in an old farm field?

The Natural Resources Conservation Service offers voluntary cost share programs to landowners for installing practices or implementing management activities on their land that address issues with soil erosion, wildlife habitat, forest health and water quality, just to name a few. Landowners can sign up for a conservation program at anytime. However, in order to be considered for the initial round of 2011 funds, you'll need to apply by October 1, 2010.

To be considered for an NRCS conservation program, you'll need to submit an application to your local Service Center. Applications can be downloaded from the Vermont NRCS web site, <http://www.vt.nrcs.usda.gov/> or you can pick up an application at your local Service Center. USDA Service Center locations can be found at the following web site: <http://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app?state=vt>. (Also see sidebar list at right.)

NRCS Service Centers:

Berlin: 802-828-4493
Brattleboro: 802-254-9766
Middlebury: 802-388-6748
Morrisville: 802-888-4935
Newport: 802-334-6090
Rutland: 802-775-8034
St. Albans: 802-527-1296
St. Johnsbury: 802-748-1296
White River Jct.: 802-295-7942
Williston: 802-865-7895

Forest Update, *continued from page 4*

Agency of Agriculture, Food, and Markets has been overseeing the deployment of 480 purple traps. They're not in subtle locations... and that's on purpose, since they turn out to be a good outreach tool.

We also continue to try looking for emerald ash borer by examining colonies of the *Cerceris* wasp which preys on related wood borers. Nine states are participating in this early detection activity. *Cerceris* is an intriguing insect which colonizes ballfields and other sunny, compacted sites. For more information, visit the website www.cerceris.info or, better yet, contact Trish Hanson, at our Forest Biology Lab, 802-241-3606. In Vermont, we are committed to collecting wood borers from 20 large colonies, and welcome assistance in this monitoring effort.

Twelve northeastern states are participating in the Forest Pest Outreach and Survey Project this year. This is a joint US Forest Service and APHIS project with state agriculture and forestry agencies. Vermont's activities this year include Asian longhorned beetle awareness month in August, training of volunteers, intensive surveys in St. Albans and Rutland, outreach to second-homeowners, and surveys for both beetles in campgrounds. In addition, public campground surveys for these two beetles, as well as for hemlock woolly adelgid and invasive plants, are being done by American Recovery and Reinvestment Act crews. ARRA is also supporting State Park interpreters, who are focusing on outreach related to these invasive species, and safe (kiln-dried) firewood for use by campers.

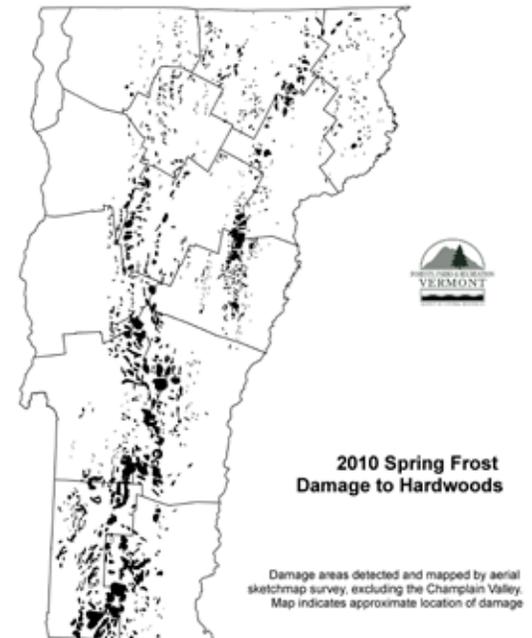
Hemlock Woolly Adelgid

Hemlock woolly adelgid was recently detected in Dummerston, bringing the count of known infested towns in Vermont to six. Seventy-four sites have been surveyed for the insect this year, including a minimum of five sites in each of the 12 towns adjoining infested towns. Trained volunteers continue to play an important role in detection surveys.

A US Forest Service grant to the three northern New England states has allowed us to conduct some additional work to obtain more information on managing this insect as it spreads north. We will continue to track winter survival at five sites (86 – 91% of the adelgids at four sites survived last winter, 26% survived at the fifth site), work with UMass on tracking a predatory beetle, and with UVM on testing a fungal insecticide.

We are continuing outreach to sawmills and other facilities that might be receiving hemlock wood products from Windham County or out-of-state. Because hemlock products can move freely to facilities with a compliance agreement, we are encouraging sawmill owners to obtain an agreement from our department if they may want to receive these materials.

For more information, visit <http://www.vtfrp.org/protection/idfrontpage.cfm>.



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Bear Neighborhood, *continued from page 3*

All spring she and the cubs wandered around the area, sometimes keeping us housebound so as not to disturb them. After last fall's acorns were all picked up, she would graze on grass just like a cow while the cubs frolicked and wrestled. One time the cubs took a nap at the foot of a tree while mama grazed for an hour. Then she went over to lay down with the cubs, who immediately woke up and started to climb all over her. She resignedly got up and walked away without a bit of rest! Ben says raising cubs is non-stop.

One time we were thrilled to watch the cubs playing on a statue in our back yard. Watching the cubs was like watching puppies play. They would wrestle each other, race up trees, at first staying close to the trunk, but as they grew older, playing out on the ends of branches which would cause any human mother to faint. Bears have unique shoulders for grasping around trunks while their hind feet push them up at a gallop. If anyone thinks they can escape a black bear by climbing a tree, they are going to be surprised! But as we watched the cubs develop, it

became apparent that one was not participating as well as the other two. Ben believes this was the female. A couple of weeks later there were only two cubs and a neighbor heard a squalling cub. Two days later Ben discovered that the grandmother, who had only one cub and plenty of milk, had adopted her grandcub!! The grandcub has fully bonded with her grandmother and uncle and ignores her mother and brothers. A Harvard professor friend of Ben's who studies primates in Africa says this is the first documented animal adoption that was not facilitated by man!

Put Blodgett, President

2010 Convention, *continued from page 1*

ogy, birds and wildlife, sugaring, trail planning, and hiking. Two tractor-drawn wagon tours around the property ran throughout the day, giving folks a chance to sit and enjoy the spectacular scenery.

VWA extends its sincerest appreciation to Marshall, Andrea, and all the Shelburne Farm staff; Al Robertson and all VWA board and member volunteers; to our many exhibitors and demonstrators; and to all who attended.

For those who missed the 2010 Convention, it was the opportunity of a lifetime to learn, do, and network with hundreds of other forest landowners. But, don't despair... the 2011 Convention is already scheduled for August 9-11 in Albuquerque, NM. While it's apt to be hotter than our 2010 summer, the New Mexico desert is quite beautiful!



Email: An Important Tool

Why do we ask members for their e-mail addresses? E-mail is the only practical way to quickly reach you with late-breaking news or updated information about VWA opportunities and events. But we don't have current e-mail addresses for many of our members.

Please consider updating your e-mail address on the membership renewal forms or send a note to info@vermontwoodlands.org with your current address.

Please be assured that we do not sell e-mail (or mailing) addresses to anyone. We only use your email for VWA related activities. You also have the option of removing your e-mail address at anytime.





Consulting Foresters Corner

Kathy Beland

I was born south of the Mason-Dixon Line, yes- a Flatlander, considered Southern by Northerners and a Yankee by Southerners. It kind of puts you in a state of limbo that location- Maryland- the Free State.

Recently, we had friends from Maryland, our forestry school buddies - come visit us here in Vermont. I suppose reminiscing is part of those kinds of visits. You talk about the changes with old friends, what your kids are doing, getting old, what you are going to do when the kids are gone and maybe whether or not the hair in your husband's mustache is gray or blond- you know the deal. But probably because of our background, we also talk about the trees and changes in the landscape.

Growing up in Maryland, one of our family's favorite day trips was to go to "the mountains." These were the Catoctin Mountains, with Cunningham Falls usually the final destination of the day. Sometimes there was a day hike to Cat Rock or the Iron Furnace, and we used to be able to drive right by the entrance to Camp David (which we frequently did) and would wave to the president in case he were visiting. My mom would pack a picnic lunch, with fried chicken and macaroni salad, Utz potato chips, and watermelon, and

lemonade in that red and white Thermos (you know the one).

But my absolute favorite part of these trips was entering the valley following Route 77 and watching the water cascade over the rocks in Big Hunting Creek. The windows of the car were usually down, and as we rounded the first curve at the base of the mountains, I would breathe deep, inhaling that intoxicating scent of hemlocks and water, and leaf mold, and marvel at the instant drop in temperature that brought relief from summer heat. There were fly fishermen in the streams, their cars parked in the pull offs as you ascended up the mountain. The falls themselves were not far off of Route 77, and on a hot and humid July day, it wasn't easy to find a place to park. But it didn't matter if we had to walk a little, because we were going to climb up the falls with my mother standing at the bottom screaming at us not to go any higher. We would play in the stream, finding crayfish, hopping across rocks, and getting sprayed by the waterfalls. It was, well, heaven to me.

Sitting around the campfire, our friends were asking about whether or not we had the

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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.

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Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI)

Vermont's Sustainable Forestry Initiative would like to thank all of the participating organizations who have renewed their dedication to sustainable forestry operations in Vermont. The companies that have chosen to actively work Vermont's landscape while adhering to the SFI 2010-2014 Standard are among the leaders in Vermont's timber community.

The Vermont implementation committee of SFI will be holding an accountability committee meeting this fall. The accountability committee is responsible for ensuring that any complaints about SFI logging operations in Vermont, reported to our accountability hotline at 1-800-SFI-GOAL, are followed up to continue to improve the quality of management on Vermont forestlands. If you wish to learn more information about Vermont's accountability committee, our hotline, or would like to join the accountability committee please call Chris Loyer at 802-229-6107

Action Alert

Vermont's SFI office has been working hard to do our part in persuading the United States Green Building Council (USGBC) to include SFI certified wood in their Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) rating system. Under the current LEED system only FSC (Forest Stewardship

Council) certified wood qualifies for use in the LEED system of green building. SFI and ATFS (American Tree Farm System) certified woods are currently not considered green building materials under the LEED rating system. SFI and ATFS account for nearly 84 million acres of forest lands across the U.S., nearly three times that certified under FSC.

Seventy-nine members of the U.S. Congress recently signed a letter to the USGBC urging them to include SFI and ATFS, as well as FSC certification. The letter, which was signed by Vermont Congressman Peter Welch and 78 other congressmen, echoed the concern of the industry that USGBC's policy on only acknowledging FSC certified wood will give builders an incentive to use foreign FSC certified wood rather than U.S. grown SFI or ATFS certified wood. We ask that everyone who wishes to help SFI and ATFS become part of the LEED certification system please go to www.ipetitions.com/petition/leed/ and sign the petition. Creating a strong domestic timber market will go a long way in ensuring the sustainability of the U.S. timber industry and future jobs for timber industry workers.

If you have any questions about becoming SFI certified or about SFI becoming LEED recognized please call Chris Loyer at 802-229-6107 or email me at Chris@JohnstonConsult.net

SUSTAINABLE FORESTRY INITIATIVE®

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In Vermont, call William Driscoll, SFI Coordinator, at Associated Industries of Vermont, 802-223-3441.

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Consulting Foresters Corner, *continued from page 8*

hemlock adelgid here, and how much damage it has done down there. The streams are losing their softwood cover, trout fisheries are threatened there just as they are in New England. We talked about the flowering dogwoods, and the anthracnose that devastated them in the mid 1980's. And the talk moved to Emerald Ash Borer and of course the Asian Long-Horned beetle. I thought about the chestnut, and the butternut, and loss of all of those elm trees lining the streets of America. Today I read something about a new fungus attacking Black Walnut. Every day it seems there is something else that is attacking our landscape and I, for one, do not look forward to the day when there is no hemlock along my favorite trout streams. If it is not an insect or a disease threatening the land, it is forest fragmentation or the pressure felt by landowners just to pay their property taxes.

It is hard not to be very disheartened about all of this loss, and the potential loss of entire tree species and habitat. Since our Pre-Columbian landscape, the landscape has changed, over and over again. Our land does have the ability to recover from changes brought about by man or nature, and after attending the Tree Farm Field Day and Banquet held last month in Burlington, I am encouraged by this landowner organization which carries 90,000 certified tree farms. I was one of the wagon ride "herders", and was able to listen to many different people from all over the country and hear about their tree farms, and the stewardship ethic they believed in. As we watched the video of the National Tree Farmers of the Year, Salem, Dianne, and Patrick Saloom of Alabama, at the banquet that evening, and they spoke about re-establishing the Longleaf pine forest in a hurricane devastated landscape, I smiled inside. I smiled because I was sitting in this room with only a handful of the Tree Farmers in our country who are dedicated to being good stewards. There are 89,700 or so more out there! I am encouraged because there are foresters, scientists,

researchers, loggers, arborists, and landowners, private and public who are working hard to educate the public, and find methods of control on trying to contain the spread of these devastating insects and diseases. I am encouraged by what can happen when you have private landowners with a strong stewardship ethic as part of the network of eyes on our landscape, ready to work hard to keep it intact, or restore it after it is devastated.

If you are reading this, you may own forestland, or work in the forest, or just plain love it, just as I did when I was a child in Maryland. Though the outlook may seem bleak, we as professionals, and laypersons, have to stay pro-active about our forestland and the threats to its existence. Becoming a member and being involved with Vermont Woodlands Association, or becoming a Tree Farmer are only two small ways that you can be part of a larger network of people whose love for the land is motivation enough to educate themselves and others about the conservation of the forests of Vermont and the rest of our country. Check out the websites if you haven't done so yet. Call your consulting forester, VWA, or the county forester for information on becoming a Tree Farmer. Attend the educational opportunities offered to learn more about managing your forestland. And don't forget – the trees put the Green in the Green Mountains!

CALL NOW! BEFORE YOU CUT, NOT AFTER

*A Guide to Public
Resources for
Woodland Owners in
Vermont*

Take advantage of free services available through the Vermont County Foresters before selling timber from your woodlands.



Call Now!
Before you cut...not after.

To download the Call Before You Cut brochure or to find your County Forester, or a VWA consulting forester, visit www.vermontwoodlands.org.



VWA's Position Statement on Current Use

In post-colonial times, land and farm buildings were reliable indicators of wealth because most people made their living directly from the land, and the quality and value of land was related to a person's ability to generate income. For many years thereafter, taxing land and farm buildings made sense and was fair.

But today the world is very different, especially the way most of us earn our living and the way we value forest and farmland for taxation. Rather than tax forest and farm land based on productivity and ability to produce forest products or agricultural crops, we now tax property on the real estate market's indication of its "highest and best use." This often leads to expansion/conversion to other uses, including its development potential. The rationale for this view is that land converted to market value, "highest and best use," will produce a higher rate of return on investment. Such a system is inherently biased against agriculture and forestry. It would result in annual property taxes that are higher than the value of the products produced from the land. This would make agriculture and forestry financially unsustainable. Landowners are then pressured to sell their land, leading to parcelization, development and other uses not compatible with forestry and agriculture as well as wildlife and environmental conservation.

The Use Value Appraisal Program was created by the Vermont Legislature to reduce property taxes to levels compatible with the "current use" of the land, rather than taxing land for its "potential use." There is widespread agreement that the program has been very successful and has helped maintain Vermont's tradition of a working landscape. Surveys and forums conducted by the Council on the Future of Vermont substantiate how highly the public values this working landscape of forests and farms.

The Vermont Woodlands Association recognizes that Current Use taxation is critically important to landowners who practice forestry or agriculture in Vermont and strongly supports continuation of the program. According to a 2007 report published by the Northeast State Foresters Association, "The annual contribution of forest-based manufacturing and forest-related recreation and tourism to the Vermont economy is over \$1.5 billion." Maintenance of a productive landscape with working farms and healthy forests not only provides jobs in our local communities for those who grow, harvest, transport and process the products we produce from the land, but there is also substantial benefit to the public, specifically, clean air, clean water, carbon storage, wildlife habitat, recreational opportunities and the beautiful landscape we and our visitors all enjoy.

The Vermont Woodlands Association pledges to continue to work constructively with the landowners of Vermont, our Legislature and our conservation partners to support and make improvements to the Use Value Appraisal Program, while resolutely holding true to the principle of fair taxation for forest and farm land and the maintenance of healthy forests and farms in a working landscape.

Current Use Tax Coalition

On August 2, the newly formed Current Use Tax Coalition... or CUTC... met for the first time, with representatives from fifteen farm and forestry organizations in attendance. Recognizing the difficulty of building consensus among so many diverse organizations, CUTC is focused on educating the general public, the legislature, and each other about the importance of the current use program and the economic and environmental benefits that our farms and forests deliver to the State.

We are in the initial stages of drafting a mission statement and setting our goals. We do know that issues abound and that the potential for conflict exists. However, we also know that we can agree on a few basic tenets: that is, current use must remain a viable program and any changes to the program must improve it.

The next meeting will be held on August 30 (in advance of our mailing), at which time we will adopt a mission statement, goals, and budget. You can expect to be kept informed via our e-news updates (make sure we have your email address) and future mailings.



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

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.

Annual dues investment (check one)

Landowners

- 0 -100 acres..... \$40
- 101-200 acres..... \$50
- 201-500 acres..... \$60
- 501-1,000 acres..... \$70
- 1,001-5000 acres..... \$100
- Over 5,000 acres..... \$250
- Friend/Supporter..... \$40

Natural resource professionals

- Individuals..... \$50
- Firms and crews..... \$100

Wood products companies & equipment suppliers

- Individuals..... \$50
- Firms and crews..... \$250

- VWA Certified Consulting Foresters* \$160
(Subject to VWA acceptance. Call for details)

Name _____

Address _____

Town _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone _____ FAX _____ Email _____

Woodland town(s) _____ County(ies) _____

Woodland acres _____ Tree Farm member? _____ Enrolled in the Value Appraisal Program? _____

Forester _____

Please make checks payable to Vermont Woodlands Association and mail with the completed form to:
VWA Treasurer, PO Box 6004, Rutland, VT 05702-6004.

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