Membership Newsletter
Vol. 4, No. 1 June 2006

News from VWA Annual Meeting

On April 7 the VWA hosted a capacity crowd for its annual meeting at the Hilltop Inn with 88 people in attendance. A slate of expert speakers presented a program that was both informative and interesting. We heard from Ginger Anderson, Steve Sinclair, and Jonathan Wood of the Vermont Dept. of Forests, Parks & Recreation about topics that included forestry education programs and the health of Vermont's forests. Gina Owens, the acting forest supervisor for the Green Mountain National Forest spoke about the recently released GMNF plan and the process of public involvement. Ron Regan from the VT Fish & Wildlife Dept. spoke about Vermont's Wildlife Action Plan.

Following the buffet lunch, VWA presented awards to forestry leaders, tree farm inspectors, and the tree farmer of the year (see p.2). Galen Hutchinson, Jim Philbrook, and Richard Rose were honored with distinguished service awards for forestry leadership. Russ Barrett, Stephen Slayton, and Jim Tessman were recognized for their service to the Vermont Tree Farm Program. Neil Lamson was also recognized for his years of service as a member of the VWA board of directors and for his service as the volunteer administrator for the Vermont Tree Farm Program. Keynote presenter Darby Bradley from the Vermont Land Trust offered views on preserving lands for future generations (see article this page).

Estate Plans are as Important as Management Plans

When it comes to forest management, experienced woodland owners are used to taking the long view. They routinely make management decisions that will not pay off for a long time, perhaps even beyond their own lifetime. But do they plan for the disposition of their land with the same care?

“Let the children decide” is a common sentiment among many parents. That may be doing the next generation a disservice. The children may be scattered around the country, and have varying connections to the land. Even if they all get along well, death,
News from the Vermont Tree Farm Program

Von Trapp Named 2006 Tree Farmer of the Year

At the VWA Annual Meeting, Johannes von Trapp of the Trapp Family Tree Farm was recognized as the 2006 Tree Farmer of the year. The tree farm today consists of approximately 2,350 acres of woodland in Stowe, having grown from a small hill farm in 1945 to its current acreage. The tree farm has been certified for more than thirty years. The von Trapps employ on-site foresters, Eric Schultz and Jonathan Pryor as well as contractors who manage the property for recreation, wildlife, and timber production. There is an extensive trail system in all tree stands enjoyed by the many visitors to the Trapp Family Lodge. The forests are well maintained as part of the resort business, setting an excellent example for all who tour their woods and use the many trails available.

Estate Plans

Continued from page 1

taxes, divorce, bankruptcy, college education, and a hundred other pressures can fracture a family once the parents are gone. Instead of being a loving legacy, the gift of land to the children may become the rock on which family unity can founder.

What can be done? First, involve your children in your decision-making. You may find that what you think they want is very different from what they actually want. Let them help guide you.

Second, if several children will inherit the property, look for a legal mechanism like a family trust and limited liability corporation, which will allow the owners to reach decisions without fracturing the land. Be careful of joint ownerships (“tenancies in common”), where a minority owner can force a breakup or sale of the property.

Third, if permanent conservation is of interest, talk to the Vermont Land Trust or a similar organization. Conservation easements can be designed to fit the land, your goals and your family’s needs. A typical easement does include some development rights in designated locations, while preserving the land’s most important natural resource values. It may even save some income and estate taxes.

Planning the future of land can be a rewarding process. It can bring a family closer together, reduce the potential for dispute later on, and help preserve your legacy of stewardship to your family and the land. Don’t wait. Get yourself and your family started as soon as possible.

Darby Bradley, President
Vermont Land Trust

Johannes von Trapp receives the 2006 Tree Farmer of the Year plaque from Clark Bothfeld, VT Tree Farm Chairperson.

2006 Outstanding Tree Farm Tour

On September 15 at 1:00 p.m. there will be a tour of the Trapp Family Lodge’s 2006 Outstanding Tree Farm. The Lodge is located at 700 Trapp Hill Road, a little south of Stowe. From 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon there will be a Board of Directors’ meeting in the Shubert Room and all members are invited to attend. At noon there will be a buffet lunch served outside the Shubert Room and everyone is invited to participate. Cost will be $25 per person. Please make checks payable to VWA and send to the VWA office to reserve lunch. There is no cost for the tour.
**President's Column**

**NO TRESPASSING!!**

When Vermont’s pioneers were cutting their homesteads out of the forest, the land was open to everyone. This became a part of our state’s culture for over 200 years. When I was a kid, the land was still open. One could hunt, fish, trap, snowshoe, hike and roam wherever. (There wasn’t much x-c skiing back then). There was more of a feeling of community, that although the land was “owned” under the white man’s culture, a bit of the Native American concept that land was for the benefit of all, still remained.

But times have changed. What once was all low-impact foot travel (with an occasional horse) has now become noisy, high impact, mechanized traffic. Unfortunately, there are some in all categories of forest users who have no respect for the land or the landowner.

From cut fences, padlocks shot off gates, stolen firewood and equipment, to mudspewing motorized vehicles in mud season, I have seen it all. My land remains open to foot traffic, but I limit wheeled traffic.

I now have a heavy steel gate with the padlock inside a hollow steel post. I backtracked the ATVs to the houses of origin. Because the Conservation Easement on my Tree Farm prohibits the use of motorized recreational vehicles by the general public, the counsel for the land trust wrote a document explaining that fact and added that it is illegal to ride on another’s property without written permission on the rider’s person. I then had the town policeman serve the papers and it has vastly curtailed ATV activities on my Tree Farm.

I grit my teeth in anger at those that spoil things for everyone else. But my wife and I grew up in rural Vermont when all the land was open for everyone to enjoy. We still believe in that, despite the above, and do get expressions of appreciation from those that enjoy our land.

One of my friends was amused to see two “No Trespassing” signs facing each other across a property line. However, I was not amused years ago when a neighbor, who was boarding deer hunters from down country, posted his land along our mutual bound-

ary—and then led his hunting parties onto my land!

Another change to the old Vermont culture is the arrival of many who were not born into its traditions. Many of them come from small lots in urban areas or from cities. Some immediately nail up “No Trespassing” signs to protect their property and privacy. I call it “The Suburban Fortress Mentality”. This destroys the sense of community to which they have moved and creates resentment among those who are accustomed to open land.

In areas of too-high deer populations, posting provides sanctuary for deer. After enjoying watching deer for a few years, the owner finally wakes up to the fact that regeneration is badly impacted, ground-nesting birds are decreasing and tree species are being altered because of deer dining preferences. The deer overpopulation problems of the suburbs, where no hunting is allowed, are now in his/her backyard!

I realize that there are some situations where so much abuse is occurring, that “No Trespassing” signs are necessary. But to be legal, signs have to signed and dated every year and visible from every possible point of access. Usually, trespassers will tear down any visible signs at their point of access, throw them behind a tree and, if caught, point out there were no signs at their point of trespass. Try to prove they were the ones who tore down the signs! If one likes signs in the woods, then a compromise position might be “Access with Permission Only” which provides some oversight as to who is on the property and may engender a feeling of caring for that property.

But I would urge all, who are not heavily impacted by trespass, to avoid the annual hassle of resigning every sign, replacement, the visual graffiti of a never-ending line of signs running through the forest and the ill-will of those who were brought up in the culture of open land.

It is highly frustrating to suffer damage done by the rotten apples, but the majority appreciates open land.

*Put Blodgett, VWA President, Put@valley.net*
News from Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department:
WHIP Your Wildlife Habitat Into Shape

The Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) is helping more than 600 Vermont landowners manage their land for wildlife. A federally funded cost share program administered by the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), WHIP provides both technical and financial assistance to help create, restore, and enhance fish and wildlife habitat. Since 1998, over $3.6 million in WHIP funds have been dedicated to this use in Vermont.

There are a variety of habitat practices that are eligible for the cost share payments. They include:

• Apple tree release and pruning
• Delayed mowing or brush hogging of grasslands or fields
• Fencing to exclude livestock from sensitive areas
• Grassland establishment or restoration
• Invasive plant control
• Patch or strip cuts to create early successional habitat
• Perennial wildlife food plots
• Stream corridor and aquatic habitat restoration
• Tree and shrub planting to create hedge rows, travel corridors, or riparian buffers

In most cases, the landowner receives 75% of the cost of these practices up to a set amount. Certain practices, however, may be eligible for 100% cost share if they are considered beneficial to one of three designated essential habitats. These habitats are early successional woodlands in the southern four counties of the state, clayplain forest in the Champlain Valley, and deer wintering areas in the Northeast Kingdom. In addition to the cost share money, landowners will receive recommendations from both NRCS and the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department on how to carry out practices to realize the best possible results.

Owners or managers of private, state, municipal, or Tribal land can apply for WHIP funds at any time with applications available at any USDA Service Center. Acceptance into the program is based upon a ranking system that considers many factors including the type of habitat improvements to be achieved, the likelihood of successful restoration, and how consistent they are with the overall WHIP priorities in Vermont. There are no minimum or maximum acreage requirements.

For more information about WHIP, contact your local NRCS office or a VT Fish & Wildlife WHIP Specialist: Dave Adams 879-2330 (Essex), Mary Beth Adler 885-8836 (Springfield), or Fred Schroeder 786-3879 (Rutland). You can also find information online at www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/WHIP/Index.html.
Have you recently come into possession of some acreage of forestland? Do you have at least a passing interest in doing the right thing on your land? If so, this article is meant to provide you with useful information on where to get advice on the stewardship of your woodland. In particular, I’m talking about the part where you walk in the summer, cross-country ski in the winter, or just plain enjoy out your back window – the part you don’t mow or cultivate and not where your house or camp sited.

However you’ve come to read this article – whether you received a copy of the newsletter from a neighbor or friend, found it on the magazine table of your favorite doctor or dentist’s office, or you’re a long-time woodland owner and current VWA member – you may find the following suggestions beneficial.

First, it is a good idea, if you haven’t already, to take a walk around your property. See what’s out there beyond the tree line. If you have taken walks before, you probably know that the forest is a very complex, living organism: trees, animals, insects, fungi, etc. are living and dying on your property. There are also lots of non-living objects as well: rocks, ledges, stones, dirt, water. All, living and non-living, contribute to the health and well being in your fragment of the ecosystem. While you are walking, you might start thinking about questions that come up that you cannot yet answer, or answer sufficiently.

Second, why not give a call to the County Forester who serves your region? Vermont has foresters that cover every county (Essex is served by Caledonia and Grand Isle by Franklin). The list and contact information is served by Caledonia and Grand Isle by Franklin). The list and contact information can be found at: http://vtfpr.anr.state.vt.us/fpr/resource/for_forres_countfor.cfm. These foresters, at no charge to landowners, are available to come out, walk your woodlands, and talk about the opportunities that you have for stewardship of your forest assets. They have knowledge and experience in assisting landowners in the management of their forest resources. This knowledge and experience is coupled with access to many programs that will make your job easier.

There are a number of financial assistance programs including: Use Value Appraisal (UVA), Wildlife Habitat Improvement Program (WHIP), and the Forest Land Enhancement Program (FLEP). Each of these programs provides financial incentives for proper forest resource management.

Third, Vermont has a significant and excellent cadre of private consulting foresters. These professionals are available to offer a wide variety of services to forest landowners. They, too, can take a walk in the woods and talk about forest management options. And then they can provide services to accomplish the management objectives. This would include, but not be limited to, timber sales, wildlife habitat improvement, and road and trail design and construction. These folks can partner with landowners to be the backbone of good forest stewardship in Vermont. Many, but not all, belong to the Consulting Foresters Association (see http://www.cfavt.org/).

Fourth, you should consider joining a woodland owner’s association. The one that immediately comes to mind is the Vermont Woodlands Association (VWA). They are a group of forest landowners that are working together to make Vermont’s forest healthy and productive. Other sources of information are Vermont Coverts and the Woodland Owners Association (WOA).

My fifth and final suggestion is to get a subscription to “Northern Woodlands Magazine: http://www.northernwoodlands.org/”. This magazine is packed with excellent up-to-date information on forests and forest and wildlife management for landowners. You can subscribe to the magazine or, better yet, receive a complimentary subscription as a member of the Vermont Woodlands Association.

Brian Stone, Chief of Forest Management
Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation

Use Value Appraisal Program

Vermont’s Use Value Appraisal (UVA) Program, also called “Current Use” or “Land Use,” enables landowners who practice long-term forest management to have their enrolled land appraised for property taxes based on its value for forestry rather than its fair market value. Landowners that meet the eligibility requirements have the opportunity to substantially reduce their property taxes. Over 1.5 million acres of forestland are now enrolled in the program. To qualify, parcels must be at least 25 acres and managed according to a forest management plan approved by the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation. House sites and land under other private or commercial developments are not eligible. The primary management objective must be long-term production of forest products in accordance with established forest practices. Forest management for wildlife habitat improvement, aesthetics, recreation, or watershed protection are acceptable objectives when consistent and complementary to timber management. Non-productive forestland (e.g. swampy or rock outcrop areas) or open land that will take more than two years to fill in to trees cannot exceed 20% of the total land enrolled for use value appraisal.
In the last year we have seen a meteoric rise in fossil fuel costs. Since many of our homes are heated with fuel oil, this has had an especially negative impact on the New Englander. With this rise in costs, we have seen a huge resurgence of folks going back to burning wood. There sure is a ready supply as the three upper New England states are the most heavily forested in the country!

Heating with wood from your own woodlot provides a cheap source of heat and a feeling of self-reliance. There are, however, some pitfalls, as it can be dirty, dangerous and time consuming. When I moved down here in 1987 I made a personal commitment to supply my winter heat from my own woodlot. In the coming issues, I’ll try to offer some thoughts and tips on heating with firewood, including a tour later this year of my home woodlot to try to show one way to do it.

When deciding what wood to burn we usually think of just hardwoods. While hardwoods in general have more heat per unit volume, my old high school buddy in Alaska keeps quite warm at 50 below with his Vermont Castings stove fueled with white spruce.

Conifer or softwood trees can be used for firewood, but their pitch has the potential to gum things up a bit in your heating system. If you burn softwoods hot enough, you can minimize the creosote buildup. I am currently burning quite a bit of hemlock, which I use when I first get home and run the furnace full open. The hazard with hemlock is that moisture is held in the cells and it can pop sparks quite a distance. So it’s better used in the basement furnace than the living room fireplace, with nice wood floors.

Most of us want to burn quality hardwood. There are, I believe, some myths and outright discrimination surrounding certain species of wood. Many folks shun paper (also called white) birch as firewood. But in the chart I use, the BTU yield of a cord of paper birch exceeds the BTU’s from a cord of black cherry. An important point about using paper birch is that it can’t sit out on the ground for any length of time. It needs to be cut and stacked off the ground promptly, so rot does not set in.

Now for the trick question: Which has more heat, a pound of popple or a pound of rock maple? Answer: They’re both about the same! The trick is in the unit of measure, which is weight and not volume. For deciduous trees, pound for pound they are about the same. If I asked which has more total heat, a CORD of popple or a cord of rock maple, the maple would come out with about 75 percent more heat.

The heat value of the different species is usually compared on a basis of how many millions of BTU’s there are per cord. A standard cord contains 128 cubic feet of stacked wood, including the air space, or 80 cubic feet of solid wood. When you are looking at how much heat value there is in wood, you also must consider the moisture content.

Most charts assume air-dried wood at a 20 percent moisture rate. Drying wood is a real obsession of mine, and I’ll cover that in a later article. A sneak preview on this topic is that most folks I know aren’t burning dry wood. Below is a listing of what the BTU value is of many of our local woods. There are some real surprises. The non-native black locust is the top dog for heat value, but if you are using balsam fir, you’ll feed your stove much more often. The values listed to the left do assume a number of factors such as stack temperatures and stove efficiency, and you may see different BTU values listed in other charts for the same species of wood.

The important point is to use them comparatively within the same chart.
Workshops

Managing Your Forest for Birds

- **Friday, June 9th** 7-9 pm at Burnham Hall, Lincoln
- **Saturday, June 10th** 8-3 pm meet at Burnham Hall, Lincoln
- **Friday, June 16th** 7-9 pm at Knoll Farm, Waitsfield
- **Saturday, June 17th** 8-3 pm meet at Knoll Farm, Waitsfield

Join Audubon Vermont for a free workshop series exploring the habitat needs of forest birds in Vermont. This free workshop is designed to help landowners learn about the birds on their property and to introduce landowners to bird-friendly management practices. Participants will learn how to identify birds by sight and sound, how to monitor birds on their property, and what types of management practices will provide breeding habitat for Vermont’s forest birds. The Friday evening session will introduce Audubon Vermont’s Forest Bird Initiative and the goals behind the landowner workshops. Saturday’s session will be spent in the field learning about forest birds and management practices that will enhance habitat for these birds. Please contact Audubon Vermont to register for the workshop at 802-434-3068.

Vermont Coverts Landowner Training

- **June 2–4** in Waterford

Each year Vermont Coverts offers two FREE, three-day workshops for Vermont landowners and land managers to learn more about managing forests to enhance wildlife habitat. The Cooperator Training Program is free and provides interactive workshops, lectures, field experiences, resources, and print materials to prepare you to assist other landowners with forest management and wildlife concerns. Meals and lodging are provided. To apply, go to http://www.vtcoverts.org/FORM2.htm

Please note: If accepted into the program each participant will be asked to submit a $50 deposit, refundable upon completion of the program. For further information about the Vermont Coverts training program or to talk to a Coverts Cooperator nearest you, contact Coverts. [Note: this workshop will be offered again September 8–10 in Castleton.]

- **Saturday, June 3**, from 1-5 pm on the Ellis town forest lot in Randolph Village

This workshop will address the identification, prevention, and control of Buckthorn, honeysuckle, barberry, bedstraw, chervil, Japanese knotweed, garlic mustard, and Autumn olive. For further information, please contact Steven Springer, Coverts Cooperator, at natureboy@innevi.com

Growing Tomorrow's Forests Today®

www.aboutsfi.org

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

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__________________________________________________________

Pen ($50 donation)  

Please make checks payable to Vermont Woodlands Association and mail with the completed form to:  

VWA Treasurer, P.O. Box 196, Poultney, VT 05764

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The Vermont Woodlands Association presents another opportunity to purchase a VWA-branded wood product. For 2006, we are offering a wooden writing pen made from reclaimed wood by Jim Cunningham of Vermont Hardwood Pens in Bristol, VT.