



Membership Newsletter

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September 2014

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News from VWA

What's in a Name? ... by Kathleen Wanner, Executive Director

This oft-quoted line from Shakespeare seems appropos for an organization that has undergone several transformations; an organization that, despite a few name changes, has been in existence for nearly one hundred years. That organization is Vermont Woodlands Association.

I'm guessing that few know VWA's history. I didn't know myself until I started digging and asking questions. Much of the information that follows comes from a letter written by Bill Kropelin, who still serves on the VWA Board, to the Vermont Historical Society. The letter is an acknowledgement that the Historical Society accepted the records of Vermont Timberland Owners Association (VTOA) for storage and preservation.

The story begins in 1915 when a handful of private timberland owners came together around a very serious issue at the time – fire monitoring and control. Today, we consider this to be a western crisis but in 1915 following heavy logging, several years of dry weather, and sparks from steam locomotives fire was a serious threat. VTOA became the vehicle for private forestland owners to set up an early warning system of fire towers and to employ patrolmen who followed the trains to spot and extinguish fires. The efforts were successful, the Association grew, and the mission soon included monitoring for harmful forest insects and tree diseases. Many of the early fire towers still stand, providing panoramic views for those who enjoy our forest-based recreation.

Fast forward to the 1950s. Active management of private forestland was gaining momentum and a new program, conceived by forest industries in the Pacific Northwest, was launched – the American Tree Farm System. The intent of ATFS was to have a local chapter in every state and so VTOA became the sponsor of the Vermont Tree Farm Program. ATFS remains true to its original concept of recognition, education, and certification for nonindustrial private forestland owners.

Over the years, the State of Vermont took over responsibilities for forest protection but kept VTOA as a strong ally and supporter. As late as the 1980s, VTOA was funding purchase of books and equipment for insect and disease identification. Also during this era, a new threat hit the horizon – inequitable taxation that set values of forestland well above the cost of services required by the land. And so, the Use Value Appraisal program was launched. VTOA was a supporter of UVA that allowed many thousands of acres to remain productive and undeveloped. Support for UVA remains a high priority today.

In 1991, VTOA had 174 members who collectively owned 469,952 acres. On May 17, 1996 VTOA merged with the Vermont Woodland Resources Association. The merger was spurred by a need to consolidate efforts due to reduced financial and human resources.

(This article is the first in a series that chronicles the history of VWA leading up to a 100-year celebration of service and support to private landowners and our precious forest resource.)

News from VT Fish & Wildlife Department

A Partridge by any Other Name, by John Buck, Wildlife Biologist

As I leisurely stride through my woodlot on this foggy and cool morning, embracing September's changes to the landscape, I am aware of the relative quiet among the trees. Most of the warblers, thrushes, sparrows, and other bird family members have long since ended their territorial music and have now departed on their epic migratory journeys to warmer winter habitat. In their absence the forest is left to those species that, by choice or some other motivating force, remain in my woods to prepare for winter's annual marathon. This vision reminds me the woods are far from being silent. My thoughts then turn to the blue jays, chickadees, woodpeckers, ravens, and the heartiest of robins. Suddenly, with a concussive explosion of wing beats, a Ruffed Grouse thunders from my feet. As it darts left, then right, then out of sight to an undisclosed landing, my heart returns to a normal beat.

The Ruffed Grouse, referred to by some as a partridge, is a forestland bird native to Vermont and throughout North America coinciding with the distribution of the northern hardwood and mixed forests. Ruffed Grouse are members of the family Phasianidae that includes other grouse species (such as Vermont native, the Spruce Grouse), ptarmigans, turkeys, quails, and partridges. The Ruffed

Grouse is not a partridge. Although somewhat related, partridges are Eurasian in origin with a key morphological difference being they have scaled tarsus (legs) versus the feathered tarsus of the grouse.

Ruffed Grouse males begin establishing territory and courting females in late



March and early April with their trademark 'drumming.' Often from an elevated spot on the forest floor, such as a stump or fallen log, males will beat their wings in the air, slowly at first, creating a distinctively

rhythmic 'thump,' 'thump,' 'thump.' The sequence of beats quickly speeds up to a rapid-fire point where one beat is indistinguishable from the next and then suddenly, it stops, as if it never happened. Moments later the sequence begins again and is repeated throughout the breeding season of April and May. Grouse do not form pair bonds as other bird species do (e.g.



Canada geese) and males are not part of the family unit. Female Ruffed Grouse do not construct a nest but lay their clutch of a dozen, or so, eggs on the ground, usually at the base of a tree or within a brush pile. In either case good visibility and rapid escape are the key components to site selection.

Chicks hatch in approximately 3 weeks in a precocious state. That is, they are feath-

Partridge, continued on pg 8

Vermont Woodlands Association offers Technical Bulletins Written by landowners for landowners!!

Visit www.vermont-woodlands.org

President's Column

The Land You Love... Passing it On, *by Put Blodgett*

My father bought our Bradford dairy farm in 1935, thinking farming was a way to feed his family during the Great Depression. The previous owner's barn had burned in 1922 and he had built a huge barn in its place. The agricultural depression of the 1920s and the Great Depression forced him into bankruptcy and the Federal Land Bank repossessed the farm.

When my mother first arrived, she opened the front door and looked directly into the basement. Ninety years of dampness from a rock-walled, dirt-floored cellar had rotted the floor joists and replacement was under way. Father and the hired man were sleeping in the barn.

I arrived at the farm the day after my fourth birthday. I was just gaining experience exploring our woods when the devastating Great Hurricane of September 21, 1938 roared up the Connecticut River valley. For years I crawled through and over downed trees. I followed the rural tradition of hunting, fishing, and trapping as a youth.

Growing up on a dairy farm I early learned one four-letter word—WORK! But in college, while pondering what I wished to do for a living, I decided that I wanted a career that was challenging both physically and mentally. I could think of nothing that better fulfilled that wish than dairy farming. I was at work on the farm the morning after graduation in 1953!

I purchased a half interest in the farm in 1953, but it became apparent that Father and I had different views of farming and I purchased his half interest in 1954. In 1956 our neighbor's huge barn burned and we purchased his two farms in 1957. We slowly came to the realization that we could not carry the additional debt that would be necessary to construct a dairy facility equal to our land holdings.

We diversified by starting a girls' riding camp for my wife and an Outward Bound style wilderness camp for me. Three years of stress from operating a dairy farm and directing summer camps caused the marriage to break up. The cattle, machinery, buildings and the beautiful Connecticut River bottomland were sold to settle up.

I continued to direct the boys' camp on the forest land for another eighteen years. I then sold the business and equipment to my waterfront director and have continued to lease him the land and camp buildings.

Since 1953 I have harvested over 3 million feet of logs, 4622 cords of pulp, over 900 cords of firewood and almost 3000 tons of chips.

My life and my living have been tied to this land through dairy farming, summer camping and forest products. It is so much a part of me.

But how can my life's work and my dreams be continued?



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.

The Land You Love, continued on pg 9



The Importance of Planning

by Mary Sisock, UVM Extension Forester

We all know we need to plan for what happens to our possessions when we're gone, yet most of us don't get around to it. Failing to plan has serious consequences. Time, money, family unity, and family heritage can all be lost when there is no plan in place. Still, many of us prefer to put off dealing with the inevitable believing we'll get to it soon or hoping for the best. Hope is not a plan. Below I briefly describe the major steps for moving from good intentions to having a plan. A list of more detailed resources can be found at <http://tiestotheland.org/resources-land-owners>.

Estate and Succession Planning

At this point, some of you may be thinking, "I don't have much; do I even need a plan?" Unless you've given away all your worldly goods, you need a plan. An estate plan provides for the distribution of your possessions after your death according to your wishes in a manner that prevents legal and financial complications, and eliminates or minimizes estate taxes. A succession plan incorporates the legal and financial aspects of estate planning plus it includes strategies for creating a multi-generational legacy. A succession plan is a means for passing on values and vision as well as possessions.

Determine Value

Estimate the fair market value of everything you own, including possessions you own jointly with others. This information is critical for determining whether

tax planning is going to be important for you. Just remember – whether or not you have a taxable estate, you need to still plan if you want to leave a land legacy.

Create a Vision

The next step is to clearly identify your values and goals. Why do you want to leave a land legacy rather than selling the land and giving your heirs money? Which parts of your vision are most important to you? Rate each component of your vision as very important, important, or less important. This will help guide your choices later on. If you own your property jointly with a spouse or partner have them go through this exercise too. Where is there overlap in what is important to each of you? Where there is divergence in your vision is it something that needs to be negotiated?

Now ask your heirs to join the conversation. As you navigate this phase, you will find yourself doing a lot of careful listening and asking many questions. Share your vision with them and let them know you would like to have their input. How important is it to them that the property stay in the family? What concerns would they have if they were to inherit the property either in part or jointly with the other heirs? You may have to have several of these conversations before you get much feedback. It is not uncommon for heirs to be uncomfortable discussing their thoughts about what should happen after you die. You might hear a lot of "You should do whatever you want." As-

Planning, *continued on pg 6*

From the American Forest Foundation

Lessons in Advocacy ... because every voice matters!

Lately, VWA has been talking about ways to encourage and prepare our members for advocacy. The legislative session in Vermont will not begin until January but it will be here before we know it. And, between now and then there will be an election.

The American Forest Foundation, sponsor of the American Tree Farm System, has an extensive network of people who spend a lot of time on Capitol Hill and who are very well versed in advocacy.

The tips below are just something for you all to think about in the coming months or to use if there happens to be an issue in Washington that you feel extremely passionate about. In early 2015, VWA will begin offering legislative training sessions for our members to get you comfortable with advocacy.

How do you communicate with elected officials?

There are many different ways to communicate with your elected officials. Just to name a few, you can visit them in their offices, attend a town hall event, send an email, write a letter*, place a call, or invite them to tour your woodlands. Here are some tips for meeting and communicating with your legislators:

- Plan Carefully. Be clear about what it is you want to achieve.
- Make an Appointment.
- Be Prompt and Patient.
- Be Prepared. Whenever possible, bring to the meeting information and materials supporting your position.

- Be Concise. Make your points clearly and quickly and be considerate of their time.
- Be Political. Whenever possible, demonstrate the connection between what you are requesting and the interests of the member's constituency.
- Be Responsive. Be prepared to answer questions or provide additional information.
- Always follow up. Send a thank you note after your visit! It's a great way to follow up with your key points.



Op-eds/local media

Elected officials pay attention to local media to keep tabs on events and issues in their district. By writing an op-ed or participating in an interview with local media, you will put woodland owner issues on their radar – and even better – the general public. Once your article is published, mail it to your representatives.

Spread the word

Our power is in numbers! Ask your friends and neighbors to become involved. Educate the people around you, including children and young adults, about your forestland.

Top five reasons you should be an advocate

1. You can make a difference and...together we can make a bigger difference.
2. Laws can be changed or improved.
3. Policy makers need your expertise on forest issues.
4. Defense is needed too. If you're not at the table you're on the table.
5. You have a story to share.

** When communicating with members of Congress in Washington, D.C., send an email if you would like your message delivered quickly! Security measures require all mail sent to the US Capitol to be radiated, which delays delivery time and can cause letters to become illegible. Send postal mail only to district/local offices.*

Planning, *continued from pg. 4*

sure your heirs that you will do what you want, but that you are really interested in their input and perspective.

Decide on a Strategy

Based on what you've heard you can determine the future ownership structure that best supports your vision. You have three basic choices: divide the land among your heirs, leave it to one heir and bequeath different assets to the others (Put's choice), or keep it intact and leave it to all your heirs together. If this last option is your preference, don't worry if not all your heirs are interested in the land. There are numerous ways of accommodating divergent needs and interests without dividing the property. This is where good estate planning advisors are worth their weight in gold.

Update Your Plan

Be prepared to adapt and adjust. Marriage, divorce, birth and death are all reasons to update your plan. Schedule time to re-view your plan once a year, and always consult with your professional advisor about the plan after any major life changes.

Don't Wait

I could spend hours telling you tragic stories about what happened when a landowner didn't plan – forced sale, income from harvests going to the government rather than a grandchild's college fund, siblings fighting in court for years, century farms lost to the heirs because of death or divorce. Don't let the phrase "if only" be your legacy.




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News from Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation

"TELE" COMES TO VERMONT: Sustaining Family Forests Initiative, Sponsored by the Northeastern State Foresters Association

A program developed by Yale University to help forest managers communicate more effectively with landowners was presented in Woodstock on July 21, 2014. Tools for Engaging Landowners Effectively (www.engaging-landowners.org), known as "TELE," is designed to promote meaningful conversations about conservation and land management with and for private forest owners.

The program is coordinated by the American Forest Foundation and the U.S. Forest Service as well as Yale through the Sustaining Family Forests Initiative. (SFFI). It uses information learned from the National Woodland Owner Survey, focus groups with woodland owners, and other research to encourage forestry professionals to better understand the preferences and values of their audience and better serve and engage them in planning and management of their land.

Recent studies in our region have reported that the majority of forest landowners do not have management plans, do not know about programs that can reduce their taxes, and have not thought about what could

happen to their lands in the future. We know that changes in our landscapes are underway and that the best way to keep both ecosystem values and the benefits of family forests intact is to plan and manage for these changes.

While Vermont woodland owners are among the most knowledgeable and most likely to take advantage of forest planning, there needs to be effective ways to maintain communication and planning for this and the next generation of woodland owners.

Workshop Leaders Mary Tyrrell, Purnima Chawla, and Emma Kravet are experienced with woodland issues and outreach strategies to help both forest professionals and peer organizations clarify messages for understandable communication methods based on audience and interests. Funding for the workshop was through the North East State Foresters Association (NEFA).

The workshop was hosted by Marsh Billings Rockefeller National Historic Park, the VT Woodlands Association and the VT Dept. of Forests, Parks and Recreation for 30 participants.





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SAVE THE DATE

Sept. 13, 2014
8am to 2pm
2014 Outstanding Tree Farmer of the Year Tour, Rupert
Registration required.

Sept. 20-21, 2014
Woodland Retreat: Weekend learning workshop
Seyon Lodge, Groton

Sept. 27, 2014
from 9am to noon
Basics of Nature Photography at Riverledge Farm, Groton with professional photographer Mitch Moraski.
Registration required.
Cost \$20

Sept. 27-28, 2014
Forest Festival at Marsh-Billings Rockefeller National Historical Park and Forest to Table Event at the Union Arena, Woodstock

October 4, 2014
50-Year Tree Farm Tour with Jim & Ellie Gustafson, Chester

Visit our website often for updates on 2014 Walk in the Woods and Wildlife programs.

Partridge, *continued from pg. 2*

ered and ready to walk with their mother in search of food and avoid predators. Within hours of hatching grouse chicks are feeding on insects in forest openings and young forest habitat. They are capable of flight in about 10 days but will stay with their mother until late summer-early fall. Despite their rapid, woods-wise development, grouse are common prey for foxes, bobcats, hawks, and owls. Hatching 12 chicks per year proves to be an important expenditure of energy linked to a successful survival strategy for the species.

Grouse are very active during the winter months as they seek food and shelter. Fruits and seeds are the principal foods. Providing forest openings where grapes (*Vitis* spp.), serviceberry (*Amelanchier* spp.), and chokecherry (*Prunus* spp.) thrive are very beneficial habitat inclusions. While the ground remains free of snow grouse will forage through the leaf litter or among the tree crowns for food. As the snow deepens, trees that retain their seeds or slowly disperse them throughout the winter (e.g. hophornbeam and birch) provide a steady and reliable food source. The buds and flowers of aspen are perhaps the best known grouse food. Promoting aspen stands can be accomplished through early successional habitat management. Deep snow pres-

ents a paradox to the grouse. On the one hand it prevents them from ready access to familiar foods. On the other, it provides them with a cold-weather roosting spot well insulated from lethal winter temperatures and out of sight of resident predators.

Hoping to catch another glimpse of the grouse that nearly caused my heart to falter I walk slowly towards where I think it landed. Carefully placing

my feet on the ground, one in front of the other, I am at full alert knowing the bird could thunder away at any moment. Stopping to listen for tiny chicken-like footsteps rustling the dried leaves, my attentiveness is met with only the sounds of the gentle breeze moving the colored leaves back and forth. It must have given me the slip like it has done to so many other perceived

predators. Turning to head home my first step ignites another explosion from a branch just five feet from my head. Although mentally prepared for such an event my heart raced back to its fight or flight pace. Not willing to be fooled three times in a row, my curiosity now satisfied, I turn for home, this time hearing only my footsteps on the dried leaves below.



The Land You Love, continued from pg. 3

I have observed so many enterprises built up by the founder(s), often times carried on by the first generation siblings, but many times brought to a halt by the third generation which may be widely dispersed geographically, little interested, and wishing to get their share in cash.

Cashing out is a big problem if the majority of the value is in illiquid assets. In forestry it can cause a forced sale or overly-heavy cutting to raise the cash.

My four children all have a sentimental attachment to the farm where they spent their early years, but only the youngest son was interested in actually being involved.

I have seen too many examples of joint sibling inheritances where disagreements occurred over necessary inputs of money or time and over disbursements.

Very fortunately, my four children agreed that the one who was truly interested should inherit the forestland, even if it meant that the remaining three did not receive an equal share of my estate.

Conservation easements prohibiting development and mandating forest management under the supervision of a professional forester were placed on the property, thus lowering its value.

My youngest son cleared three acres and built his home and a guesthouse on the property. He cuts logs, pulp and firewood in his spare time.

To facilitate the transfer, I formed a Limited Liability Company (LLC) with 900 shares of Class B stock and 100 shares

of Class A stock which have the managerial responsibility. The 900 shares of Class B have been transferred over time and the Class A will follow.

If you want your efforts and dreams to be carried on, I urge you to give thought as to how and then act before it is too late!

Put Blodgett, President, VWA

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Where's Waldo? ... or is it Wanner?

by Kathleen Wanner, Executive Director

Every third Friday at the regular VWA Board of Directors meeting, I give a report on meetings I've attended, projects underway, partnerships in progress, or outreach opportunities... It seems I've covered all corners of the state in the last month, from the office in Rutland to Vernon to E. Charleston to North Hero with stop offs in Addison, Montpelier, Randolph, Woodstock, and White River Junction... the miles have been many but the rewards have definitely outpaced them. Your board thought it would be good for members to know how they are represented so here are a few highlights:

WLEB: When the Working Lands Enterprise initiative launched two years ago, it brought some much needed attention to forestry and wood products. I've had the pleasure of serving on the Working Lands Board for the last two years and working to bring technical assistance and services to woodland owners. We meet monthly in Montpelier. Also connected to Working Lands is the coalition that has been the driver in the Statehouse helping to ensure that funding for this important initiative continues. Again, I represent VWA as a coalition member.

Natural Resource Academy: In partnership with UVM Extension, FPR, Coverts, VNRC, and others I have been attending advisory meetings for a new and exciting project that will bring all forestry education opportunities together in a web-based portal and include a statewide calendar of events! We're currently trying to decide what to call this initiative as NRA seems to be taken!

VLT Annual Meeting: It was a glorious Sunday morning for a drive to North Hero, a place I have had occasion to visit only once in many decades. My morning began with a woodland tour hosted by landowner Chris Morgan, and foresters Nancy Patch and Dan Kilborn. While the forest may look a little different, some problems remain the same – like invasive species and deer browse.

Health Hero Farm, conserved by VLT and sold to owners Eric and Hannah Noel about a year ago, was the backdrop for meeting and meal. I look forward to building a partnership with VLT as we continue to seek the same outcomes – keeping Vermont's forests as forests.

continued on next page



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Land Ethic Leaders Workshop:

Vermont had the distinct pleasure of welcoming Jen Kobylecky, Jeanine Richards, and Nate Truitt to Vermont for a 2.5 day Land Ethic Leadership Training presented by the Aldo Leopold Foundation. The program was sponsored by the American Forest Foundation, Vermont Woodlands Association, and Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park who was our most hospitable host for this event.



As one who has never dedicated much time to reflection, I had few expectations for the training – except that it could turn out to be an extended “group hug” followed by a rendition of “Kumbayah.” Boy was I wrong! To say it was inspirational would be an understatement.

We were a very small group of about 15 that included landowners, Tree Farmers, and foresters. Initially, I was very disappointed by such a small turnout but again, I was so wrong! Turned out, the size of the group or perhaps the make-up was absolutely ideal.

Observe, Participate, Reflect – the pillars of Leopold’s approach to engaging people in developing a personal land ethic. In Leopold’s words, “nothing so important as a land ethic is ever written - it evolves in the minds of a thinking community.” Based on the overwhelming reaction to this year’s workshop, we are already working on how we can bring this unparalleled training to Vermont again in 2015. If you were interested and unable to attend, we hope you’ll get another chance. It’s worth every moment of 2.5 days!

Tree Farm 101: another corner of the state not often visited, the Northwoods Stewardship Center in E. Charleston was the host for our recent introduction to the American Tree Farm System. With input from Allen Yale, Jayson Benoit, Mary Sisock, Kathy Beland, and Jared Nunery we held our first program with landowners from the NEK. Our goal is to encourage enrollment in Tree Farm for landowners who already manage in the Current Use program. Tree Farm is a logical step in stewardship and for most, would require nothing more than a forester visit to complete an inspection.



Addison County Field Days: If you attended, I hope you had a chance to see the fabulous VWA display. We are always eager for opportunities to promote our members and exemplary stewardship. It’s so critical for the public to know about our forest resource and how you all contribute to the landscape we love. If you’re a Fairgoer, don’t forget that the Vermont State Fair in Rutland is coming up August 29 to Sept. 7. Check out the Forestry Building.





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
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- VWA Accredited Consulting Foresters* \$160
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