

# Vermont Woodlands Association and Vermont Tree Farm Program

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MEMBERSHIP NEWSLETTER



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Kathleen Wanner

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## NEWS FROM VWA

# Ch Ch Ch Ch Changes... To steal a lyric from David Bowie

by Kathleen Wanner, *Executive Director*

Change is perhaps my least favorite concept and yet, it is inevitable in the course of our lives. I'd like to alert you to a change on the horizon with the Vermont Woodlands office. As many of you know, we are currently in downtown Rutland at the corner of Merchants Row and Center Street in what's called the Chittenden Building. It's been a wonderful home for Ghostwriters Communications (GWC), a company owned by me and my business partner Mary Jeanne Packer who was your previous executive director. This office has also been the home for GWC's clients and other employees.

By the time you read this, GWC will have been sold to Morning Ag Clips owned by Kate Ziehm. While this has been orchestrated to be a seamless transition for VT Woodlands and Tree Farm, one major change will be the closing of the downtown office. Beginning November 1st, I will be working from a home office in Chittenden, just 8 miles northeast of Rutland. You are all welcome to visit my office, just as you have been welcome to visit us downtown. Our mailing address and telephone number will remain the same. As usual, you will also be able to reach me on my cell phone (802-236-2851).

Over the last 25 years, GWC carved a niche, providing communications and management services for natural

resource-based non-profits. We have been fortunate to serve many organizations throughout Vermont, including Vermont Woodlands and Vermont Tree Farm. As the Executive Director, I was always an employee of GWC and not VT Woodlands. I will remain your Executive Director but as an employee of Morning Ag Clips. I must admit some trepidation about having a new employer. It's been quite a few decades since I've worked for anyone other than myself, but during the last few weeks as this transition nears and I get to know Kate, I'm getting very comfortable with the notion that my new employer will be much kinder to me than my current employer... we are our own worst critics! I'm also looking forward to passing off some of the responsibilities that come with owning a company and sharing our work with a much bigger team that more than doubles our capacity.

I see this transition as one that puts GWC's staff and clients on a very firm footing for the future. Kate is at a growth stage in her business. I, alternatively, have been ruminating on what my inevitable retirement means for the future. While it is inevitable, it is not imminent but rather a 5-year plan with four years remaining. This gives the board ample time to plan for the next Executive Director. It also gives me and my husband a chance to practice how we might retire together and figure

out what we enjoy doing. For me, that would be travel... maybe not so much for a man who spent the last fifty years behind the wheel of a Peterbilt. I think we'll figure it out by 2023.

If you'd like to know a bit more about Kate and Morning Ag Clips, please visit the website and check out the daily agriculture (and sometimes forestry) enews.

In the meantime, we continue to expand our visibility of Vermont Woodlands with educational programs and participation in fairs and other events. I hope you had a chance to visit the Addison County Field Days and/or the Vermont State Fair at Rutland. The newest addition to the Forestry Building in Rutland is the Kid's Cabin. Thanks to Jim and Chris Philbrook for building and installing... I want one! It would satisfy my craving for a tiny house and be a perfect escape for reading or knitting.



## PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

# The Three Musketeers

by Put Blodgett, *President*

I grew up on a dairy farm three miles north of the village of Bradford on Route 5. Next door, and just across Roaring Brook, lived Tom Hahn, a few months older and later well-known in the Northeast Kingdom.

Tom had an older brother named Bill. Being older, he was bigger and stronger, and Tom called him Billus the Brute. One deer season there was nice snow cover. Their father had slaughtered a pig and the feet were still lying in the shed. Tom took a foot and a mason jar of canned beets and carefully printed the pig's foot across the yard and into the woods with a few drops of beet juice accompanying. He then ran into the house where Bill was reading in his stocking feet. Excitedly, he yelled to Bill that a wounded buck had just run through their yard. Bill leaped to his feet, grabbed the family rifle, and raced after the wounded buck in his stocking feet through ankle-deep snow. Tom decided to vacate the house for a while.

When Tom was in the 8th grade and I was in the 7th, the Cummings family moved onto the Stonecliff Farm, less than a mile down the road. David was in the 6th grade. Three boys living three miles from the village, somehow came up with the name The Three Musketeers. We started off with silly hats to mimic the originals and home-made swords stuck through our belts.

Things started innocuously enough—building forts with the hay bales in the Stonecliff barn, the defense of a cabin on the Stonecliff Farm from townies of a

similar age. We were armed with buckets of water and flour bombs (flour tied in paper napkins).

Next, we downclimbed Stonecliff, but had never heard of ropes or protection. The scariest part was at the very bottom which was vertical, necessitating a leap into the top of a White Pine and shinnying down to the ground. We liberated a mason jar of my mother's canned pears from our root cellar and sat out-of-sight on the backside of the Hahn henhouse roof reliving our adventure.

An advantage we had was that none of our fathers had grown up in the area so they were unaware of the opportunities available.

We early adopted the motto "Where two go, the third must follow." This ensured that if one had any common sense, he was overruled by the other two.

One morning, Tom was down at David's waiting for the school bus. In front of Stonecliff Farm there is a bridge over the railroad to access their meadowland. It seemed only logical to see if the speed of a train could be calculated so that a rock dropped from the bridge would enter the smokestack (this was back in the days of steam locomotives). The engineer told the cops that two boys were throwing stones at his engine when actually they were conducting a scholarly experiment.

Before we could get our driver's licenses at sixteen, we were pretty well confined with bicycles to a ten-mile radius. I will remember the day I turned sixteen. Tom,



Put Blodgett

David and I had made big plans. I was so excited I threw hay bales all day on the run. At supper I asked Father if I could have the car. He said, "No." I was floored. All our anticipated plans evaporated.

While we were old enough to drive at sixteen, we were not old enough to buy beer. So, we had to make our own. The Hahns had an empty goat shed. My mother had a large crock, and with a window screen over the crock to keep out the flies we were in business. But at one lunch, my mother said she couldn't find her crock. After I stopped choking, I mumbled something about I would look for it. I hustled over to the Hahn's goat shed, poured out the lovely brew, scrubbed the crock thoroughly in the brook to remove all odors, dried it and handed it to my mother. When asked where I found it, I mumbled something about it was hidden by some stuff, which was partially true.

For some reason, David's parents decided to send him off to Staunton Military Academy in Virginia. Tom and I hitchhiked down to see him that spring vacation, but the Military Academy kept things under tight control and the school was more boring than the hitchhiking. One of his friends there lived in Poughkeepsie, NY, so we decided the following summer to drive down for a party. We had to teach the Poughkeepsie boys how to carefully pour the home brew so as not to rile up the yeasty sediment in the bottom of the bottles. We drove home that night. I arrived at 6 a.m.,



changed my clothes and went to work. That night I asked Father if I could have the car to go to the dance at the Lake Morey Casino. This time he said yes! I wasn't going to admit how tired I was, but spent the evening leaning against the dance hall wall with my eyes closed.

Tom and David drove down to Poughkeepsie for another party. Tom fell asleep on the drive back and totaled David's car. I was blamed for not being there to take my turn driving.

There is a beautiful arched bridge over the Connecticut River between Fairlee and Orford. Many of us crawled through holes on the underside of the arch and crawled inside the arch to the other side. I notice that steel plates now cover the lower holes to discourage this ritual. David and I later climbed up the outside of the arch and had a sword duel at the top. Tom was too scared to participate and broke the code of where two go, the third must follow. To do penance, he joined the paratroopers after graduating from UNH.

Fairlee also is blessed by Lake Morey. And on that lake and nearby Lake Fairlee are several children's camps and the camps require counselors. At that time the Aloha camps consisted of two girls camps and one boys camp and they held a weekly square dance at Camp Lanakila for off-duty counselors. With twice as many female counselors as male, the girls were delighted to see three additional males. We thought we had died and gone to Heaven. But at our third dance we were told to leave and never come back. And we thought we were on our best behavior!

One Saturday night a car rolled over on the west side of Lake Morey. Sunday afternoon we went to investigate. Hearing an approaching car, we staggered up over the bank, limping and holding our heads. The car braked to a stop to help. Not too

proud of that one.

I shudder when I think back on this one. The Cummings had a green International pickup with high wooden sides painted a matching green that David was allowed to drive. The three of us fit nicely inside the cab. To relieve boredom on a long night drive, the driver would open his door, the middle man would take over the steering wheel, the driver would step out onto the running board, the middle man and the outside passenger would slide to the left, the former driver would reach to the top of the sideboards and walk his way around on the outside flange of the metal sides of the pickup box and enter the cab on the opposite side. This was repeated while traveling until all three had made the circuit.

One thing we enjoyed doing was exploring the back roads of Bradford, Newbury and Fairlee. One Sunday David and I were out exploring a back road between West Bradford and West Fairlee and got thoroughly stuck. We walked down the road going forward and fortunately came across a couple having a picnic. They very kindly drove us back to Stonecliff. The Cummings had two farm trucks—one was a relatively new Ford that was registered, the other was an old Army truck with 4 or 6 wheel drive for use around the farm. We decided that the Ford might not be able to pull the pickup out and were busily transferring the registration plates from the Ford to the Army truck when the senior Cummings unexpectedly arrived home early. Mr. Cummings stood 6'3" and weighed 230 pounds. He was an imposing figure to teenage boys. He directed us to replace the plates on the proper truck, then sent David to do chores and took me to guide him to the pickup. The Ford did pull the pickup out of the mud, but Mr. Cummings was so mad he pulled me all the way to West Fairlee village before he stopped. Unfortunately, one of us put the chain on backwards so the grab hook was

around the pickup's axel. Somewhere on the trip to West Fairlee village it loosened enough so that it flipped up and bent the tie rod. We were never allowed to drive the pickup again!

A couple of years ago, Tom hosted his Memorial Reception. He said he wanted to enjoy the food and drink and hear the accolades. I thought it was one of his better ideas.

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## NEWS FROM VERMONT DEPARTMENT OF FORESTS, PARKS & RECREATION

# Vermont Native Plants vs. Invasive Plant Look-a-likes: Invasive Lesser Celandine vs. Native Marsh-marigold

by Elizabeth Spinney, *Invasive Plant Coordinator, Vermont Department of Forests, Parks & Recreation*

The yellows and purples of late summer flowers are something I look forward to every year. This summer, that vibrancy made me think about another standout plant from earlier in the growing season: Lesser Celandine (*Ficaria verna*). Also known as “fig buttercup” and “fig-crowfoot”, Lesser Celandine was introduced to North America as an ornamental plant. An herbarium sample from the 1860s in Pennsylvania indicates its first recorded escape from the garden. The popularity of this perennial plant as an ornamental perhaps came from the showy yellow flowers that come up in March and April as a harbinger of spring. A native plant in Europe, the English poet William Wordsworth even demonstrates a fondness for Lesser Celandine in several poems.

Lesser Celandine can be found in floodplain forests, along rivers and lakes, and in disturbed habitat. The primary way this plant moves is from the underground growth being spread accidentally by erosion, digging in the area by humans or wildlife, flooding events, or on purpose through cultivation. This plant is a particular threat to Vermont’s rare natural community of floodplain forests.

Once established, Lesser Celandine creates dense mats, excluding all other vegetation. Its tendency to grow up and flower in the early spring puts native spring ephemeral wildflowers up against a tough competitor for space and resources. And its habit of dying back after flowering makes the window for control extremely short each season. Though the common name might

suggest it, Lesser Celandine (Buttercup Family: Ranunculaceae) is not related to Greater Celandine (Poppy Family: Papaveraceae). The most common look-alike for Lesser Celandine, Marsh-marigold (*Caltha palustris*), is a native plant to Vermont, and can be distinguished most easily by only having 5 petals on its flowers. The best time to identify Lesser Celandine in



*Infestation of Lesser Celandine*  
Photo- Leslie J. Mehrhoff, University of Connecticut, Bugwood.org



Vermont is in early to mid-April, when the flowers appear. Lesser Celandine has dark green, shiny basal leaves that are heart or kidney shaped, and variable in size but small (1.5-3.5" across). The small flowers have 7-11 petals born on grooved stalks that stick up above the leaves. Once flowered, the aboveground growth dies back, and it persists underground as thick tubers and rhizomes.

While still available as an ornamental plant in some places, Lesser Celandine has only recently been recorded as an

escape in Vermont (2014). It is present in 27 states, and several Canadian provinces. If you find Lesser Celandine growing outside of an ornamental planting in Vermont, please report it to VTinvasives.org: <https://vtinvasives.org/get-involved/report-it>. Though this species is not on the Vermont Noxious Weed Quarantine, nor the Watchlist, its invasive tendencies and prohibition in other states are concerning for the health of sensitive natural communities in Vermont.



Bright yellow flowers of Lesser Celandine appear above the leaves in early to mid-April in Vermont.) Photo- Leslie J. Mehrhoff, University of Connecticut, Bugwood.org

To learn more about Lesser Celandine, check out these additional resources:

[http://nyis.info/invasive\\_species/lesser-celandine/](http://nyis.info/invasive_species/lesser-celandine/)

<https://www.invasive.org/alien/pubs/midatlantic/five.htm>

<http://www.tsusinvasives.org/home/database/ranunculus-ficaria>

<https://gobotany.nativeplanttrust.org/species/ficaria/verna/>

<https://www.invasivespeciesinfo.gov/profile/fig-buttercup>

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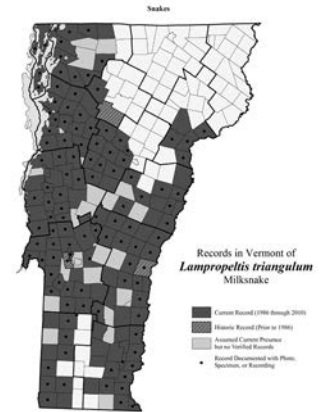
# To Be, or Not to Be: A Rattlesnake of another Name

by John Buck, *wildlife biologist*

The ringing phone startled me as I was deeply focused on finishing up some overdue paperwork from sugaring season. Recognizing Ray's number I welcomed the interruption and answered. Expecting a casual 'Hi John, how are you?' instead my 'fight or flight' light went on by Ray's panicked, 'John, you won't believe what I just saw!' sensing his tone of incredulity, I inserted a long pregnant pause to let Ray finish his thought. 'A timber rattler!' he blurted out. 'Where did you see this snake?' I asked in my best calm and collected voice. 'Just out behind my house near the wood pile I am working on' came his reply. Knowing that my friend lives in the upper Connecticut River valley about 100 miles from the only two Vermont rattlesnake dens, I was very doubtful of his claim despite the fact an old quarry in town likely provided homes to several snake species. However, I've learned that respect through an approach of curtesy and curiosity is the best way to get information rather than with doubt and derision of one's hearing or seeing abilities. As our conversation continued it came to light that the snake wasn't actually seen but rather heard shaking its rattles. With this piece of

evidence my suspicion became more certain. I said to Ray, 'I suspect what you encountered was a frightened eastern milksnake. They are known to shake their tail vigorously in the leaves when frightened in hopes of chasing away any would-be predator. 'Well,' with a notable pause of cautious belief inserted, he said, 'it worked!' 'Don't be embarrassed, I would probably have set a high jump record if it were me.' 'As unnerving as it must have been, you were in no danger. Milksnakes are non-venomous and would rather run away than put up a fight with you.'

The eastern milksnake is one of 24 sub-species of milksnakes which have a distribution from southern Canada to Central America. They are members of the larger King Snake family of snakes that are common throughout North and Central America. With the exception of Vermont's highest peaks, water bodies, and the Northeast Kingdom, milksnakes are found throughout the state. They are most often associated with woodland and forest edge habitat where fallen trees and rock piles provide good shelter. Mice and other small rodents make up a good portion of their diet which explains why they are also found in and around barns and old buildings where rodents can be plentiful. It is from this setting where the old world tale that milksnakes actually drank milk from the dairy cows likely got its start. Such a feat would be physically impossible not to mention the cow's intolerance to such an act. Rodents are only a part of the diet. Small birds, eggs, amphibians, and even other snakes comprise the balance of a milksnake's diet. Like their



kingsnake family cousins, milksnakes constrict their prey. The eastern ratsnake is Vermont's only other snake that feeds by constriction. All of Vermont's other snake species, except the timber rattler, eat their prey live. They are also one of the few Vermont snakes that lay eggs.

Milksnakes breed in May and June then lay their eggs (oviparous birth), like most reptiles, in a warm and protected place, such as under a rotting log. After approximately two months of incubation, young milksnakes hatch in late July and August. To be clear, all reptiles develop inside an egg. However, most Vermont snake species incubate their eggs within the female's body. When fully developed, the eggs 'hatch' as the newborn snakes emerge from their mother. It appears to be a live birth but actually is not and is described as being an ovoviviparous birth (only mammals are capable of true live birth).

Because milksnakes have such a wide continental distribution their range overlaps those of some look-alike venomous snakes. Most commonly is that with the copperhead. As with other pit vipers (eg rattlesnakes), copperheads have a triangularly-shaped head and an oblong pupil. If you didn't want to get that close to tell an easier way is to notice that the difference in their respective color bands. The milksnake's are thick and uniform while the copperhead's are irregular and hourglass-shaped.





The other venomous species is the coral snake. The eye shape and color bands are very similar between the two snakes. But there is distinct difference. And if one can remember the definitive band color sequence with the rhyme, 'Red and yellow kills a fellow. Red and black, a friend of Jack', one can avoid a serious encounter. Fortunately, neither the copperhead nor coral snake lives in Vermont. However, we do have two small populations of timber rattlesnakes that live on the edge of western Rutland County. Timber rattlers are shy, timid creatures that prefer to

avoid people. Vermont's populations live in isolated, sparsely populated, and rugged landscapes making encounters rare. However, because milksnakes can imitate them, regardless of what part of Vermont one hears the 'rattle' it can stir up a number of hard-wired emotions. In fact, hawks, foxes, and raccoons are not the milksnake's only principal predators but must include humans too. Because they can live in close community with people (seeking mice and rats) they are often confused with venomous snakes and killed for that reason or simply by a primal fear of snakes in general. Greater

knowledge of snake identification and behavior will help both the snake and the person.

I couldn't let Ray's snake alarm off the hook too easily. Because we are good friends I recalled to him a story my sister once told me about the 2 1/2 foot milksnake skin she found in her basement one spring. 'Ray', I said. 'It wasn't disturbing enough for her to think a milksnake was living in her basement all winter and the fact that they often overwinter in groups. What disturbed her the most was she only had half the skin.'



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# New opportunities to remember those who touched your lives

by **Kathleen Wanner**, *Executive Director*

Your Vermont Woodlands Board has been diligently planning for the future to ensure that we will continue to serve Vermont's landowners for years to come. They have also been thinking about how to honor or remember those who dedicated their lives to the continued health and productivity of our forest resource. Toward this end, the board created new opportunities for you to honor and remember those who have been important to your woodland owner journey.

We now have two new funds: Vermont Woodlands Memorial Fund and Vermont Woodlands Honorary Fund. Why two new funds, you ask? A Memorial Fund is generally accepted as a way to remember those who are deceased. The Honorary Fund was set up to honor the living in a special way. If you contribute to either of these funds, it's up to you to tell us how you want your contributions invested. If you'd like to help ensure our future, you can choose the Executive Director Endowment or the Upton Wildlife Endowment. Our Wildlife Endowment is a perfect example of how we have been able to grow investments. Peter Upton, a long-time VWA member, board member, and wildlife enthusiast left VWA \$10,000 in his estate. With a matching challenge and ongoing donations, the Upton Wildlife Endowment now tops \$112,000. Several generous donations from anonymous

donors have also grown the Executive Director Endowment to nearly \$250,000.

If you wish to support the Vermont Tree Farm Program, you may choose the Bizzozero Fund, established in 2004 with \$9,610. This investment is now worth nearly \$39,000. The principal in these investment vehicles is protected in perpetuity but as they grow, the earnings grow as well. If you do not choose one of our investment endowments, your contribution will support the General Fund for day-to-day operations.

When you make a Memorial or Honorary contribution, you will also tell us whom you wish to remember or honor and we will print the names in our quarterly newsletter and Annual Meeting report. Our funds are set up in a way that anyone can contribute to a named or new honoree. If you have any questions about making memorial or honorary contributions, please call or email us and a member of the investment committee will be in touch with you.

Several generous donors have already contributed to our Memorial and Honorary Funds, naming those who touched their lives in special ways. You may see your loved ones in this list.

## Contributions to the Memorial Fund have been received for:

Thomas Beland  
George Buzzell  
Robert Darrow  
John Hemenway  
Edward Osmer  
Jim Wilkinson

## Contributions to the Honorary Fund have been received for:

Leo Laferriere  
Thom McEvoy  
Ross Morgan  
William Sayre  
Steve Sinclair  
Kathleen Wanner

If you would like to make a donation to the memorial or honorary fund, please make note of whom your donation is for and how you would it invested (Upton Wildlife Endowment, Executive Director Endowment, Bizzozero Tree Farm Fund, or general operating fund).





## NEWS FROM THE VERMONT TREE FARM COMMITTEE

# VWA and the Tree Farm Program- Working for you in Washington! Part 2

by Kathleen Wanner and Al Robertson

In our June 2019 issue, Al Robertson reported on the work that VWA and the Tree Farm Committee have been doing in Washington with the American Forest Foundation. In particular, Al wrote about the Fly-In and the topics we covered with our congressional delegation. Following the publication of our last issue in June 2019, we had word from Congressman Welch's Washington office that the invasive species legislation we had been working on for the last ten years had been introduced by the Congressman as HR 3244. With Emerald Ash Borer on the move in Vermont, this was very good and timely news for us here. And, we know that invasive species are not just a Vermont phenomenon so it's good news for all woodland owners across the country.

HR 3244 is actually a better version of the previous legislation introduced in 2018 (HR 3244) as it is a more comprehensive bill. But, now the work of gaining co-sponsors and bi-partisan support begins! And for our members who live out of state, this is where you can help. Please reach out to your Representatives in the House and let them know how important this legislation is to ensure healthy forests for the future. Tell them your personal challenges with managing invasive species in your woodlands and ask for their support. Your member of Congress does not need to be on the

Agriculture Committee in order to sign on as a co-sponsor but can speak to Congressman Welch or one of his staffers to become a co-sponsor.

For tips on contacting your members of Congress, visit the American Forest Foundation website ([www.forestfoundation.org](http://www.forestfoundation.org)) and navigate to Advocacy/Connecting with Congress).

The story begins ten years ago in Washington, DC.

- VWA started working on the invasives issue in 2009 in conjunction with AFF and other national Tree Farm folks
- After talking with UVM folks (UVM scientist Mark Twery specifically) VWA structured some policy work around a federal grants program which had some success with the Northeastern States Research Cooperative (NSRC)
- About 5 years ago new genetic engineering tools like the CRISPR tool, changed the entire way science looks at dealing with fixing invasive problems; the American chestnut work is a prime example of that success. Their research is two-pronged: a traditional backcross genetic improvement, and a CRISPR GMO. Both are well along.
- At the same time, VWA began a cooperative arrangement with Dr. Faith Campbell from the Center for

Invasive Species Prevention (CISP) to develop legislative proposals that would help APHIS, and aim the grant concept at genetic solutions to invasive problems.

- Working with the Reduce the Risk of Invasives Coalition (RRISC), VWA and CISP introduced several legislative proposals for the 2018 Federal Farm Bill. These were vetted by USFS scientists and two were included in the AFF Farm Bill platform.
- Congressman Welch has been VERY supportive of our efforts and his Washington staffer Mr. Mark Fowler was instrumental in trying to get these two proposals into the House 2018 Farm Bill.
- The legislative proposals get to the heart of the problem: more resources, funding, and authority for APHIS and a grant program to fund research aimed at either producing trees resistant to invasive insects like the EAB or actually find genetic weaknesses in the insect that could be used to eliminate it. These solutions are long term proposals. The American chestnut research has been going on for nearly three decades and, while successful, it will be several more decades before the chestnut returns to our forests.

# New and Developing Uses of Wood (That you may not expect)

*Wood isn't just for houses, furniture, bird-houses, cutting boards and toys. New technologies are creating tremendous new opportunities for wood and wood fibers. In most of these uses, the most important characteristics are around fiber strength or chemical reactivity, which can provide value for wood species and grades that are not suitable for more conventional uses.*

*Mike Rainville of Maple Landmark Woodcraft did internet research for a recent display and found quite a breadth of information on new technologies that utilize wood and wood fiber. This is very much in keeping with what we heard from our keynote speaker Donna Cassese at the 2019 Industry Summit..."if you can make it with petroleum, you can make it with wood." Thanks, Mike, for sharing your research.*

## Cellulose in Parmesan Cheese

Wood cellulose is used in Parmesan Cheese as an anticlumping agent. There have been some concerns about the amount some companies use as a filler and whether that negates the "100% Real Cheese" claim some companies use.



## Modern Wooden Towers

Vancouver, Canada Bergen, Norway Minneapolis, USA London, England Development of Cross-Laminated Timbers and other laminating technologies are aiding in the manufacture of panels and beams that are of a predictable strength and sufficient resiliency to be used in tall structures. Many building of over 200 feet (~18 stories) have been built and even larger ones are being planned.



Minneapolis, USA



London, England



Vancouver, Canada



Bergen, Norway

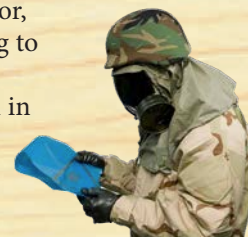
## Dissolvable Pulp in Food Products

Dissolvable pulp derives from cellulose which is virgin wood pulp that has been processed and manufactured to different lengths for functionality, though use of it and its variant forms (cellulose gum, powdered cellulose, microcrystalline cellulose, etc.) is deemed safe for human consumption, according to the FDA, which regulates most food industry products. Manufacturers use cellulose in food as an extender, providing structure and reducing breakage. Cellulose fibers are used in a variety of processed foods and meats meant for human and pet consumption. Cellulose adds fiber to the food, which is good for people who do not get the recommended daily intake of fiber in their diets. Plus, cellulose's water-absorbing properties can mimic fat, allowing consumers to reduce their fat intake.



## High-strength, lightweight Body Armor

In purely physical terms, nanocellulose boasts of a whopping 8 times better strength-to-weight ratio than steel. On top of that, it has much higher stiffness than Kevlar – by virtue of the nanostructural arrangement of the needle-like crystals. Considering all of these properties, it comes as no surprise that nanocellulose could be used for light armor, helmets, weaponry and ballistic glass. In fact, according to the grapevine, the US Army has already joined in the bandwagon to dabble with the effectiveness of material in the field of military purposes. And, the really fascinating part is – many scientists are even thinking of designing small military robots reinforced with special nanocellulose particles!







### Transparent Wood

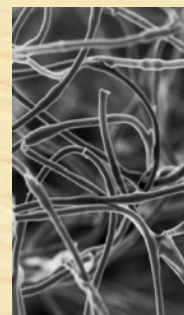
Being able to “see the forest through the trees” could soon take on a near-literal meaning. Within the last year, separate research teams using parallel methods have both advanced upon an idea that looks as incredible as it sounds: Transparent wood. The transparent wood is made by removing the lignin in the wood veneer. Step one was to chemically remove lignin, which both contributes to the yellowish-brown appearance of wood and binds its cells and fibers together (helping give wood its trademark rigidity). When the lignin was pulled out of the wood fibers, the material left behind was milky in appearance — predictably white, but not yet transparent. That’s where the clear path to clear wood forked: Researchers at Sweden’s KTH Royal Institute of Technology mixed its substrate with prepolymerized methyl methacrylate (PMMA; basically, acrylic glass), while a University of Maryland team injected its bleached wood with epoxy.



have clearly demonstrated that it is possible to both produce nanocellulose procedure were easily transformed into ethanol (with remarkable efficiency of 91 percent) via the familiar effect of yeast fermentation. Dr. R. Malcom Brown Jr. has also made his crucial researches in the field of the aforementioned blue green algae, and found out that it is feasible to create both bio-fuel and nanocellulose in a cheap manner. Moreover, the streamlined production process could also absorb carbon dioxide, one of the major contributors to the baleful scope of global warming.

### Nano-technology & Wood

“Anything you can do with petroleum, you can do with wood.” Nano-bioengineering of enzymes is aiming to enable conversion of cellulose from wood chips, corn stalks, unfertilized perennial grasses, etc., into ethanol for fuel. Cellulosic nanomaterials have demonstrated potential applications in a wide array of industrial sectors, including electronics, construction, packaging, food, energy, health care, automotive, and defense.



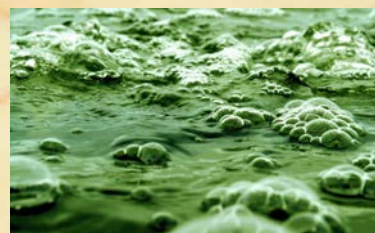
### Low-impact (fuel efficient) yet Super-durable Vehicles

According to Doug Gardner from University of Maine’s Advanced Wood Engineering Composites Center (AEWC) – even an addition of just 10 per cent of nanocellulose into the mix of a composite material, can increase the overall substance strength by over 70 percent. Such components can certainly be utilized for a range of crafts, including motored vehicles, boats and even aircraft. In yet another breakthrough, Brazilian researchers have been successful in developing a special plastic variety with 30 percent less weight but four times more strength than conventional plastic – with the aid of nanocellulose derived from bananas. Even renowned automakers like Ford have estimated that they can reduce their commercial car weights by 250-750 lbs, which in turn would could substantially improve their overall fuel efficiency.



### Flexible Electronic Displays

What are the ideal features for a contemporary display of an electronic device? The answer would be in the order of transparency, lightness and strength. Well, guess what – nanocellulose has all of these attributes, and more! Japan-based Pioneer Electronics has already plunged into the realm of development, and as a result we can very well see gossamer-like screen products with latent durability and sturdiness. And, since we are on the subject of electronic devices, IBM is looking forth to adapt the wood-based super-material for internal computer components.



### Bio-fuel can be a By-product when ‘Growing’ Nanocellulose

Though not technically an application of the nanocellulose itself, but studies

# Reflections on Forest Bird Conservation

by Hannah Weiss, *University of Vermont Rubenstein Conservation Education Fellow*

*A word from our partners at Audubon Vermont. Conservation, education, and public policy are the main pillars around which Audubon Vermont organizes its work. This article highlights the first two; conservation and education. Hannah Weiss is the 2019 Rubenstein Conservation Education Fellow at Audubon. Over the course of the summer Hannah had the opportunity to engage with all facets of Audubon Vermont's work. Read on for her reflections on Audubon's forest bird conservation programs.*

This week, I join Steve Hagenbuch to learn about the second half of Audubon's slogan: "protecting birds and the places they need, today and tomorrow."

Steve is a conservation biologist with Audubon Vermont and focuses on protecting bird habitat. The projects this week revolve around managing forest bird habitat, including sugarbushes – sugar maple stands managed and tapped by maple syrup producers. Steve's master's degree centered around the implications of maple sugarbush management for songbirds, which has led him to develop the Bird Friendly Maple Project.

Sugaring operations voluntarily participate in the Bird Friendly Maple Project. Usually, a maple producer will reach out to Steve with an interest in acquiring the flashy label on their maple syrup. Steve will review their current forest management plan and then do a site-visit to analyze the property himself. Once he has walked

the property, he will write up a report detailing the current condition of the property, where the gaps are in terms of managing the forest with birds in mind, and suggestions for how to manage to better protect birds. The producer must sign off that they will follow the suggested amendments to their current management plan. Once signed, they receive the labels, educational materials, and promotional materials.

Currently, thirty-seven operations participate in the project. These operations range from 200 taps to over 100,000 taps and are spread throughout Vermont.

Over the course of a week I will work with Steve to conduct field work associated with a number of Audubon Vermont's forest bird conservation programs. The first is our own Green Mountain Audubon Center, which taps maple trees and runs educational programming in the spring surrounding sugaring.

Audubon's management plan has not been updated in a couple years and our goal of the day is to follow the gridded pattern on Steve's map to analyze the 255 acre property. We aren't beginning in the sugarbush section, but on the other half of the property – the same analytical methods will be used and provide me the opportunity to learn them.

We begin on a hot, humid July day – one of those days where I was sweating, though standing still. The Rubenstein Conservation Education Fellow from

last summer, Sam Blair, joins us as he is currently working with Steve as a summer intern. We follow a map on Steve's high-tech iPad and reach the first plot. It's off-trail and requires a fair amount of bush-whacking. Later, I learn that Steve is not only a great forester and birder, but also a Master Bush-whacker.

Once at the plot, Steve instructs me to plunge a stick into the ground – this will be our plot center. He then instructs me on the somewhat magical-seeming art of the prism. After counting and identifying trees – the sugar maple, paper birch, and hemlock are most common – we unroll a tap measure and count a radius around plot center of 59 ft, which is a quarter-acre. Within this quarter-acre, we estimate canopy-cover (how much sky we can see if only looking at the top layer of trees), mid-story cover (how much sky if only looking at trees between 6 ft. and 30 ft.) and understory cover (6 ft and below). In a smaller circle (a tenth of an acre) we count fallen trees measuring more than 10 inches diameter that we call "coarse woody debris," and if there are any piles of finer woody debris (sticks/branches within which birds could hide). These are all components of a forest's structure, important for offering nesting habitat for a variety of bird species. We also keep eyes out for invasive plants (we might find buckthorn, honeysuckle, or barberry), and note the birds we either see or hear. Steve identifies by call a Scarlet Tanager, a Winter Wren, and a Chickadee. I also learn of Sam Blair's



hidden talent: guessing tree DBH correctly. His accuracy astounds me!

We repeat this process several more times, at several more sites, with bush-whacking in-between. By the time we're done, I've gained several battle wounds from the pickers and sticks and have completely sweated through my cotton shirt (a silly wardrobe decision on a humid day). And, I feel prepared for tomorrow's expedition to a sugarbush in Underhill: the Proctor Maple Research Center.

The next day dawns and I arrive in Underhill to meet Steve and Mark. Mark, as it appears to me, wears several hats: he's a UVM-extension researcher, an operations coordinator, an educational outreach person, and is able to answer every one of my maple-sugaring-related questions. The Proctor Maple Research Center is a field research station of the University of Vermont's Plant Biology Department. The Center itself has existed since 1946 and focuses on research-based advances of maple syrup production in Vermont. Their projects span from new sap collection techniques to the affects that tapping has on tree health. Not only are they focused on research, but also function as a field classroom and lead tours and presentations of their operations. Yearly, they produce 3,000 gallons of maple syrup.

They've agreed to allow Steve and me to analyze their land and draft suggestions to support and improve the landscape for birds. As Steve reminds me, sugarbushes are inherently good for birds, but landowners can intentionally manage with birds in mind to improve them.

Steve, Mark, and I trek out through the sugarbush. We have to dodge blue and black tubing strung across and around trees – this is the modern way to collect

sap from trees. The metal buckets are essentially a thing of the past as they rely on a freeze-thaw that changes pressure within the tree and gets sap to flow. The tubing, however, uses a vacuum to create that pressure difference which yields more sap overall.

Amongst my questions, Mark asks me with a grin, "Are you going to ask about if it hurts the tree?" It was, in fact, one of my questions. "We're doing research on the long-term effects now. But from what we can tell, the tapped trees haven't produced less sap year after year."

We survey seven plots with Mark, and then Steve and I survey seven more on our own. "It's not actually good to have high percentages of every layer of the forest," Steve tells me. "It's better to

have a more even distribution because different birds prefer different things."

After completing the survey, we make it back to our cars and I open all the doors on mine to let it air out. Everything feels too hot and I'm looking forward to the drive back in A/C. Steve will process these results through the Bird-Friendly Maple Sugaring criteria, and draft a report. It will then be up to Proctor Maple Research Center, as to whether the suggestions are feasible.

As for us, we will be surveying another property in northern Vermont later in the week. "There's a bit of a backlog," Steve tells me. It seems like the project is truly taking off!



# Forest? Woodland? - The Importance of Small Acreages in Vermont Stewardship

by **Trevor Evans**, *Vermont Woodlands Association, Vermont Landowner* & **Leslie Horner**, *Pennsylvania State University, Forest Stewardship Program Associate*

Smaller-acreage woodlands can play an important role in providing diversity of age and structure in forest habitat. “Well, I don’t really own a forest. It’s only about 17 acres.” This is not uncommon for Vermont Woodland Association volunteers to hear when talking with the public at events like the recent Vermont Farm Show in Essex Junction. Landowners and forestry professionals alike use many words to describe the same land—forest, woodlot, woodland, woods, and even other terms. As the statement indicates, many people equate “forest” with large acreage. In fact, social science research has shown that some stewardship-related words resonate more than others. A 2011 survey study conducted for the Northeastern Area Association of State Foresters found that most respondents believed a tract size of 40 acres or more could be considered a forest, and only one-third of respondents considered a 20-acre tract size to be large enough to be considered a forest. Words like “woods” and “woodland” and even “woodlot” resonated with survey respondents when describing privately owned lands.

What is clear from these conversations with landowners and communications studies is that words matter in our efforts to foster land stewardship—whether coming from a natural resource professional like a licensed Vermont consulting forester or from a fellow landowner. Words matter even more so when considering the range of acreage sizes of Vermont’s privately-owned woods. 78% or 4.46 million acres of Vermont is forested.

80% is controlled by private land owners and the rest by either business or government. A majority of the family forest ownerships in Vermont own less than 50 acres of forested land. Pennsylvania’s data statistically is like Vermont’s but on a larger scale. Nearly 500,000 of Pennsylvania’s approximately 740,000 woodland owners have 1 to 10 acres, and that number too like in Vermont will grow as lands are subdivided over time. Another 217,000 owners have 11 to 99 wooded acres, so these two groupings of owners account for more than 90% of owners, and more than 7 million acres of Pennsylvania’s forested landscape. Vermont Woodland Association membership statistics in March 2019 show that 374 members or 42% of the total membership of 886 members fall in the 0-100-acre category. This data shows that to effectively care for the health and function of all of Vermont’s woods, it is critical to engage owners of smaller acreages in active stewardship. Using language that is inclusive of owners for whom the word “forest” may not resonate is an important approach.

One reason the health of smaller acreages is important to the health and function of Vermont forests in the broader landscape relates to the need for connectivity. Data has shown that since the early 1980s, the number of smaller acreages and the number of owners has grown steadily. Larger parcels are often subdivided between heirs or new buyers, and as this transfer of land and subdivision of land or fragmentation occurs, the likelihood of that land being

converted from a functional woodland ecosystem to cleared land (often for development) increases. When looking at aerial imagery, or even looking out the window of an airplane at low altitudes, one can easily get a sense how important it is to wildlife habitat to retain wooded corridors between larger chunks of forest habitat. Small wooded acreages are often where these habitat corridors are provided.

Likewise, smaller-acreage woodlands can play an important role in providing diversity of age and structure in forest habitat. Age diversity in woodlands is essential for supporting diverse wildlife and for forest renewal. However, diversity of age and structure don’t occur without planning help from a forester and active management. Dr. Julian Avery, a professor of wildlife ecology and conservation recently shared results of a decades-long study showcasing the need for active management to support bird diversity. Avery and his research team sampled bird species present in a 40-acre woodland in New Jersey which, since the 1950s, has had protections which don’t allow for any living trees to be cut. Some trees on the property are 350 years old. Using the same collection methods at the same locations that have been sampled for decades, the research team was able to document that the diversity of bird species declined on this tract as it aged. Using Breeding Bird Atlas data, the team could also show that the abundance of many of the bird species was fewer in comparison to the bird populations in the surrounding area which had younger forests. As a



news article reports, “The researchers found that nearly half the species found in the forest at the time of initial protection are now gone, and that yearly forest species composition is highly dynamic. Ground nesting and migratory species were more likely to be missing than were canopy breeders, cavity nesters, and year-round residents.” The take-home lesson from this research is that leaving woodlands alone many times does not provide the expected or desired benefits to wildlife, and even small acreages can contribute to providing habitat for diverse species when active woodland stewardship takes place.

The leave-it-alone approach on small or large acreages can be also detrimental to overall woodland health and function — particularly regarding tree and shrub diversity. For example, consider a 5-acre tract of land that is part of a semi-rural neighborhood on the edge of a small town. To the north of the tract is a forested mountain, and to the south lies the town. As homes were built in this neighborhood, landowners cleared trees for firewood and supplemental income, evidenced by the stumps still visible in the tract. What remains in this tract now are dead and dying ash, black walnut, a few black cherry trees, and numerous non-native invasive trees and shrubs. Mature and young Norway maples dominate one section of the 5-acre tract, while privet and massive bush honeysuckle shrubs densely cover the understory of other sections. Down the street, female individuals in a stand of *Ailanthus* trees (“Tree-of-Heaven”) send seeds through the wind to take root wherever they can. The dominance of non-native and invasive trees and shrubs is an unfortunate example of why non-management simply is not a feasible stewardship strategy in our woodlands today — especially on small acreages which have vulnerable edges for invasive trees and shrubs to take root and spread quickly. However, through active management, which includes removing the bush honeysuckle, privet, Norway maples, cutting the dead ash trees, this tract can begin to be transformed into a small woodland with more diverse native plant species. Planting trees and broadcasting seeds of berry-producing native shrubs, as well as staying vigilant in controlling the spread of invasive trees and shrubs is a start on this journey of active stewardship, and the small acreage can become an important refuge for birds and other wildlife.

Natural resource professionals have increasingly been paying attention to the importance of efforts like this on small acreages, as they can help to functionally piece together the larger forested landscape. Other Vermont landowners — no matter how many acres they may own — can also play a very important role in demonstrating active stewardship that can be seen by neighboring owners. Signs explaining your efforts, walks around the property with curious neighbors, and sharing equipment, resources, and even service providers

like foresters and trusted loggers are all tools that can make a significant difference in engaging other landowners. In these interactions, we can also have an impact by acting not as an infallible expert but an informed guide, avoiding jargon, and meeting people where they are on their individual stewardship and learning curves.

So, before you think your property is too small to be a forest or woodland and is not important enough to be managed or for you not to become a member of the Vermont Woodland Association, please reconsider your importance in the stewardship of Vermont’s woodlands.



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## NEWS FROM SUSTAINABLE FORESTRY INITIATIVE

# Vermont SFI® Coordinator Report

by Bill Sayre, Chair, Vermont SFI and Ed Larson, SFI VT Coordinator

The past six months have been an interesting time for the SFI State Implementation Committee (SIC) of Vermont. We attended and participated in several events allowing us to continue promoting SFI and educate people inside the industry, in government roles and the general public about the importance of a working forests and the principles of sustainability. Events included our semi-annual Forest Policy Task Force meeting, a legislative breakfast, a forest industry summit, Project Learning Tree, (PLT) steering committee meetings, and talk radio. We worked hard on our priorities of promoting a new safety culture in the industry to reduce workers' compensation costs and expand Project Learning Tree into more schools and other youth groups.

In early April, SFI attended the second annual **Vermont Forestry Industry**

**Summit** held in Burke, Vermont by the Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund. It was a day and evening event with several panel discussions and lots of networking opportunities. SFI VT had a display booth with stand-up displays, literature on both SFI and PLT. About 400 attended, many visited the booth. Link to a summary of the Summit including videos of the sessions is here: <http://www.vsjf.org/programs/vermont-forest-products-program/vermont-forest-summit/>

**SFI Northeast Regional Meeting** – On May 30, 2019, Ed Larson attended the annual regional SIC meeting held at the Wild Center in Tupper Lake, NY. The meeting was well attended including SIC's from NY, NH, ME, and PA. We learned a great deal about new SFI initiatives including PLT and a plan to revise the SFI standards. We also had

a chance to preview some of the new marketing materials SFI will be rolling out soon. A draft of the revised standards are expected in October of this year and will be in effect 2022 – 2029.

**Common Sense Radio** – There were a few occasions to be a guest on the WDEV daily "Common Sense Radio Show" to update listeners on SFI and its activities. Host Bill Sayre, VWA Director and Chair of the VT SFI SIC, visited with SFI Coordinator Ed Larson and Bruce Shields, SFI SIC Chair of its Outreach Committee to talk about the value and importance of SFI in Vermont. A special show took place with Larson reporting live from the PLT Conference in Little Rock, Arkansas co-hosting the show with Bruce Shields. The first half-hour included SFI President Kathy Abusow and PLT National Leader Ester Cowles talking about the SFI/PLT relationship, the conference and the value of getting young people interested in forestry and the forest products industry. It was a big hit at the conference. Recordings have been added to the Vermont SFI Web site. We plan to continue this form of outreach in 2020 and beyond.

**Project Learning Tree - PLT** in Vermont. Vermont PLT is housed in the Vermont Dept. of Forests, Parks and Recreation (FPR). Rebecca Roy has returned to be the coordinator, part time and will continue to work in the Parks Division. Our Core Team comprised of SFI VT, FPR and VT Tree Farm has



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SFI Coordinator, at Associated  
Industries of Vermont, 802-223-3441.





met several times the past two years to work on a plan. We have created an expanded steering committee that adds VT Dept. of Education, UVM Extension, Shelburne Farms, Merck Forestry Center and VT Institute of Natural Sciences. We have a plan working with forest-based education centers as hubs for teacher trainings to get PLT into more schools and other youth groups.

Larson attended a PLT Coordinators' Conference in Little Rock, AK in early May. It provided him with a chance to do a deep dive into the details of the program and learn about how other states administer PLT. Adding PLT to our tool box of programs coincides well with the SFI mission to educate our youth about the forest and forestry and its many values in a balanced fashion. In PLT, children are taught how to think, not what to think,

### **LEAP and Loggers Safety Training**

- SFI currently posts all Vermont Logging Contractors that are currently certified under Loggers Education to Advance Professionalism (LEAP) on its web site. SFI continues to work with LEAP and FPR to maintain the quality of the training curriculum with an increased emphasis on safety. This is in order to get Workers' Compensation Insurance (WC) carriers to recognize this program and offer lower premiums for enrollees. We have supported FPR Deputy Commissioner Sam Lincoln in his efforts and leadership to attract more insurance carriers and find lower comp. rates. As a result, the LEAP curriculum has been revamped adding more training for mechanized and non-mechanized contractors and a special session targeted to the business owner or a project manager. Early this year, the VT Dept. of Financial Regulation, (DFR), included two new job class categories for LEAP Certified Logging contractors and for the first two years required insurance carriers to offer policies with a sizable

discount. This added to the already reduced rates adjusted this past year due to rate actuaries, several employers are experiencing substantially reduced rates. The effort is far from over, Vermont remains one of the highest WC rate states in the region, but it is a great start. DFR is currently trying to hire on a workplace safety investigator for logging operations to visit jobs and inspect equipment and practices as a way to coach crews on how to incorporate a culture of safety on all logging jobs.

### **Mill and new participant prospects –**

SFI VT was awarded a Community Engagement Grant from SFI Inc. This award will allow Coordinator Larson to get around Vermont and meet many new prospects and strengthen awareness of SFI. This grant also, in part, intends to promote Project Learning Tree and their focus on "Green Careers" in the forestry sector in Vermont.

### **SFI/AIV Forest Policy Task Force -**

The first of two semi-annual meetings was held on July 31, 2019 at the Capitol Plaza Hotel and Conference Center in Montpelier. About 40 industry professionals attended. There was a full line up of topics and expert speakers to inform and update us on all matters of the industry. FPR Deputy Commissioner Sam Lincoln provided a thorough

update on the Loggers Safety and Workers Compensation Program. For the Vermont Dept. of Fish and Wildlife, Wildlife Biologist, John Gobeille spoke on activities in his department. He added information on where things are in adopting the management plan for Camel's Hump. Jeff Tilley, Timber Program Leader for the Green Mountain National Forest provided an update on timber program and their efforts to expand early successional habitat. Christine McGowan, Forest Products Program Director for the Sustainable Jobs Fund provided a summary report of their 2nd Annual Vermont Forest Industry Summit that took place at Burke Mountain Resort in May 2019. Our Keynote speaker was June Tierney, Commissioner, VT Dept. of Public Service who helped us understand their view of the role of wood in Vermont's energy future. The entire afternoon was spent with Mike Snyder, Commissioner of FPR and Sam Lincoln, Deputy Commissioner, FPR. The two provided information and updates on new legislation passed in the Session just completed, the Emerald Ash Borer; the newly created Vermont Forest Carbon Sequestration Working Group; local road permits and Legislative efforts to reform Act 250 specifically to include a review for fragmentation. SAF and LEAP CE credits were made available for attendees.



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# Post and Beam on Lake Iroquois Keeps the Wood, the Work, and the Dollars Local

by Christine McGowan, Forest Program Director, Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund



George Wilcox and his son Dave Wilcox stand next to the log of a white pine tree that was cut in February on their West Berlin property. Photo by Erica Houskeeper.

The story behind Randy Kay's camp on Lake Iroquois began with an errant voicemail. Andy Harper, owner of Winterwood Timber Frames, received a message that he wasn't sure was meant for him, but he returned the call anyway and got to talking with Kay, who was looking to build a camp using materials sourced in Vermont. "Using local, responsibly-sourced timber for our post and beam buildings is a central tenet of my business," said Harper, "so we ended up having a great conversation."

## Small-Scale Forestry

Kay hired Harper to build his 1,800 square-foot camp, and began working with

architect Timothy Duff to design a year-round home that would fit naturally in the surrounding environment. That same spring, Harper was asked to speak at the Vermont Forest Industry Summit in Burke about utilizing local wood. In the audience, Dave Wilcox, a forester and landowner, heard Harper say that he was looking for small-scale sources of high quality local pine for his timber frames. "He said he didn't need 100,000 board feet all at once," said Wilcox, "and that because he paid a premium for the logs, he preferred to walk the land to ensure that the trees were suitable for the home he was building. We had a small mixed softwood stand that was ready to be thinned and included some beautiful 70- to 80-year-old pines,

so I introduced myself after the panel and invited Andy to come out to walk my family's forest."

Wilcox manages more than 200 acres of his family's forest in West Berlin. The property, which is a Certified Tree Farm and enrolled in current use, has been in the Wilcox family since 1973. As it turned out, the area that was next scheduled for treatment included pines that were exactly what Harper needed for Kay's camp. Ranging from about 90- to 100-feet, the trees were straight and tall with few knots, but were starting to get choked out. "It was a right-sized deal at the right time for both of us," said Wilcox, "and it fit within our long-term forest management plan." The timber sale totaled five small truckloads of White Pine logs, totaling 21,000 board feet, as well as seven cords of Red Maple firewood and about 4,000 board feet of Spruce sawlogs—all in all a pretty light thinning of the six- to seven-acre area.

"Even a small sale for a big Canadian mill would typically be in the 50,000-75,000 board foot range," said Harper. "I try not to inventory timber because pine used for post and beam construction has to be fresh. It doesn't make sense for me to buy double what I need." In fact, the name "Winterwood" refers to the harvesting of trees in the winter for spring construction. "Forestry has seasonality," said Harper, "just like agriculture."

## Adding Value Along the Supply Chain

Between the forest and the construction site, the trees harvested last winter from the Wilcox land were processed by a



critical third partner, Fontaine Millwork and Forestry. Located in East Montpelier just a few miles from Winterwood Timber Frames, Fontaine and Harper have been friends for a long time. “Marc has the ability to saw logs up to 35-feet long,” said Harper, “which is unusual and truly impressive. He’s used to handling the larger and longer pieces we need for timber framing, so we work together often.” All of the logs from the timber sale were delivered to Fontaine, where Harper then walked through and chose logs for the post and beam. He provided Fontaine with a cut sheet specifying the exact size and length of the beams needed for the camp based on the architect’s plan. The side cuts left over from the logs were dried into lumber that is being used in the camp for flooring. All in all, Harper purchased about 60 percent of the timber sale, and Fontaine purchased the rest to be sold as finished lumber. “Marc played an essential role in the economics of this sale,” said Wilcox. “He was willing to buy the remaining logs that were not suitable for post and beam.”

All three men agree that the relationships forged in a small state allow them to do business differently.

*“There’s a degree of trust and a shared love of the forest,” said Wilcox. “We all value the idea that these trees won’t be shipped overseas to become a piece of trim board at a big box store. Instead, they’ll be used in a home where people live and appreciate that the timber grew here in Vermont for almost a century before becoming part of their home.”*

Harper agrees. “Not every tree is a commodity,” he adds. “The people who add value along the way have as much of a story as the tree itself.” Harper points to other Vermont businesses such as The Treehouse Hardwoods and Millshop and Green Mountain Grain & Barrel who are also sourcing wood with a history of place. “The idea that local wood products support an important industry here in Vermont is starting to take hold,” he said.

“We have to keep making the connection for people between the wood they buy and the forests they love. We have to keep preaching, keep supporting one another, and keep buying local.”

Wilcox, who was visiting the construction site with his father, George, a retired fieldman for Agri-mark, points out the similarities to Vermont’s local food movement. “People understand that they support the fields and farmers when they buy local food at the farmer’s market,” he said. “But they don’t necessarily make the same connection for wood products. The only way to prevent parcelization and maintain healthy forests for recreation, wildlife, and the environment is to support the working forested landscape. In order for landowners to keep our forests as forests, we need the economics to work.” The value of the wood, however, goes beyond dollars and cents for Kay, who intentionally sourced building materials from Vermont. “I want this home to tell a story,” said Kay. “Now part of the story is that the timber came from the Wilcox family land, and that we supported Vermonters and the forested landscape.”



Dave Wilcox harvests a white pine tree on his family's property in West Berlin. The property, a Certified Tree Farm and enrolled in current use, has been in the Wilcox family since 1973. Photo by Erica Houskeeper.



White pine from the Wilcox land is cut at Fontaine Sawmill in East Montpelier. Photo by Erica Houskeeper.



Andy Harper, left, of Winterwood Timber Frames, oversees his crew as they build Randy Kay's house on Lake Iroquois in Hinesburg. Photo by Erica Houskeeper.

# Landowners, Loggers, and Workers' Comp Insurance

For decades, workers in Vermont's forest economy have experienced prohibitively high workers' compensation insurance rates for logging contractors, creating a significant barrier to employment growth in the sector and leading to more people working alone, and uninsured, in one of the state's most dangerous occupations.

As a landowner, do you have a part in helping to resolve the workers' compensation insurance issue in the logging industry? The simple answer, YES! When loggers ask if landowners really care about workers compensation insurance, the answer should always be YES! We never hesitate to ask a building contractor for verification of insurance because we know the liability rests with the homeowner should anything happen. The situation in your woods is no different but all too often, we don't ask the right questions.

The Workers' Comp for loggers story has been unfolding for the last several years with input from Forests, Parks and Recreation (FPR), the administration, the legislature, the insurance industry, logging industry in surrounding states, landowners, foresters, and others. And if you've been following it, you know that the efforts have been successful. But, it's now up to you, the landowner, to be a part of the solution and ensure that successes are sustainable. The Vermont Logger Safety and Workers' Compensation Insurance Program will help protect you and your investment in your woodlot. For additional information on the program, visit <https://fpr.vermont.gov/about-vermont-logger-safety-and-workers-compensation-insurance-program>

Landowners and their agents, including consulting foresters, can find the tools on the VT FPR website to perform due

diligence and document that coverage or exemptions exist for those that will be performing activities related to forest management on their property. Be sure to read the Guidance for Landowners and forest managers document as you prepare for your next timber sale. Utilize the companion checklist to ensure you have followed the guidance. For properly insured, or exempt, loggers, the checklists will not be onerous to complete.

Take the time to visit the FPR website, explore the available tools and resources, and talk to your consulting forester. If you ever have questions, please don't hesitate to ask. If we don't have answers, we know where to find them.

<https://fpr.vermont.gov/vermont-logger-safety-and-workers-compensation-insurance-program/workers-comp-resources-landowners>

## AN INVITATION TO OUR MEMBERS

We welcome your submissions for the VWA and Tree Farm newsletter. If you have a story to tell or news of interest to share with other landowners, please send along so we may consider for future editions. We can accept articles, photos, or news tidbits via email to [info@vermontwoodlands.org](mailto:info@vermontwoodlands.org).

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# NEW MEMBER APPLICATION

(Note: existing members will receive an invoice)

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..... \$100

### ☐ VWA Accredited Consulting Foresters ..... \$160

(Subject to VWA acceptance. Call for details.)

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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.

## MEMBERSHIP BONUS!

# Northern Woodlands



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.

**[northernwoodlands.org](http://northernwoodlands.org)**



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Photo: Kathleen Wanner