

Vermont Woodlands Association and Vermont Tree Farm Program

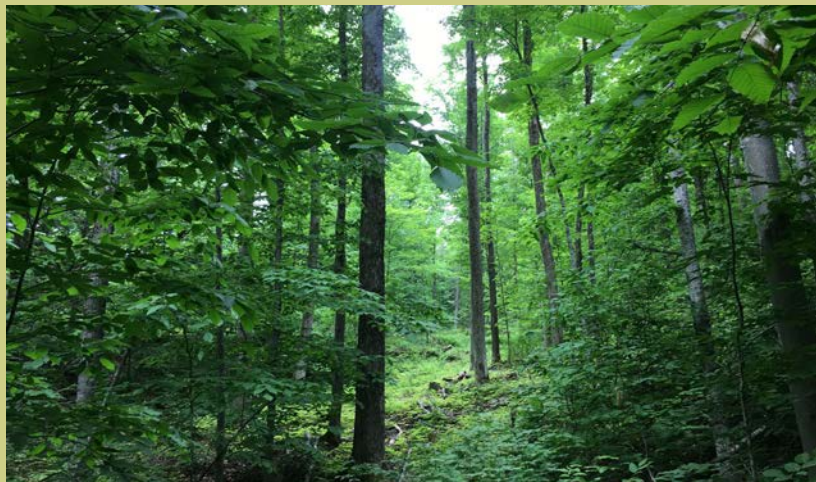
A VOICE FOR HEALTHY FORESTS

Vol. 17, No. 2

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VWA VP John Buck hard at work behind his Woodmizer. Softwood logs (spruce, pine, hemlock) in the foreground awaiting milling.



MEMBERSHIP NEWSLETTER



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Photos: Allan Thompson (front left), Kathy Beland (front top),
 VWA (front bottom), Jon Bouton (back main), VWA (back inset)

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.

Mission Statements:

Vermont Woodlands is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation whose mission is to educate and advocate for the practices of productive stewardship, use, and enjoyment of Vermont's woodlands. We achieve our mission by delivering programs for landowners, the public, and policy makers that support forest health, forest economy, wildlife habitat, recreation, and enjoyment of forests for today and for generations to come.

Vermont Woodlands Association does not and shall not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religious belief, gender, age, national origin, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, military status, or political belief in any of its activities or operations. These activities include, but are not limited to, hiring and firing of staff, selection of volunteers and vendors, and provision of services. We are committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for all persons.

The **American Tree Farm System**, first organized in 1941, is the Nation's oldest certifier of privately owned forestland. Tree Farm members share a unique commitment to protecting watersheds and wildlife habitat, conserving soil, and providing recreation; and at the same time producing wood products on a sustainable basis. The Vermont Woodlands Association strives to educate, train, and support private forest landowners in sound management practices concerning wildlife, water, wood, and recreation. We do this by managing and enhancing the American Tree Farm System® Program in Vermont.



NEWS FROM VWA



Wildflowers!

by Kathleen Wanner, *Executive Director*

Our connections to the land come from so many diverse passions. For me, it's the early spring when shoots of green begin to pop and as if by magic, turn into spring ephemerals seemingly overnight. This is the time that makes my heart sing! I can slow myself down and follow Leopold's model: Observe, Participate, Reflect.

Trillium, Jack-in-the-Pulpit, Trout Lily, Dutchman's Breeches, Hepatica, Blue Cohosh, Maidenhair Fern ... so many beautiful, delicate blooms appear on my little 18-acre woodlot that I can barely contain myself when they arrive. I like to think that I have a symbiotic relationship with my land. No lawn for me – that takes work. No garden for me – that takes soil. But my rocks and wildflowers have found that they can live here comfortably, and, over the years, friends and family have joined them.

It's fascinating to see how every disturbance on the landscape brings new surprises. Two decades ago, Painted Trillium were plentiful; today it's rare to find even one. Red Trillium have popped up in different locations, with more southerly exposure. The cohosh inhabits a very small patch of rich earth under a large outcropping of ledge. It's joined by Maidenhair Fern that's so elusive among a plethora of

other not-so-special ferns. And the Jacks abound with new finds annually, especially along the gravelly edges of the old log road.



Painted Trillium

Spring brings this abundant but fleeting beauty that invites up-close observation. It seems so simple, but I sometimes surprise myself by being oblivious to the world around me, by missing the subtle nuances of change. How much

passes me by in those moments when my brain is spinning off in a hundred different directions, when my days are more about destination than journey?

After nearly 50 years of ownership, a recent discovery brought unimaginable delight – I have Lady Slippers! LADY SLIPPERS! They grow on a wooded hillside barely traversed because it's so steep, but there they are, in all their glory. I didn't find them. My forester did while gathering data for a management plan. I won't see them until late June but they are a gift in the offing.

Prior to the advent of cell phone cameras, I used to make my

travels through the woods armed with sketch pad and colored pencils. They are still my favorite tools but all too often are replaced by the click of the camera tucked into my pocket. Although it isn't a great substitute for careful contemplation and study of form and color, it does slow me down.

Truth be told, it's not just spring that makes my heart sing. I'm a sucker for every change of season. I feel fortunate to live in this place with such natural intensity. Here, nothing lasts forever. Even a sub-zero snowy morning in January will soon be a distant memory replaced by the pop of spring green; a ninety-degree dripping summer day will miraculously transform to amber hues of autumn. The mountains make me feel protected, anchored snugly to the earth, and enveloped in her care.

Our relationship with the earth is what Leopold invites us to think about, and my invitation is most often delivered by spring wildflowers. What invites you to explore that relationship, to seek harmony with the natural world? What makes your heart sing?



Lady Slippers



PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

VWA Foresters

by Allan Thompson

Spring is a special time for landowners and VWA Consulting Foresters. As landowners, we're anxious for the days of longer strides afield without the heavy winter garments. New birds, new flowers, new growth, new life. Annually, the spring scenes tempt us outside to explore our woods. Inevitably the explorations lead us to consider the management activities desired or already planned, and the eventual spring call to the Consulting Forester occurs.

As a VWA Consulting Forester, I expect these calls, and they are welcome and enjoyable. I imagine the landowner tracking forest debris into the house on the way to the phone, boots still laced. Excitement in their voice connecting again with their woodland partner as they share their adventures and forest ideas. I love these dialogues, and we VWA Foresters all share your excitement. We're ready to listen, help, and do our job.

First and foremost, a VWA Consulting Forester's job is to serve landowners and their woods. A VWA Licensed Forester is a member of VWA, in our Forester category. We are licensed by the State of Vermont to practice forestry. We have at least 3 years of professional consulting experience working for landowners conducting forest inventory, writing forest plans, and planning and supervising forest management activities. VWA also requires that foresters show they are involved in

communicating and advocating for forests and forestry in a public way. This puts our work in front of the community and, by doing so, ensures that forest management and foresters remain culturally trusted and relevant.

VWA Consulting Foresters bring vetted experience that you won't find anywhere else. We must also follow a code of ethics. "Compliance with these canons helps to assure just and honorable professional and human relationships, mutual confidence and respect, and competent service to society." Failure to follow this code will result in forfeiture of membership.

The Forester Advisory Committee (Michael Brown, Richard Carbonetti, John McClain, Tii McLane, and myself), reviews forester applications, manages adherence to ethical standards, and is the liaison between foresters and VWA as well as the greater community engaged in Forestry. We are committed to serving VWA Foresters in their pursuit of serving landowners and their woodland pursuits.

The greatest benefit, I believe, in working with a VWA Consulting Forester is the benefit of working with a Forester who has a proven commitment to VWA's mission: to educate and advocate for the practices of productive stewardship, use, and enjoyment of Vermont's woodlands. Anyone who shares this commitment is worth

sharing a relationship but also is proven to be an informed, trusted forester sharing similar values as you.

I am exceptionally proud of our 32 VWA Foresters: I'm proud of being one, and I hope that if you are working with one, you're proud too. We serve every corner of the state and do so well. Not all high-quality Consulting Foresters are Licensed VWA Foresters, and maybe yours isn't on our list yet. We sure would like them to be, so please ask them to be. Share with them why you are a VWA member as there is bound to be common ground. VWA advocates for woodland stewardship, and VWA Foresters are our best champions of membership. VWA Foresters recognize that if their clients are VWA members, they are more likely to be a better steward of their land and to engage with their forester for management services.

This mutually beneficial theme permeates much of what VWA does as we recognize that likely the two most important players in Vermont's woodland stewardship are the forest landowners and their foresters. VWA is committed to finding new ways to increase benefits to VWA foresters and to continue to help foresters in their profession as well as in their relationship with and service to landowners. As a Forester, why not join an organization that almost universally concludes their woodland education

with the phrase *call your consulting forester*? As a landowner and VWA member, you might feel better knowing your forester is a VWA Forester. This

way, when you make that spring phone call, you'll know you're talking to someone who cares a great deal about productive stewardship, use, and

enjoyment of your woodlands. You'll know you're talking to a VWA Forester.

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NEWS FROM VERMONT DEPARTMENT OF FORESTS, PARKS AND RECREATION

Don't Let This Grass Grow Under Your Feet – Stiltgrass

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

Looking out my window today, I see that I will spend the weekend mowing, as we have officially moved past spring into summer in the mountains of Vermont. The quick growth of the grasses and forbs in my yard pale in comparison to the rapid growth of one invasive grass – Stiltgrass (*Microstegium vimineum*).

This very invasive plant (an actual classification allotted by the New York Invasiveness Ranking at http://nyis.info/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/f8fe1_Microstegium.vimineum.NYS_.pdf) is also commonly known as “Nepalese browntop,” and it can be found in forests, roadsides and lawns, meadows and fields, floodplains, shores of rivers and lakes, and in disturbed habitats.

The first record of this species in the US was from 1918 in Tennessee. The continued spread of this plant across the US was thought to have been an



Japanese stiltgrass infestation, 1378045, Chris Evans, University of Illinois, CC Non-com 3.0 (<https://www.ipmimages.org/browse/detail.cfm?imgnum=1378045>).

accidental introduction as packing material. It has since spread to over 25 US states. This annual grass, that reaches heights of 1-4 feet, is native to Japan, Korea, Malaysia, India, China, and the Caucasus region.

The leaves are light green blades, 1 to 3 inches in length, and arranged alternately on the stem. Each stem can grow 1-3 feet tall. Each blade is held on the stem with a leaf sheath, and where the sheath meets the stem will have little white hairs. A distinct identifying characteristic is the silvery stripe of reflective hair down the middle of each blade. Common look-alikes, like White Cut Grass (*Leersia virginica*) lack this silvery stripe on the blade.

The primary mode of spread is through water and by activity of wildlife and humans moving the prolific number of seeds (100-1,000 per plant, thought to remain viable up to 7 years in the soil). However, the plant can grow vegetatively, creating localized monocultures of dense matted vegetation. It is an annual that dies back each fall, and that matted layer of thatch does not decompose quickly.

While previously thought to be absent from Vermont, sightings in 2019 provided by the public led the Vermont Natural Heritage Program (<https://vtfishandwildlife.com/conserve/>

[conservation-planning/natural-heritage-inventory](https://vtinvasives.org/sites/default/files/Early%20Detection%20Rapid%20Response.pdf)) in 2020, to photographically confirm populations in Bennington, Rutland, and Windham counties. This is still considered an early detection species of concern (<https://vtinvasives.org/sites/default/files/Early%20Detection%20Rapid%20Response.pdf>).

Its ability to grow in a variety of conditions (habitat generalist, shade tolerant), prolific seed production, and fast, dense vegetative growth, mean this plant can spread rapidly. That rapid and dense growth means Stiltgrass can smother other understory vegetation, including native woody forest species. The environmental impact it has had in other New England states



Japanese stiltgrass stem, showing silvery midrib, and alternating leaf arrangement, 5437496, Bruce Ackley, The Ohio State University, CC 3.0 (<https://www.ipmimages.org/browse/detail.cfm?imgnum=5437496>).

has led to its listing on the unofficial Vermont Watchlist (https://fpr.vermont.gov/sites/fpr/files/Quarantine_WatchListUpdate-2017_November.pdf).

Please use the Report It! Tool from Vermont Invasives if you find this plant growing in Vermont: <https://vtinvasives.org/get-involved/report-it>.

To learn more about Japanese Stiltgrass, check out www.VTinvasives.org and these additional resources:

- <https://www.cabi.org/isc/datasheet/115603#tosummaryOfInvasiveness>
- <https://content.ces.ncsu.edu/japanese-stiltgrass-identification-and-management>
- <https://www.agriculture.nh.gov/publications-forms/documents/japanese-stiltgrass.pdf>
- <https://www.nybg.org/blogs/plant-talk/2010/09/tip-of-the-week/tip-of-the-week-removing-invasive-japanese-stilt-grass/>
- <https://extension.psu.edu/controlling-japanese-stiltgrass-in-your-garden>
- <https://njaes.rutgers.edu/fs1237/>
- <https://plants.usda.gov/core/profile?symbol=MIVI>
- <https://www.fs.fed.us/database/feis/plants/graminoid/micvim/all.html>
- https://www.wnyprism.org/invasive_species/japanese-stiltgrass/



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Many 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.

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If you would like to make a donation to the memorial or honorary fund, please make note of whom your donation is for and if you want it invested in the Memorial/Honorary Endowment (inaccessible principal in perpetuity) or the Memorial/Honorary Fund (accessible principal).



NEWS FROM AUDUBON VERMONT

Woods, Wildlife, and Warblers: Resources for managing forests with birds in mind

by **Steve Hagenbuch**, *Senior Conservation Biologist, Audubon Vermont*

Summer. That magical time of year when bird song rings forth from forests all around the state. From Wood Thrush and Scarlet Tanager to Chestnut-sided Warbler and White-throated Sparrow, Vermont and our neighboring New England states are the summer nesting habitat for some of the greatest diversity of bird species found in the United States. For many landowners, protecting and enhancing wildlife habitat ranks as one of the most important reasons for owning forestland, a statistic confirmed in the most recent USDA Forest Service, National Woodland Owner Survey (see the March edition of the Vermont Woodlands Association newsletter for the complete story).

A desire to protect and enhance wildlife is one thing. Having the confidence to manage the forest in ways that achieve that objective can be quite another. Fortunately, there is a variety of resources available to provide the tools and knowledge necessary in order to steward the forest birds and other wildlife in mind. Vermont's network of consulting and county foresters can be a great starting point. Another option is the Woods, Wildlife, and Warblers program.

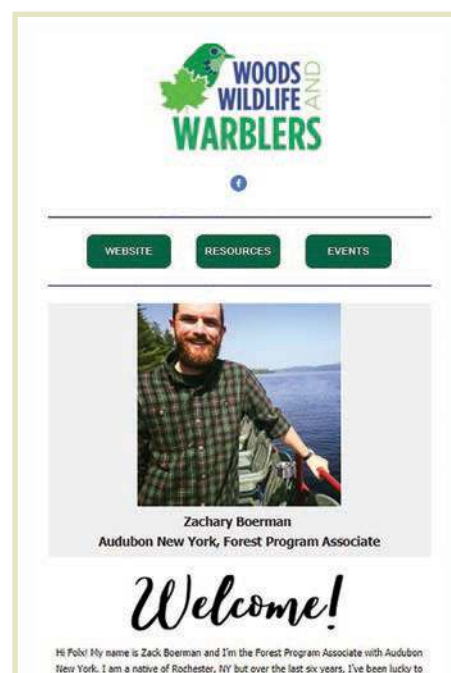
Woods, Wildlife, and Warblers is a partnership program that began in Vermont in 2016 and has since expanded into the state of New York. In Vermont, the core partners are the Vermont Woodlands Association, the Vermont Tree Farm Committee, Audubon Vermont, and the American Forest Foundation. Together we seek to create and improve forest bird habitat by providing forest owners with the knowledge, tools, and resources they need to enhance and protect the health of forests now and into the future.

The coronavirus pandemic required the program to think creatively about ways to engage with Vermont's forest landowner community. While we look forward to getting back into the woods together again soon, the virtual tools developed during the pandemic will have long-lasting benefits:

- **Woods, Wildlife, and Warblers website** - <http://www.woodsandwildlife.org/>
The revised program website is your go-to, one-stop shop for learning about Woods, Wildlife, and Warblers. Here you will find guides, fact sheets, and other downloadable resources to help

you on your way to managing your forest with birds and other wildlife in mind. It also includes a listing of upcoming events as well as links to a library of the brand new eNewsletter.

- **Woods, Wildlife, and Warblers eNewsletter** - <http://www.woodsandwildlife.org/enewsletter>
Curious to know when migratory birds will be returning to your area? Interested in the latest news



related to forests, habitat, and birds? Signup to receive the monthly eNewsletter by clicking the Subscribe button in the upper left hand corner of any edition of the eNewsletter.

- **Woods, Wildlife, and Warblers Facebook page** - <https://www.facebook.com/woodswildlifewarblers>

If you are tuned into social media, be sure to like our Facebook page! Posts include links to interesting articles, programs related to forests and birds, and more.



Connect with the Woods, Wildlife, and Warblers program for your chance to keep in touch with us and take advantage of all the resources we have to share.

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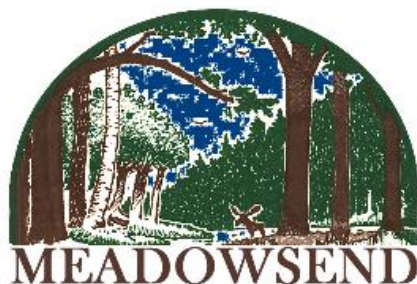
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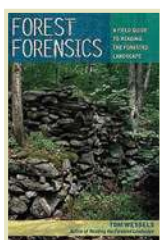
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NEWS FROM THE VERMONT TREE FARM COMMITTEE: BOOK REVIEW

Forest Forensics, YouTube, Zoom and more

by Allen Yale, *landowner and Tree Farmer*



Wessels, T. (2010). *Forest forensics: A field guide to reading the forested landscape*. Woodstock, VT: Countryman Press.

Until the Covid pandemic, I had never heard of Zoom nor visited YouTube. My wife and I have long been fans of the visual arts. In the isolation of the early days of Covid-19, someone told us about Google Arts and Culture, on which we were able to visit the collections of many of the world's art museums. Often this website would link us with YouTube, so we began to visit YouTube as well. In fact, I must admit I have become addicted to YouTube, checking it a couple of times a day.

One of my recent discoveries on YouTube this Spring was a series of talks by Tom Wessels, which I think would interest members of VWA and Vermont Tree Farm. On YouTube, I was accidentally reintroduced to Tom and

what he calls *forest forensics*. Tom is an ecologist who teaches at Antioch New England Graduate School in Putney. In 1997, Tom wrote a book entitled *Reading the Forested Landscape: A Natural History of New England*. When I pulled my copy of his book from my bookshelf, I discovered it was signed by Tom. As I began to read it, I realized I hadn't read it when I got it in 1997 ...

Using evidence found in woodlots, Tom Wessels is able to discover indicators of former disturbances and land uses: evidence of abandoned cropland and pastures, fires, beaver ponds, blowdowns, storms, forest blights, and logging.

One thing about YouTube is that while watching one selection, YouTube alerts you to other offerings of a similar type, which allowed me to watch four sessions with Tom, including a three-part series that seems to follow his book. Then I searched for "Tom Wessels" to be sure I hadn't missed any other of his YouTube videos and found several. For anyone who would like to discover more about the history of your woodlot, I would recommend checking out Tom Wessels' series.

On another Covid-related note, I'm sure many of you have become familiar with "Zoom." Many organizations

have found that the only way they could function during the pandemic was to meet via Zoom. The Vermont Tree Farm Committee and VWA have been meeting on Zoom for most of the last year. It took these conservation groups a little longer to begin offering programming via Zoom. Throughout the Spring, I participated in several Zoom programs offered by VWA, Vermont Audubon, Vermont Coverts, and the Vermont Land Trust; among them deer management with Nick Fortin, discussions of the book "Woods Whys" by Commissioner Mike Snyder, and land ethics. As of mid-April, I had registered for four more: another "Woods Whys," a talk on the recovery of the peregrine falcon, the wildlife of Burlington, and bat habitat. All these concerned the interface between forest management and wildlife

Being a resident of Derby, in the Northeast Kingdom, one of the benefits of the pandemic has been that I have had access to meetings and programs that would be too distant for me to travel to in person. It is my hope that post-pandemic, these organizations will continue using Zoom and other digital technology to broaden their audience and allow individuals to attend programs they might not normally attend in person. We'll see what summer brings ...



THE FORESTER'S VIEW

Puddles with a Purpose: Vernal Pools

by Charlie Hancock, North Woods Forestry

Amphibians are not normally thought of as terrestrial animals; however, many species make their home in our forests and fields and very commonly are heard and seen in the spring. An *amphibian* is a vertebrate animal with scaleless, soft, moist skin and toes that lack claws (as opposed to *reptiles*, which have scaly dry skin and toes with claws). Think salamanders and frogs, not snakes and turtles. These little guys are incredibly neat because they lead a double life, undergoing a complete metamorphosis from larva to adult, with the larval animal being aquatic, but the adult of many species is essentially terrestrial. They generally reproduce in water, in most cases with eggs laid in gelatinous masses or sheaths after fertilization.



Wood frog eggs. Photo courtesy Jon Bouton.

This is where the *Vernal pools* come in. Vernal pools are temporary pools of water, formed from snow melt or spring rains, that provide essential habitat for amphibian breeding. They might simply look like big puddles that show up in our woods every spring, but these are distinctive wetlands in that they are

devoid of fish and/or certain species of frog (because they are temporary with periodic drying) and thus allow the safe development of amphibians unable to withstand competition or predation by fish or frogs. The organisms that reproduce here are the “obligate” vernal pool species, so called because they *must* use a vernal pool for various parts of their life cycle. If the obligate species are using the body of water, then that water is a vernal pool (put more simply, a vernal pool is always a puddle, but a puddle is not always a vernal pool. *Evidence of use must be found to classify this specific wetland community*). In New England, the easily recognizable obligate species are the wood frog and mole salamanders.

The **wood frog**, common to our upland forests, is a small (about 2”) frog of moist woodlands. As the name implies,

this frog is not an animal of ponds and streams but one that spends its life in the woodlands and vegetated wetlands. In early spring, shortly after thawing from its winter dormancy, the wood frog finds its way to a vernal pool so it can breed. The males get rolling with a loud chorus that can be heard for a few weeks when the air temperature is above the high 40s (*note: the earliest callers in our woods are usually the spring peepers, followed by wood frogs, then the trill of American toads, pickerel frogs, and, finally, leopard frogs, each with a distinct call*). The eggs are laid in the vernal pools in the early spring, and the frogs return to the forest for the remainder of the year. The tadpoles develop in the pool and eventually follow the adults to adjacent

VERNAL POOLS *continued on pg. 12*



Wood frog. Photo © Kent P. McFarland / KPMcFarland.com.

VERNAL POOLS, *continued from pg. 11*

uplands. The presence of evidence of breeding by wood frogs comes in the form of egg masses or tadpoles, indicating that a pool is a vernal pool. The egg masses of a few hundred eggs each are often deposited in clusters of hundreds of masses. The gelatin covering, the size of the communal cluster, and exposure to the sun all help the eggs to be warmer than the surrounding water, and they develop quickly. By mid- to late-April, small black wood frog tadpoles are abundant in vernal pools. As they feed on the leaves and algae of the pool, they grow quickly and become a green-brown color. By June, the tadpoles will have developed legs and be absorbing their tail in preparation for leaving the pool.

Mole salamanders also spend their lives in our upland forests, commonly burrowed on the forest floor. The mole salamanders are one genus, and in Vermont consist of three main species: the spotted salamander, the blue-spotted salamander, and the Jefferson salamander (all of which are listed by the state as *species of*

greatest conservation need). In early spring, when the snow is melting, the ground is thawing out, and nighttime temperatures edge above freezing, these salamanders make their migrations on rainy nights to vernal pools to breed. Many salamanders will return to the same pools in which they were born (referred to as *ancestral pools*). These migrations to the pools often involve hundreds of salamanders, making it quite the spectacle. Eggs are laid in masses that range from the size of golf balls to that of tennis balls, depending upon the species. Salamander eggs are surrounded by a matrix of jelly, which distinguishes them from frog egg masses in which single eggs are merely clustered together. These eggs will hatch in 4 to 7 weeks, and larvae will feed on small invertebrates in the pond until they metamorphose and move onto land in the summer/autumn.

Another interesting species that make their home in the vernal pools of our forests are the **Fairy shrimp**. These are small (about 1 inch long) crustaceans that spend their entire lives in the



Fairy shrimp. Photo © Nathaniel Sharp.

vernal pool. Eggs hatch in late winter/early spring, with the adults observed in pools in the spring. Females eventually drop an egg case, which remains on the pool bottom after the pool dries. The eggs pass through a cycle of drying and freezing and then hatch another year when water returns. The presence of fairy shrimp also indicates that a water body is a vernal pool. Other species that indicate that the water body is a vernal pool include fingernail clams and dragon fly larvae.



Mole salamander. Photo courtesy Allan Thompson.

So get outside and look for vernal pools! If you find a potential pool, look for the indicative egg sacks or larvae that will confirm its use. If you have a pool in your woods, document the presence of breeding populations and report it to the Vermont Center for Ecostudies, which is working on a vernal pool mapping project to document pools across the state (<http://www.vtecostudies.org/VPMP/>). This information will greatly improve conservation planning, help protect species of conservation concern that depend upon vernal pools, and preserve the ecological values associated with these critical, but often overlooked, wetland habitats.

THE FORESTER'S VIEW

Looking Back to Look Forward

by Ross Morgan, Northern Forest Conservation Services

There were 225 years of us on the log landing in Albany, equally divided among three aging men. Bob Davis, Bernie Peters, and I are each 75 years old, and we have spent much of our lives working in the woods in southern Orleans County, Vermont: they as loggers and me as the forester.

Bob was raised with the land that is under our feet, and he tells tales of getting the cows where there are now white pines over 20 inches in diameter. He and I have worked for nearly 40 years together: at first, he ran horses in the woods, backed up later with a crawler or tractor for longer skids. Over 30 years ago in a nearby woodlot, I set up the work for using horses, building roads for trucks ahead of time and using six landings instead of only two that would be needed for a skidder job. This gave us short skids for horses, essential



Bernie and Bob, on one of many landings together. Photo courtesy Ross Morgan.

to making the job more feasible.

Bernie came later, and Bob often calls him “the best man to cut cedar in the Kingdom.” Bernie does cherish cedar,

selling fence posts from his dooryard for decades. Bernie also ran for Governor, but I am glad he did not win as that would have made for one less skilled cedar man in the woods around here. Bob also ran the local funeral parlor in Craftsbury for decades, and he started as a horse logger too. They are themselves workhorses, out in the woods year-round felling and skidding, bucking on the landing.

We have a routine when I arrive: we get to the business at hand, changes in markets, ideas of where roads should go, how the small John Deere tractor is running, the marking and the cutting. And then we start telling stories, often ones told many times, but that doesn't



A pile of cedar logs and a pile of 6-foot cedar for fencing. Photo courtesy Ross Morgan.

LOOKING FORWARD, continued on pg. 14

LOOKING FORWARD, *continued from pg. 13*

matter as the purpose of telling a story is not to convey information as much as it is to have a laugh, ultimately reinforcing the team of the three of us, each doing our job, contributing to a long-term goal of moving more and more toward well-managed forests. For 50 years, I have marked trees for harvest in thinnings, shelterwoods, cuttings in multi-aged stands, and salvages, all following plans and maps that I have prepared. Silviculture and its many facets and responsibilities is my life's work. Then the loggers are contracted to cut the trees, pay the landowner, and "button up" in the end. The best results have been when the loggers and forester can see each other's

needs in accomplishing their part well, and often a close relationship is built, a team, which makes the work meaningful.

For many years, the "soft" touch of using horses and then small machinery and cable skidders was attractive to landowners, and we tried to go in that direction, knowing the aesthetic values of the forest were often most important to the landowner.

We are preparing the way for a continuation of this work; our ways are old-fashioned and we know it, but we also know that the team approach and sound silviculture is a must in the future wherever wood is harvested.



Ross Morgan

I seem to be holding onto old ways, tried and true, yet with an overlapping glance forward in time, trying to see what will be the best way to take wood from our forests in the future, leaving the forest whole and functioning, for this is what forestry is about.



Are you a VWA member who is NOT a tree farmer? Now is a great time to enroll.

Do you:

- Have a desire to leave the land better than you found it
- Own 10 or more forested acres
- Have a management plan, or wish to have one
- Have a stewardship ethic that makes you proud

Tree Farm may be for you. Join now as a "Pioneer" while you prepare for full certification. VWA will waive the \$30 annual administrative fee for the coming year.

If your plan already meets the Tree Farm standard, you may be eligible to enroll as a certified Tree Farm – and we'll still waive the fee. Call the office to get information on how to enroll or check with your forester.

SYNERGY – by definition:
the interaction or cooperation of two or more organizations, substances, or other agents to produce a combined effect greater than the sum of their separate effects.

SYNERGY – by example:
VT WOODLANDS AND
VT TREE FARM



Are you a Tree Farmer who is NOT a VWA member? Now is a great time to join.

Do you:

- Have a desire to leave the land better than you found it
- Wish to learn more about sound forest management
- Want to be part of an organization that advocates for private landowners
- Have a stewardship ethic that makes you proud

Vermont Woodlands Association may be for you. Join now and get your first year of membership, with your compliments.

Call the office to arrange for our complimentary one-year membership. Add your voice to our nearly 900 woodland owner members.

Kathleen 802-747-7900 or email info@vermontwoodlands.org

Star Date May 1, 2021: Sing it with Me!

*“Summertime, Summertime, Sum Sum
Summertime,
Summertime, Summertime, Sum Sum
Summertime,
Summertime, Summertime, Sum Sum
Summertime, Summertiitime...”*

Now, I hope that all of you sang that out loud and now have it stuck in your head for at least the rest of the day, especially since we keep hearing almost on a daily basis that the Notch is open, no closed, no open, no closed.

Spring has been teasing us a lot, as have summer temperatures this year, only to get interspersed with snow showers. My daffodils and serviceberry have cried a good cry, and my redbud threatens to break but keeps tucking its magenta head

back in its shell. I feel like we are playing the childhood game red light green light, and I keep messing up and have to go back to the starting line. Ah well, it is Vermont after all, and maybe this is more of a traditional spring than we have had in a long time! I prefer the long spring before everyone is complaining about the heat and forgetting these days or the last big snowfall.

With warm temps, the green-gold of spring maples, and woodland wildflower carpets comes bird songs and their babies, more field work, turkey season, wild ramps, black flies, mosquitoes, and, yes, ticks. This year also brings news on the Tree Farm front for inspecting foresters and Tree Farmers alike.

By the official calendar start of summer, all inspectors should have received their Toolkits, with lots of information to support their efforts for the Tree Farm program. If you have not, please contact us so we can get one out to you. Most inspectors should also be trained to the 2021 Standards by the time this newsletter is in your mailbox. If not, other online options may be available in the near future. The best part is that inspectors are certified for the full length of the new standards, usually 5 years. No training updates will be required. Thanks to Alex Barrett for coming on board as an inspector facilitator, helping to get you all certified.

LOG, continued on pg. 16



Introducing ... Forest of Recognized Importance (FORI) in Vermont

Under the 2021 Tree Farm Standards of Sustainability, Standard 5 covers Fish, Wildlife, Biodiversity and Forest Health. Included in that standard is Performance Measure 5.4, which states,

“Where present, forest management activities should maintain or enhance forests of recognized

FORI, continued on bottom of pg. 16

LOG, continued from pg. 15

Don't forget we still offer a stipend for completed optional (now named Monitoring) inspections, so make sure once you are re-certified or newly certified as an inspector you take advantage of the available funds before the cache is empty. The new inspection form has finally been renamed to "021" and is a bit longer than the previous 004, but I believe you all are up to the task of completing and submitting them digitally!

Keep Tree Farm inspections in mind as you complete field work through the summer and fall, but also remember

there are still three COVID options available for inspections, for as long as is necessary:

- Option 1: Solo Forestry Professional Assessment with Landowner Follow-up by phone or email.
- Option 2: Solo Forestry Professional Assessment with Live Video or Phone Connection
- Option 3: In-person Engagement and Assessment with Physical Distancing

We had hoped to have a Tree Farm Inspector Field Day this summer, but we are not sure we will be able to make

that happen. If it looks like restrictions are lifted and it can be scheduled amidst everything else that we are scheduling, we will notify you all via email and in the weekly eNews.

Please also check out the "For Inspectors" section of the Vermont Tree Farm website (<https://www.vermonttreefarm.org/for-inspectors/>). All parts of the toolkit are available there, as are blank 021s and updated information regarding the 2021 Standards. If you need any new parts to your toolkit, let us know, and we will get it out to you!



FORI, continued from pg. 15

importance (FORI) ... FORI "represent globally, regionally and nationally significant large landscape areas of exceptional ecological, social, cultural or biological values."

When this was adopted in the 2015-2020 standards, Tree Farm Committees were tasked with identifying FORI in each of their states.

After much discussion and reviewing lists of potential FORI in Vermont, the Tree Farm Committee identified its first and currently only Forest of Recognized Importance, Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historic Park. Many of you also may not know that on May 1, 1956, this property became Vermont's First Tree Farm, making it almost as old as Tree Farm itself at 65 years. I don't know if there are any other states out there with their first Tree Farm still being actively managed and a part of the Tree Farm program!

The Forest Management Plan for MBR states,

"The Mount Tom Forest is significant as the earliest surviving example of planned and managed reforestation in the country and is a key component of the Park's cultural landscape. It is a living exhibit that illustrates the evolution of forest stewardship in America, from the earliest scientific silvicultural practices borrowed from nineteenth-century Europe to contemporary

*practices of sustainable forest management. Nine of the plantations set out by Frederick Billings in the late 1800s still stand. Older trees such as open grown sugar maples that date to the Marsh period and hemlocks over 400 years old can still be found throughout the property. The network of carriage roads designed and built by Billings continues to provide public access to the Park and adjoining public lands, showcase the evolution of forestry on the property, and reveal breathtaking scenery."*¹

Vermont Tree Farm program designated this as a Forest of Recognized Importance for its cultural significance in the history and evolution of forest management in our country. On Monday, August 9, MBR will host a webinar to discuss FORI and the history of management, followed up with a woods walk on Saturday, August 14. Watch your eNews for more information!

¹ Forest Management Plan and Environmental Assessment; Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historic Park, November 1, 2006.

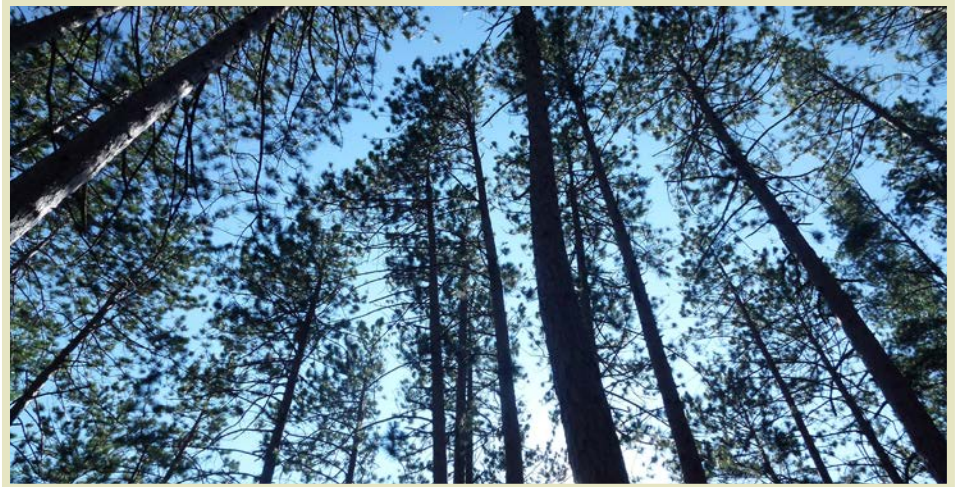
How Did I Come by a Forest Ethic?

by Alan Robertson, *Tree Farmer*

Growing up I never had one. I had moral ethics instilled by my parents, but, having grown up in a semi-suburban/farming region, I never had much thought about the land I lived on.

That changed after college when I ended up in Germany, left the army while still overseas, and became a civilian employee of the US Army. As an engineer responsible for German contractors working on US facilities, and in recreating by running and hiking all over the countryside, I came in contact with a lot of Germans and their personal responsibilities and feelings toward their countryside, still largely forested. As an amateur historian, that fact alone came to my attention. Forests in Germany have been “managed” since about 1200 AD. For several centuries, this management amounted to simply avoiding a wood “famine.” Nothing gets your attention in medieval times like freezing to death for a lack of heating wood or starving because the animals you eat are no longer in the non-existent woods. You quickly gain an appreciation for the presence of forests. Eventually techniques and learning evolved into more formal efforts and the emergence of even-age harvesting schemes and reforestation methods, all based on simply growing as much wood as quickly as possible.

Recognition of the damage this shallow and harmful approach to forestry caused was raised as early as 1817 when Heinrich Cotta commented, “Here and there we admire still the giant oaks and firs, which grew up without any care, while we are perfectly persuaded that we shall never in the same places be able, with any art or care, to reproduce similar trees. The grandsons of those giant trees show the signs of threatening



death before they have attained one quarter of the volume which the old ones contained, and no art nor science can produce on the forest soil which has become less fertile, such forests as are here and there still being cut down...” Germans realized this failure, and, by 1850, new forestry philosophies were beginning to circulate in the country.

But there were other needs for forests that transcended their need for wood, often expressed in the Germans’ love of music, poetry, and literature, as well as the need for social welfare, also as far back as the early Middle Ages. As the country’s population grew, forests became the curtain, shelter, and “space” needed to separate each village from the next. Foresters became revered individuals with the highest respect levels in society and with vast powers because they were responsible for maintaining the resource, beauty, and silence needed by a very populated land. The hundreds of years of the social and material need for the forest built a deep reverence and respect for the woods, and this was clear in any conversation I had in my interactions with Germans. And the more I hiked and walked in Germany, seeing the many forest memorials and cultural

observances, the more I understood their ethic, and it became mine, too.

Webster’s defines a steward as an Anglo-Saxon word: “In Scotland, an officer appointed by the king over special lands belonging to the crown.” A steward doesn’t own the land but is responsible for its condition. A good steward leaves the land in a better condition than he found it. So, my forestland ethic is to try to be a good steward of the forest in line with the respect and love for it I inherited from my experiences in Germany.

In the US, forestland has never been in such a short supply, or ingrained in the culture over the centuries, or so important to the need for physical separation that is found in Europe. Hence the development of a forest ethic culture has been a much longer work in progress with Aldo Leopold being our light and vision on the concept. His writings have helped me realize and express my ethic and responsibilities as a steward of my forest. And so, I think the Land Ethic Vermont’s initiative of having those with a land ethic express their beliefs is an excellent way of helping those with any contact with the forest develop their own ethic.

Women Owning Woodlands (WOW): Building a Vermont Network



The VT WOW Mission: to create opportunities to engage and empower women landowners to help ensure our forests remain a healthy, connected, well-managed resource for all to enjoy.

If you attended our VWA Program Forum on April 29, you heard an excellent presentation by board member and WOW steering committee member Marli Rabinowitz. If you are a woman woodland owner or partner in owning woodlands – whether by choice or circumstance – please check out VT WOW to learn how you can become actively involved.

VWA first learned about women-focused programs from a Pennsylvania forester named Nancy Baker who was part of the PA Women and Their

Woods Program, one of the longest-running women-focused programs in the country. Building on the excitement of this program introduction, VWA held its first event, a weekend forestry school for women, in April 2012 at the Riverledge Farm in Grafton. Twenty-five women spent the weekend together learning, networking, sharing stories, and enjoying the woods and great food. From this stellar launch, you'd think we were off and running ... not so. Network-building is challenging and takes a huge amount of time, energy, commitment, and broad liaisons.

Fast-forward to 2019. The WOW network re-launched with many of the missing variables now intact. The steering committee is eight members strong, representing state agencies, non-profits, and women woodland owners. Together we have accomplished so much. We are committed to connecting you to information, resources, other women landowners, and women

practitioners to help you make informed decisions about the land in your care.

Women are a large and growing segment of the landowner population in Vermont, making land-use decisions on nearly 1.6 million acres of forest. Women are primary owners of about 20% (475,000 acres) and joint owners of 44% (1.1 million acres) providing public benefits like clean water, climate mitigation, wildlife habitat, and forest products. Yet, women are significantly less likely to initiate or participate in forest management activities.

If you want to connect with the WOW network, learn about women-focused resources, and become more actively engaged in forest management, visit us online at <https://ourvermontwoods.org/topic/vt-women-owning-woodlands-network> or send us an email at wownetvt@gmail.com.

Information and Guidance to a Successful Timber Harvest

Timber harvests come with a lot of questions—some answers you need to know, some you don't. To help you answer those important questions about your woods, the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation has created the **Landowner Guides to a Successful Timber Harvest**. They're simple and concise guides that handle topics including: Overview of a timber harvest, Water, Wildlife, Economics, and Working with Foresters and Loggers. Download the series or just the booklets that pertain to you at VTCutwithConfidence.com.





Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund

NEWS FROM VERMONT SUSTAINABLE JOBS FUND

A Vermonter's Approach to Sustainable, Affordable Housing

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

Ten years ago this summer, Hurricane Irene tore through Vermont, leaving massive destruction and flooding in its wake. Among the hardest hit were mobile home parks, where many residents lost everything they owned—including the roof over their head. So, when Steve Davis, a community-minded Hartford builder with a long record of energy efficient construction, got a call from the Vermont Modular Housing Innovation Project, he didn't hesitate to take on a ten-home pilot project to replace homes lost in Irene.

Davis and his team worked with state partners including Efficiency Vermont, the High Meadows Fund, and the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board to design an affordable, modular, net-zero home. Inspired by the models and convinced there was a broad market for the homes, Davis and his niece, Kristen Connors, founded VerMod, a modular home construction company with an emphasis on sustainability and affordability (<https://vermodhomes.com/>).

Over the past decade, VerMod has built more than 100 energy-efficient modular homes for Vermonters, improving on their model and adjusting to customer feedback along the way.

"There is a real need in Vermont for affordable housing," said Connors. "As people downsize or maybe think about purchasing their first home, there is a



Photo by Erica Houskeeper.

lot of interest in energy efficient homes that use natural and low-VOC materials. They are healthier to live in and better for the planet."

For Vermonters, by Vermonters

A sixth generation Vermonter from Hartford Village, Connors sees an opportunity to provide housing for low and middle-income Vermonters. Built with New England weather in mind, the company's solar panels can be prepped

to provide battery storage to ensure homes have power when the sun isn't shining and in the case of power outages. Each VerMod roof is built to withstand Vermont's snow levels, based upon the final destination of the home.

Energy efficiency requires the homes to be tight—especially during cold Vermont

HOUSING, continued on pg. 20

HOUSING, *continued from pg. 19*



Vermod co-founder Kristen Connors envisions a scale of growth over the next decade that benefits and supports the local community. Photo by Erica Houskeeper.

winters when we want to retain as much heat as possible—but they also need to “breathe” and bring in fresh air. The company uses a Conditioning Energy Recovery Ventilator (CERV) to continually monitor VOC’s, pollutants, carbon dioxide, and humidity to ensure healthy air quality.

“It’s a home that requires some education and commitment,” said Connors, who notes that they work with customers on an ongoing basis to ensure the home

functions at its full potential. “We don’t just deliver a home and walk away; we stick with our customers for years to make sure they really understand how to maintain the home.”

While energy efficiency is their focus, VerMod is also careful to use materials and practices that reduce the company’s carbon footprint, and that includes using wood to construct the “good, solid bones of the house.”

“Steel is not our gig,” said Connors. “We live in a place where wood is abundant and we incorporate as much locally-sourced lumber as we can into our homes.” Steel manufacturing is both an energy- and water-intensive process, and a known contributor to global carbon emissions. According to the American Forest Foundation, the manufacturing of steel and concrete emits 15 and 29 percent more carbon dioxide than wood, and generates 300 and 225 percent more water pollutants, respectively. In addition, wood is a renewable resource that stores carbon when used in construction.

More practically, Connors says they like to work with people they know who stand by their product, and their customers like the warmth of wood in their homes. The company sources lumber for wood framing, flooring, and paneling locally



Rick Broughton makes wood boxes at Vermod, a modular home construction company with an emphasis on energy efficiency and affordability. Photo by Erica Houskeeper.



An employee puts the final touches on a Vermod house on Route 14 in Sharon. Photo by Erica Houskeeper.

from Goodro Lumber in Killington (<https://goodro-lumber.com/>) and Baker Lumber in Hartford (<https://www.bakerlumber.net/>). Connor's own VerMod home was built using beams and hemlock siding milled from trees cleared on her property, and the additional timber was passed on to another VerMod homeowner.

The Future of Affordable Housing

Sustainability is not only the goal for each VerMod home, but for the company itself. Connors and Davis envision a scale of growth over the next decade that benefits and supports the Hartford community, and allows them to be creative with their designs. "We live in a tourist town that is filled with working-class people," said Connors. "There is such a need for affordable housing in Vermont and we really believe our contribution and impact in the long-term is building those homes in a way that is healthier for people and the planet."

The recently constructed Davis Towers in Hartford offer a glimpse into their vision—colorful, compact, and highly-efficient. "We want VerMod to benefit communities," said Connors. "Single moms, hard-working middle-class families, retired people on a fixed income looking to downsize their homes and carbon footprint—that's our market. We want to have fun building these homes and, hopefully, leave behind a legacy of

energy-efficient, affordable housing in our community."

About the Vermont Forest Industry Network

Vermont's forest products industry generates an annual economic output of \$1.4 billion and supports 10,500 jobs in forestry, logging, processing, specialty woodworking, construction and wood heating. Forest-based recreation adds an additional \$1.9 billion and 10,000 jobs to Vermont's economy. The Vermont Forest Industry Network creates the space for industry professionals from across the entire supply chain and trade association partners throughout the state to build stronger relationships and collaboration throughout the industry, including helping to promote new and existing markets for Vermont wood products, from high-quality furniture to construction material to thermal biomass products such as chips and pellets. Learn more or join at www.vsjf.org.

For COVID-19 updates from the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation, please visit <https://fpr.vermont.gov/covid-19>.



Welcome New VWA Members

Barbara & Sebastian Scripps,
New Canaan, CT

Josiah Wintermute,
Budd Lake, NJ

Marge Gulyas,
Waterbury, VT

Dennis & Allison Mewes,
Dummerston, VT

Tyler Cote,
So. Burlington, VT

Sarah Ford,
Stowe, VT

Robert Nelson,
Randolph Ctr, VT



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NEW MEMBER APPLICATION

(Note: existing members will receive an invoice)

Vermont Woodlands is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation whose mission is to educate and advocate for the practices of productive stewardship, use, and enjoyment of Vermont's woodlands. We achieve our mission by delivering programs for landowners, the public, and policy makers that support forest health, forest economy, wildlife habitat, recreation, and enjoyment of forests for today and for generations to come.

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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Address _____

Town _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone _____ FAX _____ Email _____

Woodland town(s) _____ County(ies) _____

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

Forester _____

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

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



YOUR HARD WORK INSPIRES US TO DO OUR BEST EVERY DAY.

We know how challenging things have been for all of our farming and forest products families and we're proud of our small role in helping you keep workers working, equipment running, and operations running smoothly.

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