



News from the Forest

July, 2001

Some things are worth waiting for. It's taken awhile for VFF to emerge from its formation stage, but it looks like we are getting there. During the past few months, we've made progress on both the ecological and economic fronts of our mission. Though we haven't arrived yet, we can see more clearly what needs to be done. It hasn't been easy, but we are receiving support from a lot of people in the community. Thank you for that.

Ecological Timber Sales

VFF is participating in several relationships that led to timber sales over the past few months. As you know, VFF landowners provided wood to the **Lake Champlain Maritime Museum** to build rowing gigs. Chris Granstrom, a VFF landowner, followed the boat project from start to finish and wrote an excellent article for the Summer 2001 issue of *Northern Woodlands* magazine. If you haven't seen the article, you can call 802-439-6292 to order a copy.

VFF is also working to provide the museum with wood for their next big project, an 1862-class canal schooner. It was during the search for white oak logs for the schooner that VFF encountered an interesting situation:

Shelburne Farms was one of the VFF landowners who expressed interest in providing wood for the schooner. Marshall Webb, who manages the Farm's forests, requested VFF's help in assessing the biological sensitivity of a white oak stand in Church Woods before harvesting the timber. VFF provided a biologist, Mark Lapin, who made a preliminary assessment of the parcel.

The team went out looking for harvestable timber but instead, *they found a rare, old-growth forest—right in Chittenden County!* The research team determined that Church Woods is a unique example of a "clay-plain forest," and that the white oaks were at least 240 years old. This means Church Woods is older than the U.S. republic and has stood since the first Europeans settled Vermont. Quite an exciting find.

VFF and Shelburne Farms are now planning a symposium to discuss ways private landowners can afford to preserve rare and sensitive natural communities. The event is planned for October 4th at the Farm—we'll keep you informed.

VFF has also provided Ted Ingram and **Shelburne Museum** with hemlock timber that Ted is using to build a replica of an English barn at the museum.

Our work with **Middlebury College** on LaForce Hall continues. VFF is providing a large quantity of birch and beech to be used as flooring, ceilings, wall panels, cabinets, and trim for the building.

Ecological Forestry Grants

VFF and our Ford partners, the Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund and the National Wildlife Federation, have established a mini-grant program to help aspiring stewards prepare their forest land for certification. We sought the help of the Otter Creek Audubon Society and Lewis Creek Association to target 26 forested parcels (about 5000 acres); 18 landowners have been contacted; and 6 applications covering 1181 acres have been approved for cost-sharing grants. If you haven't heard about the program, get in touch with us for details.

VFF Web Site

Our site, familyforests.org, is up and running, though we still have a lot of work to complete to fill out all our details. Our report on Middlebury College, the *Field Guide to Bicentennial Hall*, is now available on the site. Check it out!

Green Chainsaw Lubricant

Chris Davis (545-2156) and Stephen Taylor (453-5916) have Green Plus Bar and Chain Lubricant for sale. This non-toxic, non-polluting product also extends bar and chain life. Chris and Stephen are selling it at cost: \$10 per gallon and \$42 per five-gallon pail.

Highlights of other VFF activities over the past few months

Vermont Family Forests:

- Initiated GIS mapping, developing a template that summarizes existing data and ownership objectives for management planning.
- Approved 7 Timber Harvesting Plans and Summaries and issued certificates for 7 commercial timber sales.
- Updated 2 forest management plans on 113.5 forested acres and began revisions of 3 plans involving 1110 acres.
- Made presentation on VFF to the Waitsfield Planning Group involving Vermont Land Trust, the Select Board, and Mad River Conservation Group.
- Made presentation to 15 Tinmouth landowners who are exploring options for a landowner association and possible affiliation with VFF.
- Obtained an anonymous grant of \$500 through the Vermont Community Foundation. Thank You!
- Applied for USDA funding to explore a log aggregation/sort yard.
- Researched and implemented an easy-to-use system for bar coding logs.
- Initiated a project involving school children, a local logger, sawmill, and wood worker to provide lumber from Starksboro Town Forest for the town library.



The next big challenge for VFF is figuring out how to manage timber value-adding work in a commercially feasible way. We know that VFF can't be a non-profit lumber company, and we know this work must be done professionally.

Any ideas?