



News from the Forest

Spring 2008



Message from the Founder

We at Vermont Family Forests know that a great deal is required if we are to conserve the health, productivity, and beauty of Vermont's privately-held forests in this age of rapidly changing climate and peaking fuel supplies. In fact, we need to manifest a bold new relationship with forests, because climate change requires culture change. VFF's *raison d'être* is to befriend the forest and to help usher in that change.

One key element required in this culture change is the recognition that forests do not need us as much as we need them. What forests do require of us is that we place reasonable demands upon them so as not to undermine the ecological functions and values by which family forests maintain themselves as healthy natural systems. Keeping a much closer eye on the soil, water, biological diversity, and vitality of our forests must be our first priority in the new culture.

VFF advances these notions in three primary ways. First, we help forest stewards to be better informed. We do this through offering workshops ranging from wood energy efficiency

to natural community mapping to sustainable fuelwood harvesting. Second, we help forest stewards get higher financial returns from their stewardship. We do this by connecting stewards more directly with customers that "get it" through our certified Family Forest® flooring and firewood products and more. Third, we help our community celebrate forests through a host of events ranging from Winter Solstice to Beltane to Best Night to Natural Forest Burials.

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as we need them.**

We are joined in our conservation efforts by friends including Addison County Relocation Network or ACoRN, the Colby Hill Ecological Project, the Green Mountain Club, the Watershed Center, the Vermont Land Trust, and many others. We celebrate the fact that the Vermont Reptile and Amphibian Atlas Project now resides at VFF.

So thank you for joining us in thinking and acting locally and holistically and for recognizing that the pathways to forest conservation are as diverse, numerous, and sometimes circuitous as those of an old growth forest! We hope you enjoy reading this and may the forest be with you!

David Brynn
Executive Director





Colby Hill Ecological Project Update

Colby Hill Ecological Project has been documenting biodiversity at our research site in Lincoln for a decade. Under the watchful eyes of numerous researchers, we've mapped forest and wetland ecosystems and have collected data on small, medium, and large mammals, amphibians and reptiles, birds, and insects including beetles, dragonflies, butterflies, and springtails. A highlight of 2007 was the installation of a weather station to monitor the local climate. Beginning in 2008 we will monitor phenology (seasonal timing) of spring blooms and leaf flush, and we will participate in a study testing three methods for detecting medium mammals (track plates, hair snares, and camera traps). This long-term commitment to documenting so many aspects of nature on self-willed lands is made possible by the vision of Lester and



Monique Anderson and the hard work of the researchers involved. We all know that ecosystems are extremely complex, and it therefore takes a long time to understand how their components interact. We've seen plenty of fluctuation in numbers of animals of many species and are set to use the first ten years as a great foundation for continued observation of changes and discernment of patterns on the forever-wild lands of these old hill farms.

VFF and Vermont Reptile and Amphibian Atlas Project Join Forces

The Vermont Reptile and Amphibian Atlas Project has joined forces with Vermont Family Forests (VFF). According to Project Coordinator Jim Andrews, *The Vermont Herp Atlas* began in 1994 as an effort to gather the data needed to make informed recommendations regarding the appropriate status and conservation of reptiles and amphibians in Vermont. Since then, the goals have been broadened to incorporate public education, encourage citizen involvement, and promote conservation. The goal of the *Atlas* is to gather and disseminate data on reptiles and amphibians in a way that involves and informs Vermont residents, landowners, and land managers, so that they will become more educated, effective stewards of wildlife and wildlife habitat.

Current Use - Report & Presentation

In 2007 the Vermont State Legislature directed the Legislative Council to hire a consultant to conduct a thorough and independent review of the use value appraisal program to determine its effectiveness. Deb Brighton was hired to conduct the study and VFF was asked to assist in that effort. A multi-disciplinary team was assembled including Deb Brighton, Glenn Rogers, and Martha Sullivan as well as VFF's Executive Director David Brynn and Forester Brendan Weiner. The study was completed in October of 2007 and is available on our website. In sum, we found that the program achieved its statutory goal of encouraging and assisting in the maintenance of productive forest land. However, we suggested changes in the program that would allow enrollment and conservation of more ecologically sensitive lands including wetlands and rare natural communities. In January

of 2008, the results of the study were presented to the legislature by Deb Brighton, David Brynn, and Glenn Rogers. David Brynn made a presentation highlighting the functions and values of Vermont's forests, the challenges facing those forests, and the effectiveness of the use value appraisal program in meeting some of those challenges.



Community Wood Energy

VFF's Community Wood Energy Project is in full swing. The project has four primary goals: Sustainable production, Efficient use, Local sourcing, and Fair and equitable access (SELF). VFF co-sponsored a well attended Community Wood Energy and Biomass Fuel session at the Jericho Research Forest in February. UVM Master's Candidate Emily Schadler coordinated the event, which included a forwarder logging demonstration by Paul Cate and wood-fired flatbread production by Kelly and Scott Hamshaw. VFF Intern and UVM Master's Candidate Erin Quigley worked with Caroline Camara's Mount Abraham Union High School (MAUHS) class to conduct a pre-harvest assessment at Lynn and Willy Osborn's family forest in Lincoln (see map on page 3). Existing access roads and riparian zones were examined and upgrades designed. Students from the UVM Applied Forest Conservation Class conducted detailed stand analyses, developed a plan, and marked a small portion of the area for harvest. Dennis Weaver, an excellent logging operator



from Starksboro, has been clearing the new trails—with a bit of help from his father, David—and putting up log length firewood. The best fuelwood will be sold as Family Forest® firewood. The lower quality polewood will be chipped and sent to MAUHS. Some mature hardwood timber will be converted into flooring and millwork and the site will be used as part of a Community Wood Energy charette to be co-hosted with the Forest Guild in April.

Family Forest® Flooring Update

We continue to sell flooring on a pilot basis and customers are raving about it. As readers may recall, we conducted several timber sales and generated about 23,000 square feet of hardwood flooring. Partners in this project include the Vermont Land Trust and Middlebury College. Folks have been coming into the VFF offices to see our samples and to learn about the forests from which the flooring came. American beech continues to be a favorite. Much of the beech came from David and Louise Brynn's forest in Bristol. David remembers getting up in the middle of a crystal clear night to skid the logs down his then-frozen driveway! If you have a flooring project in the offing, give us a call!

SUSTAINABLE FORESTRY

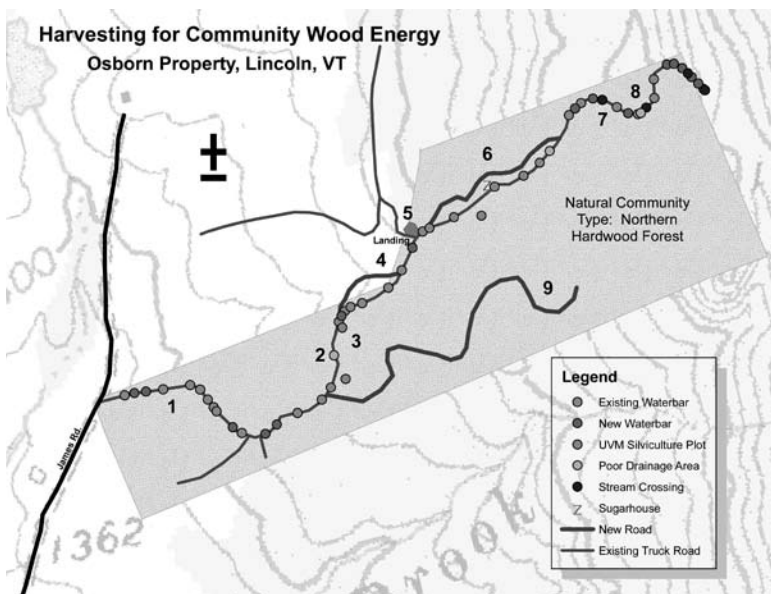
Certification Update

VFF successfully completed our 2007 audit. This marks our tenth year of being certified by SmartWood as meeting the Forest Stewardship Council's standards for sustainable forestry. We are due for a full audit in 2008 and are looking forward to that. After reviewing our forest management checklist in light of organic forestry standards, the VFF Board recently voted to pursue organic woodland certification (see page 4). VFF's checklist has already been called *the green standard*. So what will we need to change in the forest? Not much. We will need to move from "strongly encouraging" to "requiring" the use of biodegradable bar and chain lubricants. Most VFF landowners are doing this already and professional loggers like Bill Torrey are as well. This process will take some effort but we are committed to completing this in 2008. Stay tuned.



Forestry Services Expanded

VFF now offers a full suite of forestry services including initial recon, forest inventory, forest management planning, GIS mapping, access design and construction, commercial harvests, and invasive species removal to name a few. If you have an interest in practicing family forestry™ on your lands, just give us a call. We also have bar and chain oil, cruising sticks, a complete reference library and more to assist you in achieving your family forest conservation goals.



Left: Pre-treatment assessment of existing and new access at Lynn and Willy Osborn's family forest in Lincoln.



Vermont Family Forests™ is a nonprofit education organization whose mission is to conserve the health of the forest community and, when appropriate, to promote the careful cultivation of local family forests for community benefit.

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VFF GOES ORGANIC

One of the things that makes Vermont Family Forests special is our commitment to forest health. The VFF Board of Directors has re-affirmed our commitment to this core mission by embracing our principles and our forest management checklist.

In application, these principles and practices result in forests with: clean, clear, cold waters; uncompacted, stable soils rich in organic matter; diverse biology; and the capacity to resist invasive exotics.

VFF uses nature as our model and we are always attempting to learn lessons from self-willed, wild forests. We've been strong advocates for the use of bio-based lubricants and appropriately-sized equipment and for leaving plenty of snags, dens and large downed wood. We have strictly avoided use of synthetic pesticides—including and perhaps especially Monsanto's Roundup—and the practice of whole tree harvesting.

Doing these things makes VFF organic. The VFF Board intends for us to be independently certified as organic as soon as is reasonable. This is good news for VFF and the forest! Stay tuned.

BRISTOL BEST NIGHT

VFF co-sponsored Bristol Best Night for a second year. Why? Because hosting the event allowed new folks to become aware of our conservation work. Also, providing home-grown entertainment close to home reduces fossil fuel consumption and the associated depletion of base cations such as calcium in forest soils. Less technically, Bristol Best Night allows us to celebrate our community with friends. This year we had two venues: Bristol Town Hall and the Bristol Baptist Church. Planning for next year's event is already underway and a third venue will be added. Mark your calendars and tell your friends!

(photos by Jonathan Blake)



UPCOMING EVENTS: WORKSHOPS, EXPLORATIONS AND CELEBRATIONS

NATURAL FOREST BURIAL:

Examining the potential for establishing a natural burial ground at the Waterworks Property

- WHERE?** The Walkover Gallery on Main Street in Bristol
WHEN? April 13, 2008 at 3:00 pm
COST? Free and open to the public. Refreshments will be served.

The Watershed Center and VFF are co-sponsoring an event to explore the establishment of a natural burial ground at the Waterworks Property. Guest speakers will include Lisa Carlson, executive director of the nonprofit Funeral Ethics Organization and Pieter van Loon, stewardship forester with the Vermont Land Trust. The exploration is being held as part of The Watershed Center's (TWC) annual meeting.

TWC's Waterworks Property is a 664-acre forest in Bristol and New Haven, Vermont. It is the site of careful forest stewardship, outdoor recreation, and long-term research. The property is conserved in perpetuity through a conservation easement held by the Vermont Land Trust and is enrolled in the VFF pool of certified forests.

For more information about the other organizations involved, please visit the appropriate website. (www.funeraethics.org, www.vlt.org, and www.naturalburial.coop)

AMPHIBIANS IN THE SELF-WILLED FOREST

- WHERE?** VFF office* then Waterworks Property
WHEN? June 7, 2008, 8:30am - 1:00pm
Meet at the VFF office for muffins and hot beverages and a one-hour slide show. Then we're off to see the critters!
COST? Free and open to the public.

Please join us for a hands-on workshop with Jim Andrews, Vermont's premier herpetologist and coordinator of the Vermont Reptile and Amphibian Atlas Project. After a slide-show, we'll carpool to the 664-acre Waterworks Property on Plank Road in Bristol and New Haven to search for, find, identify, and handle these spectacular critters. *Please note: Children are welcome but pets are not. Please dress for the weather.*

The workshop is co-sponsored by VFF, The Watershed Center, and The Vermont Reptile and Amphibian Atlas Project. Visit the Vermont Reptile and Amphibian Atlas Project online at <http://community.middlebury.edu/~herpatlas> to order new amphibian posters available soon.

*VFF is located upstairs in the Old Bristol High School on the green in downtown Bristol.

2008 ADDISON COUNTY CONSERVATION CONGRESS

Our Community in Transition: Visioning, Networking, and Empowering Community in the Face of Rapidly Changing Climate, Peaking Oil, & Growing Economic Instability

VFF brought back the Conservation Congress in 2007 after a ten year breather. It was well received and plans are underway for another Congress to be held at Mount Abraham Union High School on **October 25, 2008**. Addison County Relocalization Network (ACoRN) will serve as the co-sponsor. Steering committee members include: Jeff Jones, David Brynn, Jonathan Corcoran, Graham Pringle, Barbara Tam, and Netaka White. We will begin with the assumption that global climate change and peaking oil are here. After applying a rich and engaging stewardship process in several concurrent sessions, we will draft and adopt a "Blueprint for the Transition," which will summarize the key findings of the day.

GAME OF LOGGING

The Game of Logging training program combines Scandinavian logging techniques with the latest systems for working safely around trees. We cannot overstate the value of these training courses. We've had participants who have used chainsaws for 30 years prior to taking GOL Level I say that the course changed the way they work in the woods. The spring sessions are fully booked. A registration form for Fall 2008 is available on our website or call VFF to register.

- Level I:** October 7 (2 sessions) (rain date 10/9)
Level II: October 9 (rain date 10/16)
Level III: October 16 (rain date 10/23)

BELTANE COMMUNITY CELEBRATION

The 5th Annual Beltane Community Celebration will happen again this year at The Waterworks Property on Plank Road in Bristol. "Beltane" means bright fire. This year's bright fire is set for **May 1, 2008**, starting at **5 pm**. Join us on the shores of the Norton Brook Reservoir to celebrate the return of spring. We'll gather for a bonfire, potluck dinner, May pole dance, and music by druids Bruce Catlin and Jeff Pratt of the Hibernators. Bring your children and your friends, a dish to share, a musical instrument and flashlight if you like, and celebrate spring! (*Please leave pets at home.*)

For more information about any of these events, please visit our website at www.familyforests.org or call 802/453-7728.



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VFF PRODUCTS

Vermont Family Forests stocks a variety of products to help you practice ecologically sustainable forestry. We sell **Greenplus® Environmentally Safe Lubricants** including Non-Petroleum Bar and Chain Oil. Non-toxic and non-carcinogenic, each gallon of Greenplus Bar and Chain Oil can protect up to 2,000,000 gallons of groundwater from pollution. Also, its superior lubrication qualities extend bar and chain life. VFF has both gallons (\$17) and 5-gallon pails (\$65) available.

VFF Cruising Sticks make great gifts! We have added the all-important log and tree grading specifications to the stick. This is useful in determining log value and the acceptability of trees as timber growing stock. Sticks are made out of VFF-certified maple and cost \$15.



Our highly fashionable **VFF t-shirts** are available in adult (\$12) and youth (\$10) sizes. Gorgeous **hardwood pens** (\$25) crafted from a variety of species are made in Bristol by Louise Brynn.

