This past year has been an exceptionally exciting and productive one for Vermont Family Forests. With the help of our many supporters and partners, we have accomplished solid work in our focus areas of Ecological Family Forestry, Research & Demonstration, Community Forestry, and Public Education.

Brendan Weiner, VFF’s Conservation Forester, helped us expand the VFF land base significantly. We participated in research ranging from the Colby Hill Ecological Project to VFF’s NeighborWood Project. We assisted in the long-term conservation of key community forests, including The Waterworks Property in Bristol and our own 84-acre forest in West Twinmouth. And we had a banner year in public education programs, including ten Game of Logging courses, four courses at UVM and Middlebury College, and mentoring a variety of interns.

The most unique—and perhaps most outrageous—thing we did in 2011 was to launch Hogback Community College. The idea was to found a true community college that would, in the words of co-founder John Elder, “celebrate and sustain our community through offering a diverse, changing array of useful and attractive courses.”

Our goal was to tap local expertise and to offer courses that would go into much greater depth than our workshops could. We wanted to make this community college affordable and relevant for students, while also adequately compensating instructors. We wanted to focus much more on applied learning and to use existing infrastructure—conference rooms, living rooms, and forests—as class rooms.

In February, John Elder taught the first Hogback Community College course, entitled Frost in the Forest. After exploring Frost’s poetic expression in two frosty forests of the Hogback, students returned to the Elder’s comfy fire to ponder the construction and meaning of numerous poems. John’s students raved about the experience and begged for a repeat!

Herpetologist Jim Andrews followed with Conserving Reptiles and Amphibians. One student put it this way: “Jims’ course was terrific. I loved the field time. A great learning opportunity!” From May to September, Liz Thompson led Wildflowers and Where They Grow in the Hogback Ecoregion, and her course, too, was warmly received—“I very much appreciated the depth of knowledge the instructor has and her teaching style. Classes were informative and fun!”

Shelley Gustafson’s Wetland of the Hogback Ecoregion was a big hit as well. “The course was wonderful in all regards. Shelley encourages her students to think critically about what they are seeing in the field and builds their skills and confidence as she does this.”

Real change will likely come from the margins, from the bottom up, and from the inside out.

Our sincere hope is that our community college will manifest some of that change from our special vantage point on the Hogback. We thank you for your continued interest and support for Hogback Community College in particular and for Vermont Family Forests in general.

May the forest be with you!

David J. Brynn
Community Forests

Vermont Family Forests was actively involved in several community forest conservation projects. Jack and Linda Viertel donated their 84-acre West Tinmouth forest to VFF. The parcel is located in the Taconic Mountains Biophysical Region, and it reaches 2,400 feet. In the short-term, we inventoried the Tinmouth Mountain Community Forest and enrolled it in the Vermont Use Value Assessment Program. VFF assisted with conserving the 48-acre Lost Lake Forest just northwest of the Waterworks in Bristol. The conservation easement will provide protection for Indiana bat habitat and uncommon oak forest communities, as well as non-vehicular, recreational access for the public. The easement will be held by the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department.

Research & Demonstration

Vermont Family Forests completed its work on its FamilyForest® NeighborWood™ project, as part of the UVM Community Biomass Project. We tested several practices, including: 1. Lump-sum plus timber sale method; 2. Forwarding; 3. Degree and cost of compliance with the VFF Forest Health Conservation Checklist; 4. Accessing worker’s compensation for small logging operators; 5. Firewood grading; and 6. Customer satisfaction levels.

Dr. Marc Lapin continued to direct the Colby Hill Ecological Project (CHEP) in Lincoln under the auspices of Vermont Family Forests. Field work in 2011 included research on reptiles and amphibians, flora phenology, breeding birds, and mammals. 2011 marked the lowest breeding bird count since CHEP research began in 1998 (18 species), but also saw the addition of the rare water shrew to the small mammal roster. Work also continued on Rewilding the Working Landscape: First Lessons from a Self-willed Family Forest, a publication that looks at real-world applications of CHEP research in local family forests.

Jim Andrews continued work on the Vermont Reptiles and Amphibians Atlas Project under the auspices of Vermont Family Forests. In 2010 alone, over 500 volunteers contributed more than 4,000 new records of Vermont’s reptiles and amphibians to the Atlas, originating from every county in Vermont.

Using the Vermont Family Forests model and associated templates, we assisted in the Forest Stewardship Council’s certification of the 464-acre UVM Jericho Research Forest. We also designed a process to convert over 26,000 board feet of mixed hardwood and Japanese larch sawtimber from the Jericho Research Forest into lumber for the renovation of UVM’s Aiken Center. Many students took part in all stages of the project.

Ecological Family Forestry

Brendan Weiner and Caitlin Cusack (VFF Conservation Foresters) and David Brynn have been busy inventorying forests, updating forest conservation plans, and applying forest conservation practices. We have worked on three USDA Wildlife Habitat Improvement Projects and three commercial timber sales. We are now working with Robert J. Turner Company to enhance our GIS inventory and mapping capacities.

Public Education

Vermont Family Forests successfully completed five courses under its new Hogback Community College with more than 60 students attending over 1100 hours of instruction. We served as a Community Partner for a Fall 2010 Environmental Studies Course at Middlebury College, entitled Conserving Water Quality While Harvesting More Forest Biomass in the Headwaters of the Five-Town Forest. We hosted ten Game of Logging training sessions with over 100 people participating in 800 hours of instruction.

Vermont Family Forests also served as a Community Partner for the UVM Natural Resources 206 course, in which students evaluated and designed a short-term residential facility for the UVM Jericho Research Forest. Partnering with Ralph Tursini, David Brynn instructed eight sections of the Woodturning and Forest Conservation course. David also served as Community Partner for Josh Benes’ senior thesis, entitled Community Forests as Visionary Engines.

Celebrating Forests

The annual Beltane celebration (held May 1st) and Winter Solstice celebration (held December 21st) at the Waterworks Property are two examples of our efforts to celebrate forests with music, food, spirit of all types, song, poetry, and theatrics.

VFF Products

Vermont Family Forests continues to sell BioLube brand chainsaw bar and & chain oil. Made from canola oil, the BioLube CBC extends bar and chain life, reduces groundwater pollution, and is non-carcinogenic. Our cruising sticks and Town Forest Health Check publications were popular items as well!

A touch of Celtic pageantry at the 2011 Beltane Celebration.

2011 Annual Report ǀ  page 2
FINANCIAL STATEMENT  October 1, 2010 – September 21, 2011

INCOME

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Project Partners

Bristol Best Night
Bristol Conservation Commission
Forest Guild
International Society of Ethnobiology
Lake Champlain Maritime Museum
Lincoln Conservation Commission
Lincoln Library
Middlebury College
Monkton Conservation Commission
Mount Abraham Union High School
New Haven Planning Commission
Northeast Woodland Training
Starksboro Conservation Commission
The University of Vermont
The Watershed Center
Tinmouth Land Trust
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
Vermont Reptile and Amphibian Atlas Project

Staff Changes

Vermont Family Forests is a tiny organization. When someone leaves or arrives, it is a very big deal. Brendan Weiner, VFF’s Conservation Forester for the past three years, has moved with his family to Bozeman, Montana. Brendan did an exceptional job of working with new landowners, developing forest conservation plans, and expanding the VFF land base. We wish Brendan and family all the best in Montana and have our fingers crossed that we’ll see them back this way one day.

We are pleased to report that Caitlin Cusack has taken on the role of VFF Conservation Forester. Caitlin worked at Vermont Family Forests when she was a Masters candidate at the Yale Forestry School. Caitlin has hit the ground running, focusing her work on meeting landowners, inventorying and mapping forests, and writing forest management plans. Welcome back Caitlin!

And last but not least, E. Callie Brynn will be joining VFF to help on a number of fronts. Callie has excellent computer, graphics, and cartography skills, and she will be helping us with our mapping needs. We look forward to the maps generated by this gifted artist.
Thank You to Our Supporters~

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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.

Staff
Jim Andrews, Research Associate
Deb Brighton, Research Associate
David Brynn, Executive Director
Caitlin Cusack, Conservation Forester
Marc Lapin, Research Associate
Sandra Murphy, Rewilding Project Associate

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Deb Brighton
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Vermont Family Forests
P.O. Box 254
Bristol, VT 05443
TEL: 802-453-7728
FAX: 802-453-7729
info@familyforests.org
www.familyforests.org

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