



News from the Forest

Spring 2005

Principles of Family Forestry

by David Brynn

In 1995, VFF coined the phrase *family forest* to describe a subset of the non-industrial private forests. Shortly thereafter, Vermont Family Forests obtained a federally registered trademark on the brand Family Forest®. But what is a family forest anyway?

Merriam and Webster tell us that *family*, when used as an adjective, means "of or for a family," and a *family* (noun) is "all the people or creatures living in the same house or habitat." *Forest* is defined as a "thickly wooded natural community." So a logical definition of a family forest is "a thickly wooded natural community of or for all of the creatures living there."

In Vermont, 78% of the state is forested, and public forests-including National and State Forests and Parks, as well as municipal forests-account for about 12% of the state's forestland. Private forests, both industrial and non-industrial, make up the remainder. Non-industrial private forests, or "NIPFs," account for about 63% of the state's forestland. There are over 80,000 NIPFs in

Vermont, ranging from 100 to 500 acres.

It follows that just as there are differences in forest ownership, one can anticipate differences in the forestry practiced on those ownerships. Industrial forestry might consider appropriate such practices as whole tree harvesting, the use of synthetic pesticides and genetically modified organisms, and even-aged management and large clearcuts. Terms one commonly hears used in industrial forestry are *wise use* and *forest resource*.

Family forestry, on the other hand, considers appropriate practices that attempt to mimic natural disturbance. These include leaving large dead wood and legacy trees, using non-petroleum lubricants, employing all-aged management practices and leaving hunks of forest alone to be "self-willed." In family forestry, forests are described as *forest communities* and not as *forest resources*.

Vermont Family Forests has adopted a set of principles to guide the practice of family forestry.

Vermont Family Forests principles:

ALL MEMBERS of the forest community have inherent value.

AS MEMBERS of the forest community, people have legitimate needs for the economic, ecological, and social values of forests.

THE NEEDS OF PEOPLE-like those of all other earthly beings-should not exceed ecological carrying capacities.

RECYCLING, SUBSTITUTION, AND DURABLE USES of forest products should be promoted.

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VERMONT FAMILY FORESTS™

Vermont Family Forests™ is a non-profit 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. We accomplish this mission through public education, forest certification, and research and demonstration projects.

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Family Forestry (continued from page 1)

HEALTHY FORESTS have the capacity for self-renewal.

WORKING LANDSCAPES should include interconnected forest reserves and sustainably-managed forests.

ECOLOGICAL FORESTRY practices should conserve biodiversity, water quality, site productivity, carbon storage, and scenic beauty; use only biological pest control; and mimic natural processes.

ECONOMICALLY-SECURE, WELL-INFORMED family forest stewards- including landowners and the loggers and foresters who assist them-are most capable of practicing ecologically sustainable forestry and of making continuous improvement.

LOCAL FOREST PRODUCTS-from ecologically sustainable forestry operations-should be promoted over non-native products.

PUBLIC forests and family forests should complement the functions and values of one another.

LOCAL VALUE-ADDING NETWORKS-including empowered family forest friends and stewards, wood using businesses, and loyal forest product customers-are essential to the well-being of the forest community and should be encouraged.

GREEN CERTIFICATION - of local family forests and the value-adding networks in which they participate - serves as a foundation on which even higher, local standards should be built. ♪

David Brynn is VFF's Founder and Director of Family Forestry.

Shade Tree Fertilizer

Return a Gift to Your Sugar Maples

It's spring! Vermont's sugar maples have, once again, filled our buckets with sap. Maple buds are swelling, and delicate flowers unfurling. We receive the sugar maple's gifts year-round-shade and beauty in summer, colored splendor in autumn, bare elegance and superb firewood in winter. Not to mention nutrient cycling, carbon sequestration, oxygen production, water filtering, wildlife habitat, and the myriad other ways it participates in the forest community.

But many natural and human-caused stressors can reduce maple tree vigor-namely drought, heavy grazing, soil compaction from vehicles, over-tapping, road salt, and acid depo-

sition. Acid deposition-what we commonly call acid rain-is a key culprit in weakening sugar maples since, as soils acidify, critical minerals leach away. A maple tree weakened by stressors is more vulnerable to insect defoliation, root rot, decay, and twig blight.

VFF stocks an organic shade tree fertilizer, created for us by North Country Organics, that can boost the health of your sugar maples. This custom blend of phosphate rock, dolomite, calcium limestone flour, and sulfate of potash costs \$19 per 50-pound bag.

We recommend using two pounds of fertilizer per inch of tree diameter, applied twice a year (spring and late summer). ♪



From Forest to Finished Vessel

Launch Set for New Maritime Museum Gig

by Nick Patch, Director of Outdoor Education, Lake Champlain Maritime Museum

On Thursday, May 26th at 11 AM we will ceremoniously launch our newest rowing gig *Eclipse*. *Eclipse* is a 25' Whitehall-style gig for four rowers and a coxswain, designed by Mike McEvoy. Construction is traditional lapstrake with white pine planking and white oak back-bone, with a black locust transom thrown in for good measure. We will begin our parade from the green at the Maritime Museum, then walk to the launch ramp at Basin Harbor, where students boat builders will speak and *Eclipse* will slip into Lake Champlain for the first time. We invite you all to join us for this exciting event.

Eight students from the Diversified Occupations program at The Hannaford Career Center in Middlebury, Vermont, have worked day in and day out to complete this magnificent boat. The positive attitudes and work ethic of these students have been truly inspirational to all of us fortunate enough to work with them.

Trees for Tomorrow's Gigs

Half of *Eclipse's* planking came from Mike Quinn's VFF-certified forest. For the past four years, Vermont Family Forests has been our primary source of boat building lumber for our rowing gigs. It is very hard to find quality boat building lum-

ber in the right length and width, that we know is harvested in a responsible and sustainable fashion. It is essential to locate, saw, and put up to dry lumber a year in advance of the next project.

This winter the Ferrisburgh Conservation Commission generously allowed us to log three white pine and two white oak trees from the Ferrisburgh town forest land and donated the logs to the Maritime Museum. Mike Quinn of the conservation commission and David Brynn of Vermont Family Forests donated their time and equipment to fell and skid the trees. We also received some beautiful pine logs from Tom Kenyon of Monkton. Tom logged these off of his property himself and delivered them to the Museum. All of these logs will be sawn on site by Leo Boutin of Williston. This lumber will be used in the rowing gig we are scheduled to build next winter. This was truly a community effort, and I can't tell you how much we appreciate everyone's support.

This amazing confluence of activities has allowed us to share in very real terms with our students, boat building from forest to finished boat. I can think of no better way to teach and encourage people to respect our environment and understand the need to balance our need for raw materials with respect for the natural environment. ❧



Middlebury Natural Foods Co-op Display

If you've shopped in the new Middlebury Natural Foods Cooperative on Washington Street in Middlebury, you've likely seen the inviting dining area at the front of the store. The dining area's long, curved bench and round table tops are made from VFF certified yellow birch that came from a carefully tended local forest and processed by skillful local value-adders. The story of the wood, from forest to co-op, is told in a newly installed display in the dining area. Check it out next time you're shopping for healthy food. ❧

Spotlight on VFF's Forest Management Checklist

At the heart of VFF's vision of ecological forest management is its Forest Management Checklist. If landowners adhere to these management practices, they will protect water quality, conserve or enhance site productivity, and maintain or improve native biological diversity on their forest lands. Below, we highlight one of the practices, explaining what it's about and how you can achieve it. For a complete listing of the management practices, visit our website, www.familyforests.org, under "Publications," or give us a call (453-7728) and we'll mail or e-mail you a copy.

VFF Forest Management Practice: *Post harvest use of the access network should be restricted in order to prevent erosion, compaction, and site disruption.*

The forest access network includes log landings, truck roads, skid trails, and stream crossings. Although it is the vegetation removal that often gets most of the 'air time' when folks describe their concerns about forest management, tree cutting is often less disruptive to the forest than tree removal. For example, research at the US Forest Service's Hubbard Brook Experiment Forest in New Hampshire, has shown that even extensive clear cutting can have minimal impact on soils and water health if trees are felled and left.

When removing trees during a timber harvest, you can minimize soil erosion and subsequent stream sedimentation by ensuring that the access network is properly designed, installed, maintained, and closed according to site conditions and anticipated future uses.

A timber harvesting study conducted throughout Vermont in the late 1980s showed that most sites with commercial harvesting operations experienced significant post-harvest use. And today, such post-harvest use is undoubtedly much higher and potentially more disruptive.

This is why it is important to ensure that roads you intend to close after a harvest actually remain c-l-o-s-e-d. One spring trip through soggy roads by a motorized vehicle or even a mountain bike can create channels that can turn into ditches and then into 'dugways'!

To close a road, waterbars ought to be at least 18-24 inches deep. And even deeper is better. Dropping a few tree tops in the road after the drainage has been installed is a good idea too.

Access roads and trails that will be used after the timber harvesting operation is completed should also be properly protected. Gates are often a good idea. A rope with a carefully worded sign discouraging off-road vehicle travel has worked exceptionally well for over 15 years in one place that I know. (But this may be that the landowner is known to be exceptionally mean and ugly!)

In sum, there are many ways to address unauthorized and destructive post-harvest use of access networks.

But without a doubt the most important tip for prevention of problems is to assume that destructive use will occur and to plan for it. ☞



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VFF Set to License Family Forest® Brand

VFF is launching a trial program to license the use of VFF's brand elements. If you are a VFF certified landowner interested in using the Family Forest™ brand in marketing value-added forest products—from maple syrup to finished furniture—contact VFF for information on completing a licensing application.



**FAMILY
FOREST™**

Workshops

FLY FISHING & FOREST HEALTH

Date: May 21, 2005

Time: 9:00 a.m. - noon

Location: Sycamore Park, Bristol (Formerly Palmer's Trailer Park/Tin City). See directions below

Cost: Adults \$10, Children free (accompanied by adult). Pre-registration requested.



We're delighted to have Dave Henderson of the New Haven River Anglers join us for this exciting spring workshop, co-sponsored by the Bristol and Lincoln Conservation Commissions. We'll begin at Sycamore Park (formerly Palmers Trailer Park/ Tin City on Route 116) with Dave sharing the art and skill of fly fishing-fishing, including how to cast, which flies anglers choose on a given day and why, gear, and fishing ethics. With Dave's experienced guidance you'll learn how to think like a fish (a key ingredient for successful angling!).

We're also very fortunate to be joined by consulting geologist Kristen Underwood, who will explore river health with workshop participants. Kristen performed an extensive geomorphological study of the New Haven River in the wake of recent floods, and she'll share some of the fascinating results of that study, as well as on-the-ground examples of river conditions that impact fish populations. Learn, too, how forest health affects river and fish population health. All this, along with VFF's traditional and delicious workshop refreshments. We look forward to seeing you there!

Please contact VFF (453-7728 or info@familyforests.org) to register and receive directions to the workshop site.

Game of Logging

This excellent course continues to draw long waiting lists and rave reviews. Our spring offerings of Levels I & II filled in February (including a double session of Level I). This autumn, we'll be offering Levels I - III and will publicize the course dates as soon as our instructors have selected them. Register early!

Bald Eagles at Dead Creek

The Vermont Bald Eagle Restoration Initiative begins its second season raising bald eagles in hacking boxes constructed of **VFF FSC-certified wood**. Last fall, eight eagles chicks successfully fledged from the three 8'x 8' hack boxes. State wildlife officials plan to continue the hacking program for two more seasons in an attempt to establish a breeding population in Vermont. Visit the Dead Creek Wildlife Management Area to see the eagles in their hackboxes from healthy forests! (photo: Steve Costello, CVPS)



PEREGRINE FALCONS & BALD EAGLES IN ADDISON COUNTY

Date: May 20

Time: 7pm

Location: Holley Hall in Bristol.

Margaret Fowle, wildlife biologist from the National Wildlife Federation (banding eagle in photo below), will give a presentation on peregrine falcon and bald eagle recovery efforts in Vermont, with a focus on Bristol peregrines and Addison eagles. Vermont Institute of Natural Science staff will be on hand as well, with a live eagle and falcon. Suggested donation \$2. Call

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Meet a VFF Certified Landowner

Emile Cote, Charlotte

For Emile Cote, owning and interacting with the forest is pure therapy. "Some people laugh when I say I relax running a chain saw," says Emile. "But the people who read this will understand what I am expressing." Emile's therapeutic experience began 25 years ago, when he and a handful of friends purchased a 65-acre parcel of forestland in Bristol, Vermont, to have a supply of firewood and a place of their own to visit and enjoy.

Shortly afterward, Emile met David Brynn, then Assistant County Forester. "Dave was our guiding light and hero. We asked Dave for his advice and we have never stopped listening." When David sought landowners interested in becoming FSC-certified through Vermont Family Forests, Emile and his partners leapt aboard.

As a result, wood from Emile's certified forest graces a host of highly visible projects, from Middlebury College's

Bicentennial and LaForce Halls to a 32-foot Scilly Island rowing gig at the Lake Champlain Maritime Museum. "The ice storm really hit part of our woodlot heavily," Emile recalls. "VFF helped us turn our loss into a gain through a

sale to Middlebury College."

But Emile is quick to list benefits of certification that go beyond the financial. Foremost among them has been the opportunity to meet other people who "believe in properly managing our resources for the future," a community that reaches far beyond VFF's network of certified forests. "David asked if we would host at our woodlot a group of foresters from Russia. I eagerly agreed because my wife and I had traveled to the Soviet Union in the 80s to learn from them how their education system worked. It was a great opportunity to observe their culture and how proud they were of their accomplishments. I hope I was successful imparting this same self-satisfied feeling to them."



Emile Cote (center) at his Bristol forest with co-owner Stan Smith (left) and logger Bill Torrey.

A participant in one of VFF's first offerings of the Game of Logging training course, Emile quips, "learning how to properly cut down a tree was an eye opener-and, yes, I still wear my helmet and chaps, even on warm days!"

Little Hogback Community Forest Update

VFF's Little Hogback Community Forest LLC continues to move forward. The project, described in detail in the Winter 2005 edition of this newsletter (available on-line at www.familyforests.org) involves the sale of sixteen undivided shares of a 115-acre parcel of forestland in Monkton that will be managed according to VFF principles and protected from development in perpetuity. Though all sixteen shares are currently spoken for, project leader Deb Brighton encourages anyone still interested in participating to contact her.

As soon as we have cleared some documentation hurdles with the IRS, we can carry out the purchase of the land from the Vermont Land Trust. In the mean time, VLT has allowed us to mark a timber sale so that it is ready to go when the logging

and market are optimal. If the sale occurs before the land has been transferred to the LLC, the revenue from the sale will lower the purchase price.

Our plan is for some of the logs from the timber sale to be processed into certified, Family Forest® hardwood flooring. Working from a model akin to community-supported agriculture, we plan to do this only if there are orders for the flooring. If you are interested in placing an order for beautiful, local hardwood flooring from well-managed, healthy forests, contact us!

Meanwhile, the Little Hogback Community Forest continues to thrive, and people are welcome to take a hike through it.

Colby Hill Ecological Project

The Colby Hill Ecological Project monitors the biological diversity—plants, amphibians, reptiles, birds, mammals, invertebrates, lepidoptera (butterflies), and odonates (dragonflies)—of 680 acres of private land in Lincoln and Bristol, Vermont. Now entering its seventh field season, CHEP is accumulating information that will help provide baseline ecological data against which the biodiversity, biological integrity, and water quality of other properties in this region can be measured.

New Field Season Begins

The eighth field season of the Colby Hill Ecological Project (CHEP) is under way. As in past years, this season's monitoring will include forest and wetland ecosystems, breeding birds, mammals (including terrestrial small mammals, bats, and large and meso-mammals), amphibians and reptiles. This year's invertebrate studies will focus on beetles.

And speaking of beetles...

CHEP researchers make first VT record of beetle

Until invertebrates research team Mark Ward, Susan Morgan, and Jeffrey Collins began monitoring CHEP lands, scientists believed that the flightless carrion beetle, *Necrophilos pettitii*, confined its range to locations south of southern New York State. In an article published in 2005 in *The Coleopterists Bulletin* Volume: 59 Issue:1, they describe the discovery of the beetle on CHEP lands, more than 200 miles north of the New York sites. The fact that the beetle is flightless means that the species likely inhabits the region in between Lincoln, Vermont, and southern New York State.



Though CHEP's motion-activated camera has recorded some of Vermont's largest inhabitants, including Black Bear and Moose, it's sensitive to the movements of more diminutive community members, including this White-Breasted Nuthatch, *Sitta carolinensis*. (photo: ©Jan Decher/CHEP)



European Skippers (*Thymelicus lineola*) on CHEP lands. (photo: Lester Anderson)

Their discovery underscores the value of the on-going monitoring on CHEP lands, which provides a long-term catalog of the area's flora and fauna in a landscape that is typical of much of the western slope of the Green Mountains. Such detailed research is time-consuming and costly, and we are grateful to the generosity of the Colby Hill Fund in making this invaluable research possible. ❧

Lincoln Conservation Forum in September

Another aspect of CHEP work is an initiative to network with nearby landowners to discuss landscape-level biological diversity, and, with the Colby Hill Ecological Project lands as a forever-wild "core," to work toward neighborhood biological diversity conservation.

To that end, we will be hosting a community forum on conservation strategies in Lincoln in September. We'll be sharing CHEP research and mapping, and discussing conservation alternatives, including conservation easements and ecological forest management. We'll describe the event in detail in our summer newsletter. ❧



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Beltane Community Forest Festival 2005



Celebrating our community, our forests, and the return of spring at VFF's annual festival on the banks of the Norton Brook Reservoir at the Waterworks Property in Bristol.