



# Annual Report 2007



## Notes from the President

It has been a busy year at Vermont Family Forests. We need to be busy. Healthy forests have never been more important nor more threatened. Global climate change is placing major stress upon our forests. Wind events and gully-washing storms are becoming more severe and more frequent. At the same time, we are heading back to what some call our “abundant” forests for more energy in an attempt to make up for declining fossil fuel reserves. The global economy, with all of its associated externalities, is making long-term forest conservation even more challenging. And there are those who think that forestry is primarily about growing and cutting timber and that our tax policies should encourage this.

In spite of all of this, we are still fortunate enough to live in a place that wants to be forested. Though once thoroughly cleared and exploited, forests again blanket our landscape. Much of this renewal has been accomplished through the forest’s prodigious composting of one leaf, one limb, and one tree at a time.

As Aldo Leopold—noted forest conservationist and ecologist—put it, “health is the capacity of the land for self-renewal.” We cannot take this capacity for self-renewal for granted. When Leopold traveled to Germany in 1935 to examine its forest conservation practices, he was astounded by the lack of “wildness” created by production forestry in German forests. He warned against this and urged the forest conservation community to look to self-willed forests as a source of inspiration and design. He also told us that, to be effective over time, forest conservationists must seek a state of harmony between the people and the land. He said, “When both the land and the people end up better by reason of their partnership, we have conservation.”

In 2007, Vermont Family Forests’ conservation work continued to be inspired by Leopold’s compelling visions of healthy forests and healthy communities. In our Community

Wood Energy Project, we worked with the community to identify fuelwood sources and uses that are sustainable, efficient, local, and fair. VFF’s Colby Hill Ecological Project, a long-term, ecological study in Lincoln, continued gathering important ecological data from a recovering forest. One day these “lessons from this self-willed forest” will help us be better stewards of our “working” family forests. The Little Hogback Community Forest Project was completed by Deb Brighton and friends and there are now 16 new forest owners who have access to all of the benefits of forest ownership and stewardship. VFF worked with partners at the Green Mountain Club to procure forest products from superbly-managed local forests for their GMC-Headquarters Project. We also expanded our certified land base and we increased our staffing to offer more forestry services including GIS mapping and land use planning. We even brought back the Addison County Conservation Congress after a 10-year hiatus and it was a huge success.

Vermont Family Forests is a small organization with a large passion for healthy local forests and communities. We are honored by your faith and your interest in what we do. Thank you!

May the forest be with you!  
Paul Ralston, VFF President



Little Hogback Community Forest shareholders and friends gathering at their land.

# Highlights from FY 2007

## 2007 Addison County Conservation Congress

The sixth Conservation Congress, entitled “Fueling Our Community: Building Local, Sustainable Energy Solutions,” was held at Mount Abraham Union High School in Bristol on April 28<sup>th</sup> and was a resounding success. Scudder Parker delivered the keynote address, “Building the Structures for a Sustainable Future,” and there were numerous concurrent sessions and displays on a wide range of energy related topics.

### PUBLIC EDUCATION

The *raison d’etre* of Vermont Family Forests is to conserve the health of family forests. We know that the three great conservers of forest health are: well-informed stewards; sound economic returns from ecological forestry; and a community-shared land ethic. All of our educational programs seek to shed light on what William McDonough described as the Triple Top Line of ecology, economics, and ethics.

## Community Wood Energy Charette

Local representatives of industry, state and federal government, non-government organizations, and private citizens attended a public involvement session at Mount Abraham Union High School entitled “Where Should Mt. Abe’s Woodchips Come From? Cultivating a local supply of wood energy sourced from healthy forests.” The meeting was filmed and later aired on NEA-TV and MCTV.

## Game of Logging

Seven sessions of the *Game of Logging* Levels I through III were offered in the Spring and Fall. The Game of Logging was developed in Sweden by Soren Eriksson to improve safety, quality, and productivity. More than sixty students attended the day-long sessions.



## Buddhist Economics

David Brynn presented a talk entitled “Buddhist Economics and Sustainable Forestry” at the 2006 Otter Creek Audubon

meeting in Middlebury. Inspired by E.F. Schumacher’s *Small is Beautiful*, the talk focused on ways to address forest conservation issues associated with global climate change and peak oil.

## Loan Library

We expanded our collection with the following books on wood energy: *The Woodburner’s Companion: Practical Ways of Heating with Wood* by Dirk Thomas; *The New Woodburner’s Handbook* by Stephen Bushway; *The Book of Masonry Stoves: Rediscovering an Old Way of Warming* by David Lyle; and *The Harrowsmith Country Life Guide to Wood Heat* by Dirk Thomas.

## Coppice Workshop

VFF collaborated with The Watershed Center in offering a workshop entitled Sustainable Forestry for the Future: Coppice Woodland Management with Mark Krawczyk of Rivenwood. Coppice management involves growing hardwood sprouts on rotations of seven to 20 years and was commonly practiced in England from 12<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. It will likely be an important tool as we look to forests for more fuel.

## Little Hogback Community Forest

Sixteen shareholders closed on the 115-acre Little Hogback Community Forest in Monkton. LHCF—the brainchild of Deb Brighton—became the nation’s first community forest with both a conservation easement and an affordability covenant that passed the IRS test as being a public good. Little Hogback now provides a conservation template for future efforts that make forest stewardship accessible and affordable. Three LHCF families will be heating with wood from their own forest for the first time this year! An article by John Elder on the Little Hogback Community Forest will appear in the Winter 2007 issue of *Northern Woodlands* magazine.

### COMMUNITY FORESTS

People are made better when they have the opportunity to know, to love, to invest in, and to steward forests. Vermont Family Forests is dedicated to extending the opportunities for these healthy, symbiotic relationships to all members of our community.

## Lincoln Town Forest

Working closely with Tina Scharf and others of the Lincoln Conservation Commission, VFF Forester Brendan Weiner inventoried and mapped the Ripton Lot in preparation for community involvement sessions in November.

## New Family Forests

VFF added the forests of Lisa Nading and James Whiteside, Cindy Barber, Willy and Lynn Osborn, Paul Ralston and Deborah Gwinn, Candice and Bob Shaffer, and Rick and Sandy Desorda into our pool of well-managed forests.

## Forestry Services Expanded

VFF expanded its expertise in natural community mapping and geographic information systems (GIS). In addition, VFF's capacity to assist family forest owners with their planning, inventory, and other forest conservation needs was expanded as well.

## Use Value Appraisal Study

David Brynn and Brendan Weiner worked with Deb Brighton on the Review and Analysis of the Use Value Appraisal Program, a report for the Vermont Legislature. Data on the effectiveness of the program was collected through surveys and interviews. The Use Value Appraisal Program is an essential and effective tool for conserving working forests in Vermont. The report suggested ways to move beyond a timber focus and to enhance protection of natural ecological systems including wetlands, riparian zones, and rare natural communities.

## RESEARCH & DEMONSTRATION

As the Chinese would say, "We live in interesting times." Global climate change and a global economy present enormous challenges. We must re-invent our relationships with forests and each other and we must identify new ways to achieve harmony between the people and the land.

taking advantage of the various types of stewardship help available to them. As would be expected, there are a variety of reasons. The survey revealed a consistent group of people who had concerns about their land but who were not connecting with any of the existing programs—mainly because they did not want to give government or an organization authority over management decisions." Susannah McCandless, Chris Klyza,

## FAMILY FORESTY

Vermont Family Forests coined the phrases Family Forest and Family Forestry. Like any family, all members of the forest community have inherent value. We see ourselves as respectful members and we promote practices that, as Aldo Leopold suggested, conserve those functions and values by which forests maintain themselves as healthy ecosystems.

## Northeastern States Research Cooperative Study

Deb Brighton served as principal investigator for a VFF study entitled "Forest Stewardship Incentive Programs: How Can We Interest More Landowners?" The primary purpose of this research was to understand more about those Vermont landowners who were not

and David Brynn assisted and an article by Chris Klyza will appear in the Spring 2008 issue of *Northern Woodlands* magazine.

## Community Wood Energy Project

Rather than simply substituting wood for fossil fuels, VFF has been making the case for wise use of local wood supplied from healthy forests. VFF has proposed that fuelwood should be: Sustainably-produced, Efficiently-used, Locally-sourced and Fairly-accessed (SELF-wood). VFF helped shape the Farm Bill and the Northern Forest Biomass Energy Initiative Action Plan of 2007. Caitlin Cusack, graduate student from the Yale School of Forestry, served as a summer intern on a Community Wood Energy Pilot, "Watersheds as Woodsheds Project," to fuel Mt. Abraham's new wood-fired boiler. Three VFF-certified firewood operations involving 200 cords were initiated with 96 cords being sold.



## Colby Hill Ecological Project

Now in its seventh year, research continued at the Colby Hill Ecological Project Lands under the direction of Marc Lapin and administration of VFF. Research foci for 2007 included mammal-tracking, collembola collections, bird population monitoring, small mammals and camera trapping, and herpetological study.

## Green Mountain Club Headquarters Project

More than 60,000 board feet of hemlock and white pine timbers and planking were carefully harvested from three VFF-certified family forests. Bill Torrey was the primary logger and he used state-of-the-art forwarding equipment.

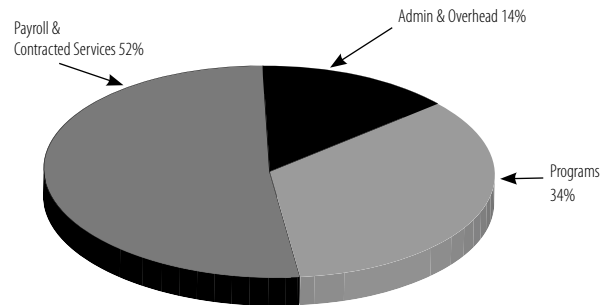
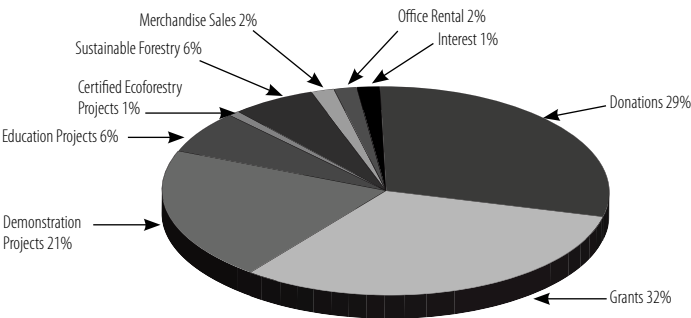
The logs were then milled locally under the direction of VFF Associate Len Schmidt. The whole process was carefully documented and will be part of the educational display at the GMC Headquarters when it opens in 2008.



# FINANCIAL STATEMENT

## INCOME

Donations	\$ 47,832.57	Admin and Overhead	\$18,224.29
Grants	51,438.52	Programs	45,227.50
Demonstration Projects	33,818.98	Payroll & Contracted Services	67,727.10
Education Projects	10,580.00		
Certified Ecoforestry Projects	1,595.00		
Sustainable Forestry	9,712.95		
Merchandise Sales	2,722.00		
Office Rental	3,000.00		
Interest	2,378.77		
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$163,078.79</b>	<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$131,178.89</b>



**Sandra Murphy**, VFF's long-time Director of Public Education, moved with her family to Utah. Sandra helped shape VFF into a top-notch forest conservation education organization. We will all miss her exceptional writing talents and her Irish wit and spirit.

**Brendan Weiner** joins VFF as a forester. He brings a diverse set of skills and experiences to our organization. Brendan recently completed a masters of science in natural resources at the University of Vermont where he first became involved with certified forestry. There he developed a certified forest management plan at the university's research forest and facilitated the process to incorporate UVM wood into the

## STAFF CHANGES

Vermont Family Forests is as much a way of life as a job. We have been exceptionally fortunate to attract people who are aligned with our core values and who challenge us to constantly advance those values. Small by design, VFF nonetheless is leaving its positive mark on the landscape largely because of these dedicated folks.

university's new student center. Brendan also has several years of experience working for the U.S. Forest Service in California and Wyoming as a wildland firefighter and ecosystem restoration technician. Brendan participated in the Use Value Assessment Study and has been busy working one-on-one with VFF landowners.

**Rebecca Tolmach Elder** took over the reigns of the [www.familyforests.org](http://www.familyforests.org) website and our *News from the Forest* letter. Rebecca lives and works near Maggie Brook Sugarworks—the Elder Family Forest in Starksboro—with husband Matt and their twin boys, Leo and Dylan.

# HEARTFELT THANKS TO ALL OF OUR SUPPORTERS

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Vermont Family Forests™ is a nonprofit education organization whose mission it 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

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Susannah McCandless, *Office Manager*  
Sandra Murphy, *Director of Education*  
Brenden Weiner, *Forester*  
Rebecca Tolmach Elder, *Website & Publications*

## Board of Directors

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Paul Ralston, *President*

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Otter Creek Audubon  
The University of Vermont  
The Watershed Center  
Vermont Land Trust

## VFF Flooring Available

Vermont Family Forests currently has about 10,000 square feet of Family Forest® flooring available in sugar maple, red maple, white ash, American beech, red oak, and black cherry. The flooring comes from VFF-certified forests located right here in our community and is in long lengths. For more information on quantities and prices, please contact Vermont Family Forests at (802) 453-7728 or contact David Brynn at david@familyforests.org.

