

News from the Forest

Spring 2006

Local Warming

Envisioning sustainable wood energy from healthy local forests

Consensus is emerging that the world's production of oil has peaked or will peak shortly. As demand for energy continues to grow at an unprecedented rate, the potential for a rapid decline in oil supply coupled with a substantial spike in oil prices is very real.

The desire to move away from oil dependency and produce energy locally has created a surge in interest in wood energy to meet both household and institutional heating needs. Twenty-five Vermont public schools currently heat with wood, and Vermont forests also supply two wood-fired electricity-generating plants, two state office complexes, and seven other state facilities. Large state subsidies for wood-gasification units are encouraging many more public institutions, including Mount Abraham Union High School, to shift to wood energy.

Vermont's forests represent a substantial source of readily available fuel. Existing infrastructure and systems are in place to harvest, transport, and utilize wood biomass quickly. But as energy demands on the forest greatly increase, harvests may exceed the forest's ecological sustainability and health – its capacity for self-renewal.

We stand at a threshold in energy consumption. For a window of time, we have the opportunity to prepare for a post-oil future and create a considered, holistic vision of a sustainable local energy economy. In our region, this economy will, appropriately, include wood biomass. Now is our chance to "get it right," to conceive a relationship with wood energy that is anchored in three critical elements: sustainable production, efficient use, and socially responsible access and distribution.

How do we assure forest health in this era of increasing demand for wood energy? What procurement standards and equipment will maintain the forest's capacity for self-renewal

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while providing increased fuel wood supply? How can we make fuel wood production and utilization as carbon-neutral as possible? How can we assure fair and equitable access to wood fuel? These are critical questions that need sustained public attention now.

As we shift away from oil dependency, we can choose an energy path that yields depleted forests and communities, or one that builds and sustains community and forest health. At Vermont Family Forests, we envision and are working toward the latter.

We consider this the most pressing forest issue of our time, and we have turned much of our attention to researching and raising public awareness of wood energy issues. We are collaborating on a grant – currently in the final round of consideration from the Northern States Research Cooperative – to conduct a study of sustainable practices for procuring wood fuel and to model procurement and utilization pathways that maximize energy efficiency. We are planning a series of wood energy workshops for later this year, and a Local Warming Conservation Congress for early 2007.

We have the opportunity, as a community, to create a model for sustainable wood energy production and utilization here in Addison County. Wood can play a critically important role as we transition to other renewable energy sources. We are not awash in wood and we must grow, use, and distribute it carefully. The possibilities are tremendously exciting, and we look forward to taking part in the visioning process. We hope you will join us. ☞

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.

News From the Forest is published quarterly by Vermont Family Forests™. To subscribe to *News from the Forest*, please email us at info@familyforests.org or call 453-7728. Call us or visit our website at www.familyforests.org for more information on VFF's programs.

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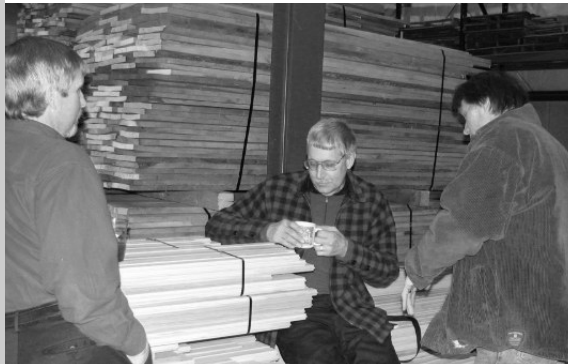
Family Forest® Flooring Debut

"The eagle has landed." That four-word message, from local flooring distributor Peter Nazarenko to Vermont Family Forests in late December, heralded the long-anticipated arrival of the debut batch of Family Forest® brand flooring.

The flooring began, months earlier, as hardwood trees growing in Vermont Family Forests' pool of well-managed forests. Local logger, Bill Torrey harvested 10,000 board feet of birch, beech, maple, and ash logs from three VFF forests. The flooring is showcased at Planet Hardwood, Peter and Diane Nazarenko's flooring showroom and warehouse in St. George, Vermont. Through advertising and word-of-mouth interest, nearly half of the inventory has sold. Customers have expressed much interest in the "Northern Hardwood Community Floor," a mix of birch, beech, and maple. Customers can purchase the flooring mix or buy any of the hardwood species separately.

Looking to create a steady supply of Family Forest® flooring, Vermont Family Forests has teamed with landowners and value-adders to create a second flooring batch, much larger than the initial run. 40,000 board feet of logs from two VFF forests are now being milled. They'll yield approximately 28,000 square feet of flooring from 11 different hardwood species.

Know anyone planning to install a hardwood floor? Please spread the good news!



Beautiful flooring. Healthy forests.

Behind every Family Forest® floor, there's a healthy local forest, carefully managed and monitored to maintain water quality, site productivity, & native biological diversity.

Available at Planet Hardwood,
St. George, VT. 802-482-4404

Logger Bill Torrey (left), VFF certified landowner Paul Cate (center), and Richard Czaplinski admire the first batch of Family Forest® flooring at Planet Hardwood.

Interested in taking part?

Any Vermont Family Forests certified landowner can take part in the flooring project. Landowners can either simply sell their logs to the mill and receive the stumpage value of the logs, or they can choose to stay on as an investor in the value-adding process (with a maximum investment proportional to their log board footage). Though the initial flooring batch was small and inefficient, the economic returns were very encouraging.

The hardest part—figuring out the logistics, relationships, and paperwork involved in creating, warehousing, and marketing the flooring—has been done. Planet Hardwood provides a retail outlet for the flooring. Vermont Family Forests provides the market story of locally grown and produced flooring from healthy, well-managed forests. We are also planning to activate an LLC subsidiary of Vermont Family Forests to encompass production of Family Forest® flooring.

If you are planning a harvest in your certified forest and would like to take part in the flooring project (or would like to certify your forest so that you can take part), please contact Vermont Family Forests. ☞

Upcoming Events

VFF workshops are held rain or shine, but sometimes extreme weather conditions will cause us to cancel a workshop. Please call the VFF offices (453-7728) the morning of the event in case of heavy rain, snow, or high winds. We will leave a message on the answering machine if the event is cancelled. For programs offered by other groups, please call the listed contact.

Beltane Community Forest Festival

Date: Saturday, April 29, 2006

Time: 5pm

Location: The Waterworks Property, Plank Rd. Bristol
(check VFF website or call us for directions.)

Join us on the beautiful shores of Norton Brook reservoir to celebrate springtime, forests, and community. Come raise the Maypole and join in a potluck dinner, May pole dance, singing, and drumming by a lakeside bonfire.

Bring your children, your friends, a dish to share, a drum if you like, a flashlight in case you stay past dark, and celebrate spring!



Earth Day Celebration

Date: Saturday, April 22, 2006

Time: 11:30 AM - 3:30 PM

Location: University of Vermont's Jericho Forest, 127 Tarbox Road, Jericho, VT

We'll provide shelter, drinks, sandwiches, & chips. Please bring a dish or dessert to share.

During this fun and informal gathering, participants can take part in several project tours, as UVM students share their conservation projects with the community. Tours include development of a conservation trail, riparian zone restoration, community conservation circle & green wood yurt, sustainable forestry demonstration plots, American Chestnut Re-Introduction, humble bowls and harvest table project, UVM Woodsmen's Team demonstration, and more! Contact david.brynn@uvm.edu.

WANTED:

A forested landscape to raise a family

Are you interested in:

- learning about birds that nest on your property?
- managing for timber production & for wildlife enhancement?
- identifying the birds singing in your woodlot?
- discovering why your forest is globally important to breeding birds?
- spending time outdoors enjoying your property in a new way?



Then join Audubon Vermont and Vermont Family Forests for *Managing Your Forest for Vermont's Birds*, a free, hands-on workshop to learn how. See the events listing for details.

Game of Logging Levels I-III

Dates: May 2, 9, 17, 2006

Once again, these excellent chainsaw training courses have filled. We are taking waiting list names, and do sometimes have cancellations. Also, be sure to contact us if you're interested in enrolling in our autumn Game of Logging workshops.

Managing Your Forest for Vermont's Birds

Dates: Friday, June 9th 7-9 pm AND Saturday, June 10th 8 am -3 pm

Location: Burnham Hall, Lincoln (and field sites in Lincoln)

Cost: free

Join Audubon Vermont and Vermont Family Forests to learn how to identify 12 key migratory bird species by sight and sound, how to monitor birds on your property, and how to manage your forest to provide breeding habitat for Vermont's forest birds. The Friday evening session will introduce Audubon Vermont's Forest Bird Initiative and the goals behind the landowner workshops. On Saturday, you'll spend most of the day in the field identifying forest birds and looking at bird-friendly forest management practices. Please contact Audubon Vermont to register for the workshop at 802-434-3068.



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Who's new in the Vermont Family Forests Certification Program?

Paul and Sandal Cate, East Montpelier, Vermont

In an era when sub-division is steadily reducing the size of the average family forests in Vermont, Paul and Sandal Cate of East Montpelier have been busy reassembling the pieces of an old family farm. Back in the 1940s, the farmer who owned their land divided the property to sell off the forestland. In 1977, the Cates bought the 12-acre farm with Paul's parents, then later purchased the adjacent 54-acre forest.

In the 29 years since then, they've built their home, literally and figuratively, upon this land. "Farm life is very settling," Sandal reflects. "We haven't been jumping around to different jobs." On the farm, they've raised hens, pigs (they cure their own hams and bacon), bees, beef cows, and a horse. Each year, they press cider from apples in their old orchard. Paul and Sandal built a log sugar house to produce maple syrup from 200-350 taps, then built a log home where they raised two sons.

The decision to certify their land was a natural extension of their life and work. "I'm in the low-impact forestry business," Paul says of his work as forest management consultant and logger. "We're trying to do the best we can for the landowner

and land. It's hard to speak from a point of knowledge if you're not involved in it yourself. I was impressed by what Vermont Family Forests was doing."

Building a dynamic, local forest-products network is a high priority for Paul. "I'm really interested in cycling things locally," he says. Because most of VFF's certified forests are over the mountain from him, he's encouraging landowners in his area to join VFF's certification program to create a certified land base in the Montpelier area.



At the Shelburne Farms Harvest Festival last fall, Paul Cate shares his enthusiasm for low-impact forestry with festival participants.