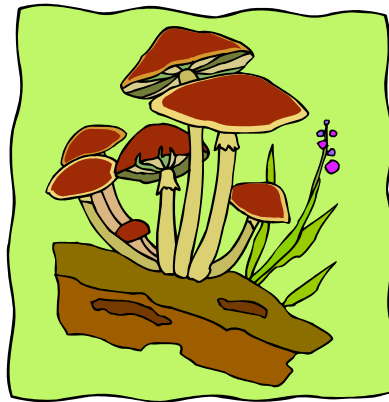




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WOODLOT TIPS



AUTUMN 2009

WHAT IF I FIND ASIAN LONGHORNED BEETLE (ALB) ON MY PROPERTY?

*By Bill Guenther, Windham County Forester
Thanks to Barbara Burns, Forest Health Specialist
Dept. of Forest Parks & Recreation
for source information*

During a recent informational workshop on this potentially devastating pest, one participant asked if landowners found this beetle on their land, maybe they would be hesitant to report it, fearing that their entire forest would be cut down in an attempt to eradicate the outbreak. It was a great question, and I'll try to offer some thoughts.

First, not reporting a sighting could be an absolute tragedy. For landowners to think they could control the ALB entirely on their own would be foolish at best, and to do nothing and ignore it would be completely irresponsible. Destructive insects do not respect property boundaries; if it is on your land it could go anywhere.

Second, if we get a report of an ALB in Vermont, what happens will depend on the circumstances and the current state of knowledge. We can assure you that you'll get the best management strategies that we know of, especially if yours is the first sighting in the state. It is unlikely that anyone in government would say that your entire woodlot would be cut down, as we hope that symptoms of an infestation would be noticed before any problem got severe enough for such drastic measures.

Third, if the insect you report is the white-spotted pine sawyer, similar in appearance to the ALB but less harmful, we will be happy and grateful that you were alert and took your responsibility to report the sighting seriously.

Asian Longhorned Beetle has been successfully eradicated several times in other states. Early detection is key!

At present, current eradication efforts consist of conducting a survey and removing only those trees shown to be infested. So the bottom line is: **IF YOU FIND ALB, PLEASE REPORT IT IMMEDIATELY!**



From Steve Sinclair, Vermont State Forester:

Public Meetings on New Use Value Appraisal Program Standards

Recent legislative changes to the Use Value Appraisal (UVA) Program and the need to clarify administrative and program guidance have led the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation to propose changes to the forest management standards and forest management plan standards in the UVA Program Manual. To further explain how and why these changes are being recommended and provide an opportunity for landowners and natural resource professionals to offer comments, we will hold two public input meetings in December:

**December 1, 2009 — Chapel Hall, Waterbury State Office Complex
(103 South Main Street, Building 4,5,6)**

December 2, 2009 — Ludlow Town Hall Auditorium, Route 103 (south at light)

Both meetings will run from **1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.** A brief overview of the proposed changes will be followed by an opportunity for public comment. A copy of the UVA Program Manual is available for downloading/viewing at

www.vtfpr.org/resource/draftuvamanual.cfm. In addition to the program manual, a synopsis of the proposed changes has been prepared and is also available on the website. Hard copies of the manual will be available at the meeting, or you can contact Wendy Richardson in advance at 802-241-3678.

The Department will record comments made at the meetings and will accept written comments until January 6, 2010. Comments should be mailed to Ginger Anderson at the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation, 103 South Main Street, Waterbury, VT 05671-0601 or emailed to ginger.anderson@state.vt.us. Program changes will go into effect on April 1, 2010.

The Department is committed to maintaining the important role that the UVA Program plays in the management and conservation of forest resources in Vermont, and looks forward to getting your feedback. Feel free to contact me if you have any further questions.

President's Column

By Stu Thurber

This is a time of year for reflection. There is an old hymn with a chorus that starts with the phrase "Count your many blessings; name them one by one." The key to those words is to slow down and name the positive parts of your life one by one. Even with extreme adversity we can be thankful because the ledger has a plus account.

The woods are dormant, the north wind chills, a northeaster blows snow over the countryside. Beneath the blanket small creatures flourish,

seeds prepare to sprout, starches convert to sugars and behold, spring is around the corner.

In the meantime we drink hot beverages, feast on pies and add a few pounds over the holidays. Bring in the wood for warm fires! I am staying in Vermont and getting ready for the next season.

Thanks to the Brian McNeice family for hosting our annual meeting. We appreciate your work and the tour.

Woodland Owners Association Annual Meeting

September 19, 2009

Minutes

President Stuart Thurber called the meeting to order at 1:10 p.m. He thanked grillmeisters Sam Schneski and Linda Lyons for barbecuing the hamburgers and hot dogs to perfection. Then all members present introduced themselves.

Treasurer's Report

Copies of the Treasurer's Report were distributed. Phyllis Weltz, Treasurer, presented the report. The Treasurer's Report was accepted as presented

Secretary's Report

The minutes of the 2008 Annual Meeting, which was published in the November 2008 newsletter, were distributed. They were approved as written.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Scholarship – John Caldwell, Stuart Thurber, Jeremy Schrauf, and Bob Hindmarsh make up the Scholarship Committee. Committee Chair John Caldwell reported that two scholarships had been awarded this year, one to upperclassman Charlie Hoffman, and one to

incoming freshman Nicholas Haskell. Nick, who was present with his father Dennis, graciously accepted the scholarship, with thanks to the association and a few words about his planned course of study in Forest Technology at University of New Hampshire.

Nominating – The Nominating Committee consists of Stuart Thurber, John Caldwell, and Bill Guenther. Committee Chair Bill Guenther reported that Stuart Thurber is eligible and willing to serve a second term. Lynn Levine and John Caldwell have served two terms and must step down. The committee nominated Stuart for a second term, and Peter Wimmelman and Bob Twitchell to replace Lynn and John. The nominations were accepted by unanimous voice vote.

Programs – George Weir reviewed programs presented by WOA during the past year. There are three upcoming programs. A Women-only Game of Logging Level 1 will be presented by Jolene Hamilton on Sept. 26th. An invitation-only program on Asian Longhorned Beetle

(ALB) and Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) for woodland professionals such as arborists, town crews, and foresters, will be presented on October 7th, and the Big Tree Tour will be presented on October 31st by Bill Guenther. The Program Committee will meet in early November, and a list of winter programs will appear in the next newsletter.

Bob Twitchell asked about possible workshops on the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid (HWA). George said that there were not as many informational workshops on HWA. John Evans said that HWA infestation is difficult to see – dieback is the best way to tell. Sugaring season is when the white egg masses are most visible, but it is hard to see even then.

Newsletter – In the coming year, Barbara Evans will be co-editing the newsletter with Trustee Margaret MacDonald. Barbara is soliciting members to submit their thoughts about woodland ownership in writing for her Member Musings column. Stuart suggested that an article could be written about the history of local sawmills. Fifty years ago, there were about 600 sawmills in Windham County. Now there are only around 70.

Library – The Library Committee consists of Bill Guenther, Margaret MacDonald, and Diana Todd. The last newsletter carried an article about the WOA library. Few people know that it exists. The committee invites members to take advantage of the library. They believe that there are still advantages to a physical library of publications, vs. the Internet. Some people still do not have Internet access. Many have only dial-up access. They also feel that it is sometimes more enjoyable to read “hard copy.”

On the subject of Internet vs. hard copy, Stuart suggested that the next member renewal envelope have a check box asking if the member would like to receive the newsletter electronically instead of in the mail.

Stuart Thurber thanked all members attending the meeting and invited them to stay for the afternoon program on crop tree management.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:40 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Carol Morrison, Clerk

Big Tree Tour Recap

*By Bill Guenther
Windham County forester*

Halloween dawned to clear skies this year, and I was looking forward to a non-aqueous day on the Big Tree Tour.



We convened at the Hannaford parking lot and started with a brief introduction of what the Big Tree Registry is all about and how trees qualify. We had an ambitious day of ten trees to visit, from Brattleboro to Londonderry.

First on the list was the huge silver maple right in the commercial section of Putney Road, which we could see from our meeting point at the Hannaford Plaza. We know some of the history of this tree: it started as a seedling pulled up from the bank of the Connecticut River and planted in 1900, right on the front lawn of the Chickering residence. It has the largest girth of any tree in Windham County — 20'7" all the way around.

Our next stop was to visit the newly crowned champion Sugar Maple at the home of Dick & Harriett Virkstis in Dummerston. I am

especially proud that we brought the state tree champ back to Windham County, after having lost that distinction to Washington County a while back.

Mid morning found us at Esther Falk's place, in one of the most gorgeous settings in Dummerston, high up off Bunker road. Esther is a legend in this town, and at 89 is still sharp as a tack. She hosted our viewing of the State's runner-up Butternut. She was gregarious and gracious and, as usual, offered up her specialty oatmeal raisin cookies. While her tree does have the ubiquitous Butternut canker disease, it is holding its own and has an impressive girth of 18'5" even though the tree is only 61 years old.

After viewing Larry Wood's unique Red Mulberry in Putney, we headed up onto Putney Mountain to gaze at River Myrddin's impressive "Grandmother Birch," as she fondly calls her state champion Paper Birch. Majestic and venerable are words to describe this unique tree, which is still growing. To illustrate how we measure trees for the Big Tree List, we re-measured the tree's circumference, its height using a clinometer, and the maximum and minimum crown spread. The tree had lost some of its upper branches due to last year's ice storm and was now seven feet shorter, but it had picked up five inches in its circumference. So, while it had a net loss of two points, at 215 points it remains the State Champ.

Lunch was beckoning at the Newfane Green. As we sat on the steps of the historic courthouse, we discussed the tree maintenance project that the county is doing for one of the most photographed Commons in the state.

The afternoon started with back-to-back visits to major apple trees. The first, in Newfane, was the champ, and while it has a huge girth, it is not that aesthetically pleasing. But it still has "character." In Wardsboro we looked at the apple runner-up, and this tree is in exceptional shape. Linda Gifkins, our host, gave us some background on how she and her husband John

have been trying to enhance and maintain the ancient apple orchard on their 1700s property. We also heard a very interesting history of the buildings on their farm and learned that at one time there was an old cider mill. According to the story, the cider often was left to go to hard cider for a little winter imbibing!

The long trek up to Londonderry was next on the itinerary, and we met with WOA Trustee Bob Twitchell from the town's Conservation Commission. Bob led us on our only hike of the day, to see the runner-up Hemlock. It stands on a steep embankment in the Londonderry Town Forest known as the Sharp Lot. This tree is said to be at least 250 years old and looks to be in very good health.

Bob continued as our tour guide, taking us to see the state champ White Pine, a very awesome tree that also has the highest point count — 363 points — of any in Windham County. We decided we would re-measure the circumference and found that the tree grew five inches in girth since 2003. This point total now puts it within 16 points of the National champion White Pine in Maine. What a treat it would be if Vermont could one day unseat the Pine Tree state in this category!

For the finale, we retraced our steps down the West River Valley to the hamlet of Harmonyville, where the stately champion Sycamore resides next to the general store. The rain gods were with us; while we had been threatened with rain most of the afternoon, a light drizzle started only as we walked up to the final tree. We marveled at this unique tree — a species that normally is found more to the south.

At 5:30, I was all talked out, and the rain was coming down much harder, signaling the end of another glorious Big Tree Tour.

Mark your calendars for the last Saturday in October, 2011, for the next installment of the Big Tree Tour.

Foreign Policy

By Ross Thurber

It would be a mistake to let the bucolic landscape of hay meadows and pasture bordered by forest bring you any sense of security or lasting peace. Along the margins of fields, hedgerows and edge lands there proliferates a biological holy war. If I were a Fox news commentator, this is when I get red faced and pound my fist. “My friends, there is an insurgency going on and it’s threatening the very values of freedom-loving land owners!”

Along the edges of your forest there are plant communities that are presently setting up madrassas, encouraging other plants to vine, thorn, prick, root sucker, and bear abundant seed to further threaten our tidy way of life. If you don’t believe me, try walking the length of a hay field six feet from the last harvested windrow. I bet it is safer to walk from Kabul to Kandahar.

For the more reflective (and generally members of the Woodland Owners Association are considered a woody, thoughtful lot), the idea of taking unilateral action against bittersweet, multi-flora rose, buckthorn and the like comes at the expense of reducing the benefits of biological diversity and the teeming dynamic

habitat that an edge provides. Okay then, bleeding heart (or at least scratched and pricked), well meaning land owner, how do we protect our native biota from being overrun by these exotics?

Some of our reluctance toward more aggressive management comes from lessons of history and a nostalgic view of our landscape. We are reminded that when the British went pell mell towards industrial agriculture and wiped out a landscape of ancient enclosures (read: hedgerows), habitat was dramatically reduced. Also, no one wants to remove a dilapidated stonewall along the edge of a field, given the sheer effort our predecessors put into the labor of building it. But aside from giving us Frostian street cred, most stone walls are in the wrong places and are not walling anything in or out, but providing a New England version of Tora Bora — allowing invasive plants a leg hold to enter field or forest.

Perhaps it’s time to re-address how we view our working landscape and create field margins that can be maintained by future generations without cursing and injury. Call them “Freedom Walls.”

Putting the “Game” into the Game of Logging

By Sam Schneski

Windham/Windsor County Forester

Most of us have heard about the Game of Logging (GOL) chainsaw training course. The Woodland Owners Association sponsors it yearly, and it is always received with great enthusiasm. It also can be a revelation to attendees regarding increased safety, efficiency, and overall knowledge about running a chainsaw in the most effective and productive manner.

I first took the course at the age of 25, when I was the forest manager for Merck Forest in

Rupert, Vermont. I had run a saw since I was 13 years old, but never with the confidence and true understanding of the saw parts, proper maintenance requirements, potential reactive forces, and, most importantly, safe, controlled felling that comes from the GOL.

Since taking the course in 2000, running a chainsaw has become almost like a sport. I want to not only get the trees on the ground exactly where I aimed them every time, but I want every stump to look perfect. I also strive to foresee

any kind of unexpected reaction the main stem or branches could have before I ever begin cutting into them on a felled tree. As a result of this increased interest in chainsaw operation, I have taken the course a few more times and even have been teaching the basics of it to seasonal interns at Merck. The experience of training led me to become a “C-Certifier” for the Forest Service sawyers who fight fire in the west. (The Forest Service sawyer rankings are: A-Beginner, B-Intermediate, and C-Advanced.)

With this growing interest in proper chainsaw operation, I was excited to hear that Northeast Woodland Training (the Vermont organization that conducts GOL training — <http://www.woodlandtraining.com/>) was going to host the regional competition in Chester, Vermont, this past summer. There were three categories: *Professional* (earn over 50 percent of your income logging and completion of all four GOL levels), *landowner*, and *collegiate* (completion of levels I and II). I entered in the landowner category, hoping to win a t-shirt or hat. The main prize in each category was a new Dolmar chainsaw and a place at the national competition at the Paul Bunyan Show in Cambridge, Ohio. The regional events were as follows:

Boring station: Bore through a drawn box on an 8- by 8-inch board, just slightly wider than the saw bar, and 1-inch high, and come out the other side in the same box without pushing the saw out of the cut further than 1/2-inch.

Spring pole: Disarm a spring pole (sapling/pole that is attached at one end and pinned down at the other making a bowed looking stem with a lot of dangerous reactive forces) using the proper kerf cuts (cuts/notches of the proper width). The closer the resulting two halves match up, the higher your score.

Big Stump: A large 20-inch or bigger stump with a 1- by 6-inch board inserted vertically into the center. Competitors are to bore through half

of the stump into the board, remove the saw from the cut, and walk around to the other side and bore into the board. If the two cuts match perfectly, it would look like one hole through the board. For each 1/16th of an inch off, points are deducted.

Precision Stump: An open-face notch is to be cut with only two cuts (no removing the saw from the cut once you start), and the resulting wedge of wood cut out has a minimum of a 70-degree angle. The competitors bore in behind the apex of the notch that was created, forming a perfect 1-inch thick hinge all the way across, without looking over to the other side of the stump to line up the cut.

Speed Cut: Each competitor has a 4-inch section of a 12 to 14-inch timber on which to make one down cut and one up cut, to create two complete wood cookies while staying within the 4-inch marked lines.

Tree Felling: Fell a 30-foot pine pole onto a soda can while accurately following the five-point felling plan — addressing hazards, side lean, escape destination, hinge dimensions, and back cut techniques.

After a hot and pretty full day of running saws, waiting, running saws, and waiting some more, I ended up winning the event. I took home a brand new 510 Dolmar chainsaw, a Northeast Woodland Training t-shirt, and a Dolmar hat. As I was leaving, someone asked me if I was going to go to Nationals. I forgot about that part of the deal! After discussing it with my wife, we decided a five-day trip of six-plus hours driving each day (except on competition day) with our 14-month-old daughter would be a good “vacation.”

On Wednesday, September 30th we piled in the car and headed west. Competition day was Friday, and as fate would have it, there was a mostly steady, driving rain for the whole day.



I had no idea Cambridge, Ohio, had so much dark red mud!

The events were similar to the Regionals plus a few new ones. One was to sharpen a pre-dulled chain in 30 minutes. Sounds easy enough, but in the rain and on a 20-inch bar (lots of teeth!), I used the whole 30 minutes. Another event was precision log bucking. A series of two-inch by three-foot long dowels were fastened around the circumference of a log. The goal was to bore the saw into the log, use one down cut and one up cut (without taking the saw out) and saw off a complete cookie without hitting any of the dowels. The other new event was the limbing station, where long dowels (2-inch diameter by 2-feet) were fastened into a log to simulate branches. The fastest time with the least amount of 3/8th-inch stubs remaining won.



I did okay on most events and even got the only perfect score in my category on the boring station, but I didn't win any prize money. I did very well on the events I thought I might have trouble with, and even practiced a little. However, I made mistakes on some of the other events, including the final tree felling, that I

haven't made since learning the GOL technique almost a decade ago. For this event, competitors had to put a pin on the ground that a bull's eye mounted on the top of the tree was to hit, and also try to hit the center of a 3-foot long 2 by 4 placed 25 feet away from the tree to indicate the direction of the fall. I determined the height correctly but was off on the side lean by almost two feet! Yikes!

The Game of Logging definitely becomes a game at the regional and national levels. Many veteran competitors have learned what to expect in events and from their own performances. There definitely is some strategy involved when it comes to racking up points, and I already have a few in mind for next time. With any luck "next time" will be next year, but with more and more people taking the GOL, some really good chainsaw operators are out there.

Competing is one thing, but getting skilled and confident sawyers in the woods is the most important aspect, and I'm extremely proud to be a graduate of the Game of Logging program.

Municipal Forests In Windham County

*By Bill Guenther
Windham County Forester*

A number of the towns throughout Windham County have what I refer to as Vermont's "best-kept recreational secrets": our municipal or town forests. Sixteen of the County's 23 towns have some sort of publicly owned forestland. The size of these tracts ranges from just a few acres in one

of the multiple Londonderry tracts, to the remote and wild 1,391 acres in the town of Dover.

The *Vermont Town Forest Stewardship Guide*, published by the Northern Forest Alliance, provides more information about these valuable resources. You can download a copy of the guide from:

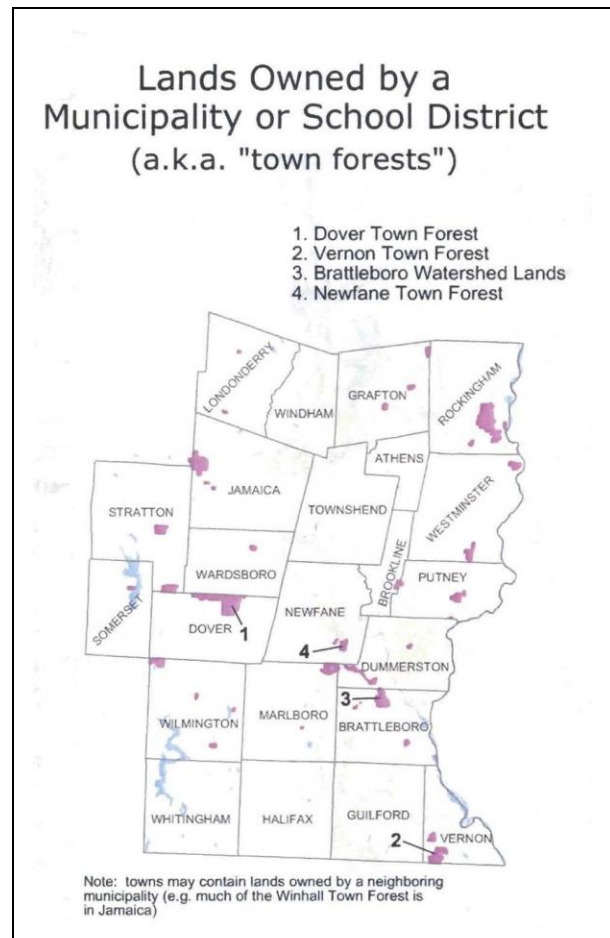
<http://www.communitiescommittee.org/pdfs/TownForestStewardshipGuide.pdf>

There is some interesting and varied history connected with how these lands were acquired. In one case, a town forest came into being from one of the "poor farms" of the old

days — town farms where the indigent were housed and fed in exchange for their labor. In 1973, Maynard Miller, a long-time dairy farmer and a legend in Vernon, convinced the town to spend the then unheard-of sum of \$175,000 (\$389/acre) to acquire a recreational use area, watershed protection, and a source of firewood for Vernon town residents – especially important in a year when the nation was facing a particularly severe energy crisis. More recently, the town of Dover purchased the above-mentioned large property for over \$400,000 when it realized that rampant development could leave a watershed unprotected.

These varied properties truly serve multiple purposes, such as producing wood products, maintaining and improving wildlife habitat, providing watershed protection, and offering varied recreational opportunities, as well as being used for conservation education. In some cases they support rare plant communities; for instance, the Miller Forest in Vernon has an excellent example of black gum “kettle” swamps that by rights should only occur many miles south of here.

The municipal forests that have high-quality timber can provide substantial income. Over \$30,000 was realized on a timber sale that covered less than 30 acres of the Brattleboro Watershed Forest. This showcase forest also offers excellent wildlife habitat and a wide range of non-motorized passive recreational



opportunities, and provides a source of clean water for nearly 10,000 town residents.

Several area schools use Newfane’s relatively new town forest as an outdoor educational laboratory. The forest also provides a trail network that fills a niche in the middle of the West River Valley.

The Biomass Crop Assistance Program (BCAP): What It Could Mean for Woodlot Owners in Vermont

*By Dana Ruppert, Program Technician
USDA Farm Service Agency, Windham County*

What Is the Biomass Crop Assistance Program?

BCAP, a program authorized as part of the 2008 Farm Bill, is designed to help increase the production of renewable energy. It provides financial assistance to producers/owners of

eligible biomass material that is delivered to qualified Biomass Conversion Facilities (BCFs).

The program is administered by the Farm Service Agency (FSA), an agency of the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture. Through the matching payment

component of BCAP, FSA provides financial assistance for the “collection, harvest, storage and transport” (CHST) of eligible materials. Producers/owners of eligible materials can receive CHST matching payments at a rate of \$1 for each \$1 per dry ton of material delivered to a qualified BCF, not to exceed \$45 per dry ton. The CHST matching payments will be available for a period of two years from the time that the FSA approves the owner’s/producer’s initial application.

While BCAP is a national program that covers a variety of crops and bio-materials, it can be tailored to work well for the Northeast’s forestry and farming communities. Given that Windham County is over 80 percent forested and southern Vermont over 90 percent, the area has considerable potential both to contribute to the region’s biomass needs and to obtain financial support through BCAP.

How Can Woodland Owners Participate in BCAP?

FSA is certifying schools, mills, utilities and other facilities that use biomass to heat/power their operations or that produce a bio-based product or fuel as BCFs, so that they may then participate in BCAP. Vermont currently has one qualified facility, located in Clarendon; there are four in New Hampshire and fifteen in Maine. A complete, regularly updated listing of facilities is located on the FSA website at http://www.fsa.usda.gov/Internet/FSA_File/bcapfacilitieslist.pdf

To be eligible for CHST matching payments, owners or producers who deliver biomass to qualified facilities must be able to demonstrate that they have ownership of the material and a contract to deliver it, and that the material was obtained from lands that are under a Forest Stewardship plan or similar management. Vermont FSA has worked with our state and

county foresters to develop a list of acceptable plans.

Here’s an example of how BCAP works:

1. A facility that runs its boiler on wood chips submits an application to FSA to become a *qualified* BCF, able to accept biomass eligible for CHST matching payments.
2. The qualified BCF then contracts with a producer/owner of eligible material to pay \$35 per dry ton for wood chips.
3. The material producer/owner submits an application to FSA to receive CHST matching payments, receives approval from FSA, and begins delivery of eligible material to the qualified BCF.
4. The material producer/owner submits documentation to FSA that the material was delivered.
5. FSA then may approve a matching payment to the producer/owner of \$35 per dry ton.

Note that although it is standard industry practice to deal in green tonnage and costs, BCAP guidelines require FSA matching payments to be made on *dry tons*. A qualified BCF must have the ability to weigh and measure the moisture content of materials, and to provide figures for both green and dry material.

If you have questions about BCAP or would like more information, please contact the Windham County FSA office at (802) 254-9766, ext. 2. We would be happy to work with you to determine if you may qualify for this program.

Program details, applications and a national list of qualified BCFs can be found on the FSA website at:

<http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/webapp?area=home&subject=cops&topic=bcap>

Shagbark Hickory Syrup

by Carol Morrison

A few weeks ago American Profile, the *Weekend Reformer* insert, carried an article about Gordon Jones and Sherrie Yarling of Indiana, who make Shagbark Hickory syrup. In exchange for firewood, a local man shared a recipe which had been passed down from his great-great grandmother. She had undoubtedly obtained it from the local tribe of Native Americans, who were producing Shagbark Hickory syrup long before the white man's arrival. The Shagbark Hickory tree sheds its bark like a snake shedding its skin. The interesting thing about this syrup is that it is made from the bark shed from the tree, not its sap.

After several attempts, Jones and Yarling succeeded in producing a delectable elixir with a subtle, smoky flavor, which caught the attention of such gourmet chefs as Wolfgang Puck. Naturally, they are keeping their recipe a secret. However, by searching the web I found this recipe "for an old, old fashioned syrup" on a cooks' blog:

Shagbark Hickory Syrup: This can be made by breaking up a couple strips of bark into a medium-size saucepan. Cover the bark with water and boil for 20 minutes. Strain out the bark and return the amber colored liquid to the saucepan. Over medium heat, gradually add

ordinary table sugar, stirring continuously until it dissolves and the mixture reaches a consistency you desire.

This is a great syrup! You can use it the same as maple syrup.

From Susie in MN

I suspect that the Native Americans of Indiana did not use cane sugar in their recipe. I wonder what they *did* use – maple sugar???

Jones and Yarling also produce and sell Tulip Poplar syrup. It started me wondering what other kinds of tree bark could be made into syrup. Wild Cherry bark syrup and Slippery Elm bark syrup, both good for coughs, came to mind. A web search yielded Cinnamon syrup, White Pine bark syrup, Birch Bark syrup, and a few more. Plum bark syrup was one that caught my eye. I wonder if the bark of other stone fruit trees might make useable syrups. Conversely, making bark syrup from some trees, such as the Black Locust, could be fatal.

Woodlot Tips readers: if you know of any other trees used to make bark syrup, please drop me a line at the WOA mailing address, or email me at info@woodlandownersassociation.org. Thanks!

Winter: The Best Season In Vermont

by Bill Guenther, Windham County Forester

The title of this article may have some folks already wondering if I am a bit loony, but yes, the season of short days is my favorite. I'll try to give you some tips on how to really *enjoy* it and not just tolerate or even hate it, as many Vermonters do. The key things you need to consider are your house, the car and you.

First I'll give some tips, not woods-related, that I hope will be helpful. Make sure your home is ready for winter by getting any cold spots sealed. For leaky windows, I like to use something called Mor-tite, which looks like putty rope about one-quarter inch in diameter and comes in a roll. It is simply pressed along



the seams of your window giving a good tight seal. And for those thrifty folks out there, you can use it again next year if you peel it off carefully when you remove it in the spring.

A quick way to hate winter is to have your pipes burst, so it's imperative that pipes on outside walls be well insulated. And for heat, since I'm sure many of you are burning wood, it is essential to burn good dry wood. In past articles, I have written about the drying process, so you need to make sure that green wood has at least a full year of drying. All too often I see folks get a log truck load of logs at the end of winter, start working it up that spring, and start burning it in the fall of the same year. That is *not* dry wood. That wood would not be ready until the following year. I am currently burning wood that has been drying for three and a half years. The large pieces can be started with just a lighter because it is so dry. Remember, burning green wood requires you to boil out the moisture before you get to the heat, causing about a 20 percent drop in heating efficiency.

Next on the list is the car. Many folks don't like winter because of winter driving, but a little preparation can go a long way. First, don't even think about driving around on "all weather radial tires," even if you have four-wheel drive. I don't care what the tire folks say. Get a good winter *snow tire*. With good snow tires, I've never owned a four-wheel drive, and never will, as I get along just fine with front-wheel drive.

Then make sure you know how to drive in snow since "snow drivability" varies greatly. Some snow types are like driving on glare ice, while some really dry snows with big flakes allow you to drive at almost normal speeds. Dad taught me two great tricks about handling winter driving that actually make it fun. One he called "the skid test," which simply means to head for a flat

stretch of road with no one to hit. Then jam on your brakes at around 15-20 mph. It will give you lots of data as to how slippery the snow really is. The other trick is to know how your car behaves in a skid. It makes a lot of sense to test this under controlled conditions, rather than when you're skidding towards a head-on collision. Go out to a big parking lot before it is plowed and practice driving in and out of a skid. Front-wheel, all-wheel and rear-wheel drive cars will handle differently.

Some simple maintenance items include always using "winter" wiper blades, as they don't hold ice the way traditional blades do. Keep your windshield washer reservoir full and always have a jug of it in the trunk. Your battery and charging system should be checked in the fall. I still continue an old New England tradition that most folks have given up. I use a factory OEM block heater in all of my cars to help the car start on a sub-zero morning and greatly reduce engine wear. When your oil is a cold, thick lump in the bottom of your engine, the block heater gets it up to operating temperature. The heater is put into the coolant system and can be set on a timer. It only takes a couple of hours to get the engine warm enough to minimize damage. You will need to use an extension cord to run to the plug that will hang out of the front of your car's grill. An odd side note: once Keene Toyota told me they could not install the block heater on my little Corolla as they did not know where to drill into the engine block. But a quick-thinking service manager made a call to Toyota of Fairbanks (Alaska!), and five minutes later they had the information. It is not good to let the engine idle for long periods to warm it up, and I personally detest remote starters as they waste a lot of precious gasoline. Use the block heater for two hours, start the car, and drive off after 30 seconds, going very slowly for the first mile, until you see the temperature gauge go up. I have driven over 150,000 miles with every car engine I've had and attribute the longevity to these practices.

Now that you've taken care of the house and the car, you need to think about *you*. Winter cannot

be enjoyed if you're cold all the time. Here is where the right clothing comes into play. I recommend starting with a good base layer of a synthetic material such as polypropylene or Capilene™ or something similar, but cotton is a no-no. Once damp from perspiration, it is worthless. I can't overemphasize enough the need for layering. Use lighter layers rather than just one or two bulky layers. Fleece materials are great for the next outer layers, and some of the newer versions are a "windstopper" variety.

For really polar conditions, one of the middle layers could be a goose down jacket or vest. This material, harvested from the feathers of Canada geese, is the warmest insulation per unit weight and volume. No synthetic has been developed that can beat it. *But*, never ever allow it to get wet, as it then becomes about the worst insulator.

Convective heat loss by even a five mile per hour wind can be huge, so make sure that you have a good windproof layer or shell as your outer layer. A good quality Gore-Tex™ unlined shell works. The key is to buy a range of sizes. The layer next to your skin should be the smallest, and as you move outward, the last layer should be the biggest. You want to make sure air is trapped in these layers that your body can warm, rather than having the layers tight to your body. I wear an XL silk-weight Capilene layer closest to my skin, then an XXL polypropylene base layer, and then move up to XL fleece jackets. With two base layers, two fleece layers, a down jacket and a Gore-Tex shell, I am perfectly comfortable at temperature of 30 degrees below zero! It's all in how you dress.

For those folks who tend to get real cold extremities, there is a nifty aid called chemical heat packs. You crack open the packet and expose them to air for about 10 minutes, and then put them into your gloves or boots or anywhere you tend to be cold. They will give off up to eight hours of warming heat. For a winter climb in the awesome Presidential Range



of the White Mountains, even my warm-blooded girlfriend was comfortable after I cracked a total of 10 heat packs and had them surrounding her petite 5'0" frame. It is truly amazing to stand on Mt. Washington in February with a sky so blue, because the air quality is so much better than in the hazy days of summer.

Now that your abode is warm and comfy, you're now a master winter driver with your car set up right, and you've got the right clothing, now comes the most important part of enjoying winter — *Attitude*. If you think something is bad, it surely will be, but if you say, I really want to see winter come on and am now ready for it, then you've crossed the biggest hurdle.

We often hear that folks get cabin fever from being cooped up all winter. As long as you don't have a major infirmity, anyone can get out and participate in at least some outdoor winter activities. Cross county skiing is an excellent aerobic activity, but if that's not your cup of tea, if you can walk, you can snowshoe. This sport has seen a huge increase in popularity, and breaking trail in new, deep snow is *very* aerobic. If you're not ready for that, seek out any of the multitude of snow-machine trails that exists throughout our County. These packed trails can make it very easy to get around.

If you really want a great experience, try winter camping. During our polar outbreak last January, I found myself camped out in northern Maine on a night well below zero, with a 25-mph wind with chill factors of about 35 degrees below zero. Since I had the right gear, I slept warmer than I do in my own home in Newfane. I even had to shed a layer in the middle of the night when I got too warm!

With the right attitude, the right gear and some good prior planning, there's no reason to not enjoy the season of the white. Now you know why I get real excited every December 21st!

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WOA is a non-profit association of woodland owners and managers, members of the wood products industry, and other interested parties in the Windham County Region who advocate both sustainable management practices and the enjoyment of forests and their ecosystems. In support of these ends, WOA offers educational opportunities for all age groups. Areas of interest include: biodiversity; clean air and water; cultural and historic resources; fair and equitable taxation of woodland; forest products; recreation; scenic beauty; and wildlife habitat. We recognize that these concepts are continually evolving and therefore will strive to consider the most current thinking and values regarding them.