



11 University Way, Suite 4, Brattleboro, VT 05301  
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WOODLOT TIPS



## WINTER 2012

### **Saturday, March 17, at 10 a.m. — Sugar House Tour, Dummerston**

Steve and Maria Glabach will host the tour this year. Their sugarhouse is at the intersection of Houghton Road and Middle Road in Dummerston. Steve sent the following narrative about the operation.

Maple sugaring has long been a family tradition with the Glabachs. Ted (my father) sugared in the 30s and 40s, with much of that time being spent at the Bunker Farm in Dummerston. He then moved to Houghton Rd. and we boiled at the farm sugarhouse until 1999. We built the new sugarhouse out next to the tar road where we now boil. Our daughter, son, Maria and I do the sugaring with the help of many of our friends and neighbors.

I started my sugaring operation in 1968 as an FFA (Future Farmers of America) project working with my dad. I started with 75 taps and a small arch and have continued to grow from there. We now have about 5,000 taps utilizing buckets and pipeline. Everyone recognizes the high quality of sap using buckets, but the labor to gather it is the major factor in why we have converted to pipeline where it's possible. We also purchase sap from several other folks who are interested in maple sugaring.

Our sugarhouse is designed to be customer friendly. With a 5x14 wood fired arch, our visitors can see the large fire, feel the heat blast from the fire while it's being wooded, smell the steam, and look into the pan to see the sap and the nice amber color of the maple syrup boiling. We use

reverse-osmosis to pre-sweeten the sap before entering the arch and vacuum pumps are utilized to increase sap flow and sap quality in some of the sugar lots.

We sell most of the syrup retail, either by customers picking it up at the house or by shipping directly to customers all over the country. We also sell wholesale to a few stores in the area, as well as to a couple of Internet sales suppliers. Our sugarhouse is always open to the public when we're boiling. We are glad to answer questions and discuss all facets of the Maple industry. It is very important to Vermont's economy and to the beauty of the state; we feel blessed to be part of it.

## Woodland Owners Association's New Email Address:

[woodlandownersassociation@gmail.com](mailto:woodlandownersassociation@gmail.com)

Recently Carol Morrison sent an email to all of you who have given WOA your email address, asking you to reply to the above address if you would like to receive news about upcoming programs and other information of interest to WOA members.

If you already gave her your email address, but have not received any information, or if you would like to receive the notifications, please let her know at the above address and she'll put you on the list!

## President's Column

*By George Weir*

### *Thoughts on Managing Beyond Use*

About 15 years ago, former WOA president and long-time trustee Bill Schmidt and I had a conversation about what "sustainability" meant related to forests. I suggested maybe it was simply an extension of sustained yield, bringing into consideration other values we can derive from forestland. Bill thought it was something more, but wasn't sure how to define that. We spoke for a while, but didn't come to any conclusions.

During the same decade Bill and I had our conversation, many forest professionals and forestry publications considered and often debated whether or not "ecosystem management" fundamentally differed from multiple use, or was simply an extension of multiple use, a way to manage for "ecosystem services" and "non-product values." I read some of the discussion, but it never struck a chord with me, because like the discussion I had with Bill, it floundered around without reaching conclusions or coming up with anything concrete.

Thankfully, the term ecosystem has faded from use recently. (I cringed when I heard nature defined as a "system.") Now we more often hear people refer to what we used to call (shudder) ecosystems, natural communities. I like that better, but I'm not sure about the community part. I usually think of forest vegeta-

tion as plant species growing in the same place, rather than species with an affinity for one another.

But to get back on topic, foresters and others now often speak of managing forests as natural communities, without broadly defining how that management differs from managing "forest types" or "stands" employing timber management guides. Certainly part of the reason discussions on sustainability versus sustained yield or ecosystem management (there's that word again) versus multiple use have trouble reaching conclusions is there are a myriad of publications and techniques on how to sustain forest product yields or achieve multiple use. There are few, maybe none, that advise how to manage a forest for what it is: a whole association of life forms and non-living matter, rather than for specific outputs.

So going back to my discussion with Bill, I think he was on the right track and I wasn't. I was still engrossed in the multiple use paradigm; he was looking beyond services, products and values we can derive, without being able to define that which lay beyond. No surprise; our forestry thinking and language are all about what we get, how we use. But how do we say what a forest actually is and how we sustain that?

This may all seem overly abstract, but actually — and perhaps thankfully — there is a practical side to

this. With exceptions that affect less than a few percent of enrolled land, all use value land has to be managed for products. Some have tried to extend benefits to non-product values with little success. Early in the process of developing legislation to address deer impacts on the land, the goal of broadly protecting forest vegetation was replaced by the objective of protecting timber crops. We tried; we failed, so far. And the legislature has asked Fish and Wildlife to develop silvicultural recommendations for landowners on how to manage for timber values in areas of high deer populations. If Bill Guenther and I testify again this year to the legislature on browsing impacts, I expect we'll couch our remarks

in terms of economic impacts, rather than the impact of browsing on blue cohosh, painted trillium and mid-story nesting songbirds.

I won't belabor this further, but I have three ideas. First, our mission statement encourages us to look beyond product values and consider other values. Second, others within state government have mission statements that require them to look at product values, and we should encourage them to honor those statements. And last, we could explore ideas of managing forests for what they are, rather than for what they may produce.

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## Update on House Bill 237 and Proposed Changes to UVA

By Bill Guenther, Windham County Forester

In last year's Legislative session, the House passed House Bill (H.237), which makes some substantive changes to UVA, primarily in how the Land Use Change Tax (LUCT), also called the "penalty tax" or "development tax," is applied. Presently, the tax is based on the proportion of a parcel's overall value to the percentage of land to be developed. For instance, if you had 100 acres of land and the town's fair market value appraisal was \$100,000 or \$1,000 per acre (and you had been enrolled in the program for more than 10 years), your LUCT would be 10 percent, or \$100/acre. So if you wanted to take 2 acres out for a house lot, your total penalty in this example would be \$200.

H.237 would change the LUCT to be based on the actual market value of the portion developed. Additionally, the bill calls for a tiered approach to be applied when determining the LUCT. For parcels enrolled up to 12 years, the LUCT would be assessed at 10 percent, 12 to 20 years would at a 8 percent rate and if more than 20 years, it would go down to 5 percent. In my example above, if you have been enrolled say for five years, and that two acre lot was valued at \$50,000, the LUTC under H.237 would be \$5,000 (10 percent of the \$50,000 Fair Market Value) as opposed to \$200 that would be due under the current LUCT. The local listers would be the folks who determine the value of the "developed" acres taken out of UVA enrolled parcels. The LUCT would still be paid to the state, but one half of it would be returned back to the local municipality.

This LUCT change would be substantive. Therefore, built into the legislation are some opportunities to exit all or part of the enrolled land at a reduced rate. If you wanted to take the *entire* parcel out of the program, there would be no penalty due, and the lien would be removed, but of course the parcel would then be subject to full fair market value taxation. In addition, if you wanted to re-enroll this tract you'd have to wait five years and then enroll the *entire* amount that was previously removed.

If you wanted to take out just a portion of an enrolled parcel, you would have a specified time period and could use the current system of calculating the LUCT. The goal in raising this tax would be to increase revenues to help support the program. Currently the differential between the use value tax liability and full fair market values taxes are nearly 53 million dollars.

Two years ago the Current Use Tax Coalition or CUTC was formed. This is a consortium of natural resource organizations, including the statewide Vermont Woodlands Association (VWA), Vermont Land Trust, the Vermont Forest Products Association, and others. This group has been meeting regularly and been following the proposed legislation. CUTC has developed its own set of recommendations on the proposed LUCT. It also supports a tiered approach, but has proposed a lesser percentage of fair market value for the LUCT on the last two tiers.

For parcels enrolled 12 to 20 years, the group proposes that the tax be 5 percent of fair market value as opposed to the 8 percent called for in H.237, and on parcels continuously enrolled for more than 20 years, CUTC supports a LUCT of 3 percent as opposed to the 5 percent embodied in H.237.

An additional component of H.237 is to appoint a Study Committee that would look at “multiple strategies to strengthen the effectiveness, efficiency and fairness of UVA and to find additional revenue generation or cost savings consistent with the program’s policy objectives. One key area of interest is “to examine the existing formula for municipal reimbursement payments to determine if the payments are equitable and appropriate ...”

As of the first week of February, the Bill was in the Senate and has been given to the Senate Finance committee for review. There seems to be a lot of desire in the legislature to make some changes, so there probably will be action on this bill this year.

**Author’s editorial comment:** I wanted to offer a personal opinion (these comments do NOT represent the position of the Vermont Forestry Division) on this proposal. First, I really disagree with the tiered approach for the Land Use Change tax. It will cause lots of difficulty with the Current Use office staff in Montpelier in attempting to determine what percentage to apply based on the number of years a parcel has been enrolled. But even more importantly, I can’t begin to understand why you should pay a smaller LUTC just because you have been in the program for a longer period of time. After all, isn’t this a land conservation program among other things? To me, there is no logical reason to reward those who want to develop with a smaller tax, just because they have been in the program for a longer period of time. Besides, these folks have gotten a lot more tax savings by being enrolled longer.

Whatever your opinion on H.237 may be, I encourage you all to let your legislators know how you feel about these proposed changes. We’re still a small enough state that direct citizen input really can impact legislation.

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## Is This Your Chair?

This folding camp chair was left at Cersosimo Farm after the 2011 Annual Meeting. If it is yours, please email Carol Morrison at [woodlandownersassociation@gmail.com](mailto:woodlandownersassociation@gmail.com) and arrange to pick it up. Thanks.



## Library Corner

Each article in this series highlights a book in the WOA library collection. Check it out!

— Margaret MacDonald, WOA Trustee

***A Landowner's Guide to Managing Your Woods—How to Maintain a Small Acreage for Long-Term Health, Biodiversity, and High-Quality Timber Production*, by Ann Larkin Hansen, Mike Severson, and Dennis L. Waterman, Storey Publishing, LLC, 2011.**

This book, written by a landowner, a logger, and a forester, won the National Woodlands Association's award as the "2011 Woodlands Book of the Year." It provides a readable introduction to sustainable practices for managing a woodland of any size. The authors first discuss how forests develop, and then describe how landowners can assess the environmental characteristics of their land and choose the most appropriate and sustainable uses of their particular forest. The book also offers guidance on such topics

as planting and pruning trees, marking trees for harvest, working with foresters and loggers, improving wildlife habitat, creating trail systems, and using the forest for activities such as hiking, hunting, and maple sugaring. Finally, the book discusses "Finances and Legacies"—an important topic that, as the Autumn 2011 issue of *National Woodlands* points out, may be of special concern to landowners given current government deficits and their implications for tax policies.

***The Woodburner's Companion: Practical Ways of Heating with Wood*, by Dirk Thomas, 3rd edition, Alan C. Hood & Company, Inc., 2006**

As we all know to our cost (literally), heating a home with oil or electricity has become more and more expensive – especially during our Vermont winters. This book guides homeowners on the best, and safest, ways to use woodstoves, fireplaces, and wood-burning furnaces. The author, a New Englander who has worked as a chimney sweep and a commercial woodcutter and logger, makes a strong environmental, financial, and even political case for using wood as a fuel; as he points out, nations do not go to war

over trees. He discusses the heating value of different types of wood, and gives detailed advice on buying firewood, obtaining the best performance from the heating source, and constructing and maintaining chimneys and flues. The book also provides instructions on woodstove installation and describes building and fire codes. While woodburning technologies have evolved since this book was written, it remains a source of practical information on all aspects of using wood to heat a home.

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## Wood Burners: How to Keep Your Home from Becoming a Burned Out Cellar Hole

*By Bill Guenther, Windham County Forester; adapted from an article by Dave Johnson P.E. (Wisconsin)*

With the unseasonably warm weather, there has recently been a spike in chimney fires. What is the connection between warm weather and these interior infernos? Folks tend to step down their stoves (or furnaces) when the temperatures rise, as less heat is needed from the appliance. But when fires don't burn very hot, there is a buildup of creosote.

Creosote is a gummy, foul smelling, corrosive, and inflammable substance that will coat the sides of everything it passes through. It is formed when volatile gases given off in the burning process combine and condense on their way out the chimney. The gases leave the burning wood with the smoke. If the

smoke is cooled below 250 degrees F., the gases will liquefy, combine and solidify, forming creosote. Creosote takes several forms, all bad. As a liquid, it can run down the sides of chimney and pipes and then dry to form a hard layer coating the pipes and chimney liners. It can also form into a fluffy substance, which plugs up pipes and then falls down, filling low spots in the piping. ***Creosote is the cause of most chimney fires.***

Creosote buildup can be pretty sneaky as it tends to feed on itself. The thicker the layer, the more it restricts the pipes and chimney. This slows the expul-

sion of smoke, allowing more time for it to cool and for the creosote to condense and build up even more deposits. Once the deposits build to an extreme level, it is then possible for the creosote to ignite in the chimney. Chimney fires are described as a harrowing experience to endure. They burn very hot and can then often ignite partitions in your house that are in close proximity to the chimney. In extreme cases, they can cause a house to explode in flames. Back in the 70s a co-worker of mine was sitting in his log cabin late one evening, heard a roar, and the house literally erupted in flames. He and his family barely escaped. The fire had so heated the inner walls, that a large part of the house just burst into flames all at once.

At this point I am sure you're asking how we can avoid a potential tragedy of loss of life and/or house. Less creosote equals a safer wood heat environment, so that should be our goal. There are two major things you can do to minimize creosote buildup. First, have fires hot enough to periodically "burn off" initial layers of creosote, which keeps the buildup low enough to minimize the potential for a fire. Remember the 250-degree figure stated above and make sure you have a thermometer attached to the pipe coming out of your burning appliance. You want to keep the temperature above 250 degrees. In fact, an optimal stack temp is 300-400 degrees F.

The second method of minimizing creosote is to burn only *dry* wood. All of the water contained in the wood is turned to saturated steam as the wood burns. It enters the stack as steam and water droplets at a temp of around 212 degrees F. This is considerably cooler than the condensation point of the creosote gases, 250 degrees. Thus the presence of steam cools the chimney, the gases condense, and creosote is formed.

We often hear of dry or seasoned firewood, but what does that really mean? My definition of *dry* firewood is: The wood is blocked, split and stacked outside (or in an outside wood shed, but not inside the house) off the ground and covered, with the ends open to drying at least *one full year*. This should reduce the moisture content in the wood down to about 15-20 percent. If you can hear a hissing coming out of your burning wood, it is not dry. Burning green wood not only imperils your house due to increased risk of chimney fire, but it is more costly in terms of the amount of wood you need. If your house will heat on five cords of dry wood you need to add another full cord to get the same amount of heat, because to get to the heat value of green wood, you must first boil off the water.

So the moral of this story is: Run your fires hot and burn *dry* wood!

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## Woodland Secret #5 — Spring Flowers

*By Arthur H. Westing, Former WOA Trustee*

Many of our rich, moist, limey (calcareous) New England forest soils support hardwood stands containing maple (*Acer*), ash (*Fraxinus*), or basswood (*Tilia*) and are virtually unique in also supporting a considerable array of early spring flowers. These small ephemeral perennials flower and set fruit and seeds very rapidly, completing that cycle before the overstory leaves have fully developed.

Among our locally most common perennial spring flowers are Spring beauty (*Clatonia virginica*), Trout-lily (*Erythronium americanum*), Jack-in-the-pulpit (*Arisaema triphyllum*), Dutchman's breeches (*Dicentra cucullaria*), Toothwort (*Cardamine concatenata*), and Bloodroot (*Sanguinaria canadensis*). Canada mayflower (*Maianthemum canadense*) is also found among that array of our very common

spring perennials, but it can additionally thrive in the less rich oak dominated woodlands. The leaf and flower buds of all of these plants had been formed during the prior summer and then lay dormant until late April or early May. By the time the overstory canopy has fully developed in late May or early June these spring ephemerals have already loaded up their rhizomes and root systems with enough stored food to enable them to do it all over again in the following spring. Most of them then become hard to find during the summer and fall.

Most of our spring flowers produce colorful and/or aromatic flowers attractive to a variety of bees and to some flies (the latter, e.g., those of Jack-in-the-pulpit). Thus most of the spring flowers reproduce sexually for the most part through cross-pollination.

However, many are at least occasionally self-pollinating, among them Bloodroot, the Violets (*Viola* spp), Wild ginger (*Asarum canadense*), and Hepatica (*Hepatica americana*). Oddly enough, the flowers of a few of these plants produce fruits and seeds without the bother of having their ovaries fertilized (a phenomenon known as parthenogenesis), e.g., Trillium (*Trillium grandiflorum*). Moreover, on top of their sexual reproduction, various of the spring flowers additionally depend heavily on vegetative (asexual) reproduction, especially Bloodroot and Trout-lily, so that large patches of these two plants are most likely to comprise a single clone (each individual thus being properly referred to as a ramet). Spring beauty is something else again: its flowers open each day for about two to three weeks, doing so in a repeating cycle in which for one day they are functionally male (staminate), followed by several or

so days of being functionally female (pistillate).

The seed dispersal of spring flowers provides another fascinating story. For most of the spring flowers each individual seed they produce has attached to it a small lipid-rich body (called an elaiosome) that ants crave. So they carry off the seeds, eat those attached morsels, and then discard the seeds hither and yon. On the other hand, once ripe, the fruit capsule of a Spring beauty explodes, thereby shooting the enclosed seeds up to 2 feet away.

Finally, in addition to having made good use of an otherwise empty niche in one of our local hardwood ecosystems, the spring flowers also serve the useful function of retaining nutrients within that system which might otherwise have been washed out as the winter snows melt and run off.

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## Big Tree Tour Repeat

*By Bill Guenther, Windham County Forester*

Arriving home one November evening, I had a somewhat strange message from a lady named Roberta in Saxtons River, inquiring as to whether or not she could hire me to give her son Ethan, who is a UVM Forestry student, a private Big Tree Tour for his Christmas present. I was honored by her out-of-the-ordinary request, but felt that I could not do this for pay as it was too closely related to my County Forester activities and would be a conflict of interest. But suddenly a light bulb went off in my head, and I said: "Perhaps this could be offered, but on a donation basis, with all of the proceeds going to the Vermont Disaster Flood Relief Fund."

"Berta" readily agreed and we just needed to find a date where Ethan could get a day off from his after school hours job at Shelburne Farms. We finally settled on Saturday, February 4, and we decided to follow the same route as last fall's tour from Vernon to Putney Mountain.

The day dawned clear but crisp, with very little snow on the ground and none on the roads. It was a good day to get around and visit the big trees. Our group included Ethan, his mom, and six other folks. It year. But lo and behold, she again had made a butternut cake from her runner-up butternut tree, along with hot cocoa. She showed us the cabling display she had made for last fall's tour. Ethan's girlfriend

turned out that Ethan's stepdad was one of the builders who had renovated the farm where the Extension Service office is located, including the old milking parlor, so this provided a neat bit of history to start the day.

After a brief introduction at the office, we headed down to Vernon and were met by Annette Roydon and her dog Emma. Emma was a little pup in November, but now has grown into a pretty big and very playful dog. The American elm looked as stately as ever, and Ethan enjoyed the discussion we had on Dutch elm disease and our surprise that we were able to pronounce this monarch to be disease free.

Ethan and I rode together throughout the day, and it was invigorating to learn about the latest coming out of my alma mater. He is a bright young man who will make a great contribution to the profession of forestry. His inquisitiveness and attention to details allowed me to see a lot of my own strange personality in his!

Arriving at Esther Falk's, I hoped she had not gone to any special trouble for us, as she is in her 91st was captivated by Esther and wants to come back and visit this fascinating, worldly, and very down-to-earth-lady.

The day concluded with a hike out to Laura and George Heller's black birch champion, in the boon-docks of Putney Mountain. This gave the chilly participants a chance to warm up with the mile long hike and to see the impressive tree with its huge spreading branches along a stone wall in an old pasture that has now grown back to a 60-year-old forest.

After getting back to the cars at dusk, Ethan seemed elated at the day, I had gotten more up to speed on what is being taught at UVM, and our other participants seemed happy, but tired. And best of all, I was able to send a bit over \$200 off to the Vermont Disaster Flood Relief Fund!

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*The following article was submitted to Woodlot Tips and has sparked some discussion. Neil raises a fundamental issue: What are the end uses of the timber we sell — and should we care? For example, much of the paper we use ends up in landfills, so by reverting to paper, we're contributing to environmental pollution. However, universal electronic bill paying could lead to 450,000 more on the unemployment rolls if the U.S. Postal Service goes under. Given the quantity and variety of wood products, there are bound to be multiple views on the tradeoffs involved in our increasingly electronic society.*

***What's your opinion?** Woodlot Tips welcomes a dialogue on this topic. Please send your (brief!) comments by email to [woodlandownersassociation@gmail.com](mailto:woodlandownersassociation@gmail.com) with Woodlot Tips in the subject line, or by mail to Woodlot Tips, c/o WOA, 11 University Way, Suite 4, Brattleboro, VT 05301.*

## JUST A THOUGHT

*By Neil Pelsue, Newfane, Vermont*

Not unlike a lot of people, I often try to find more efficient ways to do things. When a friend showed me how to use the electronic bill-paying service available from our bank, I thought, Wow here's a good one. So, I started using this service. It worked well, and still does.

A few days ago I got to thinking: What are some of the long-range effects of using these electronic bill-paying services? For one, it reduces the demand for paper. For another, it reduces the need for the U.S. Postal Service products and services. Both of these, and probably some others as well, reduce employment opportunities. If our economy needs anything right now, it certainly needs at least stable employment, but increased employment opportunities would be much better. Furthermore, I suspect there are a number of folks, especially in rural areas, who do not want to lose their local post offices.

It also occurred to me that here we are, trying to sell wood from our forests — sawlogs and firewood —

and I'm using E-bill-paying services. What's wrong with this picture? I'm reducing my demand for paper products and USPS services. Something needs to change.

Accordingly, my 2012 New Year's resolution was to stop using my E-bill service and go back to paying bills by check using the U.S. mail. I know it's not much, but it is my part to help the economy and increase opportunities to sell logs and firewood and provide jobs for our local timber industry.

Perhaps if we can persuade some of those using E-bill-paying services to give up just a bit of their efficiency, we might be able to boost the demand for wood and create job opportunities for those in our timber industry and the USPS. As the saying goes, "every little bit helps."



**WOODLAND OWNERS ASSOCIATION**  
11 University Way, Suite 4  
Brattleboro, VT 05301-3669

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CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

***Upcoming Program***

(See inside for details.)

***Annual Sugar House Visit: Saturday, March 17, at 10 a.m.***

***Mission of Woodland Owners Association***

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.