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# WOODLOT TIPS



Photo: FreeDigitalPhotos.net

## SUMMER 2014

### **Saturday, September 20, 9 a.m. — Woodland Owners Association Annual Meeting**

This year the Annual Meeting will be held at Jamaica State Park. We will meet at the Pavilion at 9 a.m. for coffee and begin the program at 9:30. There will be a separate mailing with program details and directions.

### **Tuesday, September 30, 7 p.m. — The Public Health Risk for Lyme Disease in a Complex Forest Ecosystem: *What can we do?***

Jeff Ward, Chief Scientist with the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station, will discuss the public health issue of the complex connection between the trouble regenerating our forests, the destruction of wildflowers, Japanese barberry, honeysuckle, multiflora rose, Lyme disease, and deer.

At **6 PM** Gerry Hawkes, of Forest Savers LLC, will show and explain his system for efficiently uprooting and shredding large infestations of invasive vegetation, as well as the four million BTU flaming system.

This important program is sponsored by the Conservation Commissions of Dummerston, Putney, Guilford, Marlboro, and Brattleboro, the Woodland Owners Association, and the Bonnyvale Environmental Education Center.

**Directions:** The Learning Collaborative, 471 Rte. 5, Dummerston, 1.8 miles north of Exit 3 rotary

## President's Column

by Margaret MacDonald

### **WOA: Inheriting Diverse Views**

In his book *Landscape and Memory*, historian Simon Schama states that, "Landscapes are culture before they are nature; constructs of the imagination projected onto wood and water and rock."

Thus, attitudes toward the woodlands reflect historical circumstance and cultural heritage rather than any objective reality, and naturally have varied widely.

Many primitive cultures worshipped trees, and showed their respect by attaching pieces of sacrificial victims to their branches. A sort of superstitious dread, perhaps a legacy of those pagan rites, colored views of the forest throughout much of European history. The average person saw the woods as the boundaries of civilization; they surrounded you, but you entered them only out of necessity. They were dark, dangerous places believed to harbor evil spirits and known to harbor outlaws. These were not jolly, lovable outlaws like Sherwood Forest's Robin Hood and his Merrie Men, who would take your purse if you were a member of the Idle Rich but might then invite you to feast on roast venison and drink toasts to Good King Richard (they apparently had little insight into Richard's true character). Instead, they were vicious, violent outlaws who would slit your veins and do other unpleasant things to you for the fun of it, whether you were rich or not. As for those who depended on the forest for their living, Grimm's fairy tales paint a fairly accurate picture of the life of a woodcutter: poor and hazardous.

Yet at the same time some writers and artists went to the opposite extreme: they worshipped "wilderness" — the more "frightful" the better — precisely because it was untainted by human intervention. They saw forests as the remnants of mythic Arcadia, and wanted to go "back to nature" with a vengeance. Enthusiastic landowners went to great expense to re-create imagined primitive landscapes or construct artificial "wildernesses" (some of them complete with caves and their resident hermits) on their estates.

Meanwhile, the ruling classes tended to view woodlands largely as commodities. Forests were useful: they were home to the large game animals that the nobility hunted for entertainment and they pro-

duced the timber that rulers needed for shipbuilding, industry, or export. Throughout much of history, governments blithely exploited forests until the exhaustion of natural resources frightened them into taking protective action. In fact, the concept of "sustainable forestry" first appeared in a 1713 book written in response to a catastrophic timber shortage that threatened the silver mining and metallurgy industries in Saxony. In *Sylvicultura Oeconomica or Instructions for Wild Tree Cultivation* Hans Carl von Carlowitz, a tax accountant and chief inspector of mining at the Saxon court, gathered the then-current scientific understanding of forestry and used the findings to argue that localities should harvest only as much wood as they could regrow through planned reforestation.

The WOA membership represents all of these viewpoints — in their more modern, better informed, and less extreme forms. Our members include loggers, landowners, writers, craftspeople, and government officials (though perhaps not rulers). Depending on our backgrounds, our jobs, and our individual experiences, we have different priorities with regard to Vermont's woodlands. What unites us is that we all value the woodlands for both their beauty and their utility. Unlike the Romantics, we don't consider it sacrilege to cut a tree — but we don't want to cut all of them. Some of us love to hunt and want to ensure a large stock of game, but also recognize the damage caused by overbrowsing. We have a healthy respect for the woods and their inhabitants, but we don't fear them. And the biannual Big Tree tour is as close as we get to worshipping trees, but we have fortunately eliminated the element of human sacrifice.

All of this means that WOA is heir to traditions that extend far beyond our official 65-year lifetime. Ideally, our appreciation of the woodlands can help to shape the attitudes that will enable the forests to thrive in the centuries to come.

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It has been an honor to serve on WOA's Board of Trustees for the past six years, and as your president in the last year. Thank you for your continuing commitment to WOA.

## See a Brontosaurus in Action!

*By Diana Todd, WOA Trustee*

What's a Brontosaurus? It's a plant-eating dinosaur, yes, but it's also the proprietary name for a massive chipper/chopper attachment for an excavator that is used for land clearing. Why is it called a Brontosaurus? Because it's a machine that eats trees. Essentially it's a massive mulcher on a boom that is able to grind trees and shrubs into chips all the way to ground level.

That doesn't sound very forest friendly, does it? But sometimes clearing the land of non-productive growth is the best first step in achieving specific forestry goals. Lee and Diana Todd have qualified for a WHIP grant to clear five acres of their land in Halifax using a Brontosaurus-type machine in order to stimulate the type of new growth known as early successional habitat (ESH). ESH, that in-between growth that isn't field anymore but hasn't become forest yet is becoming increasingly scarce in New England, and population declines in animal and bird species that need that type of habitat have been documented.

The Todds have arranged for Faun Koplovsky to bring his Brontosaurus-type machine to Halifax sometime before Sept 30. He estimates the work will take 3-5 days, but he can't predict exactly which week he'll be on the site. We hope to be able to bring a WOA group out to the site to see the machine in action and to inspect the results, including the size of the chips/mulch, the depth of the resulting mulch layer, and the height of remaining stumps.

Since we can't schedule this in advance, it will have to be a "flash mob" meeting – announced at the last minute. Contact WOA Secretary Carol Morrison at [woodlandownersassociation@gmail.com](mailto:woodlandownersassociation@gmail.com) or (802) 257-7967 ext. 302 to have your name added to a list of people who want to be alerted when the program is scheduled.

To see a video of the machine in action, go to <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a8ZJwnikSzk> Or just Google "tree mulching faun" and click on the YouTube link that comes up in the results.

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## Invasive Plant Management: Working with Contractors

*By Margaret MacDonald, WOA President, and Bill Guenther, County Forester*

On May 17, some 40 people attended a workshop cosponsored by the Dummerston and Guilford Conservation Commissions that informed landowners about invasive plants and approaches to controlling them, with a special focus on the contributions that expert contractors can make to combating larger-scale problems with invasives. Few landowners have the time, expertise, or resources to manage serious infestations, so working with a responsible contractor may offer the best option for those who can afford it.

The program at the Dummerston Center Grange Hall began with a slide show titled, "The Invasives Are Here!" The presentation was created by Windham County Forester Bill Guenther and Andrew Morrison, a graduate student at Antioch University of New England, and described the seriousness of the problem, outlined the historical context, and explained the motivation for controlling invasive species. Among the points empha-

sized are that ornamental species have been the biggest culprits in the spread of invasives. To make matters worse, deer browse leads to increased colonization by invasives and matting ferns.

In our area, buckthorn presents the most serious problem: it spreads rapidly, leafs out early, and retains leaves late into the fall, thus creating dense shade that helps it to out-compete many native plants. In addition, its branching habit makes songbirds vulnerable to predation. Buckthorn seeds can remain viable in the soil for five years. Bill recommended mowing buckthorn at least four times a season for five years. If using chemicals, landowners should cut the buckthorn a foot above the ground and apply glyphosates right onto the stem. The cut material should be bagged and moved on plastic. Japanese knotweed should be pulled early (in the first or second year). Bill concluded his part of the presentation by urging land-

owners to accept that they cannot eliminate invasives entirely, but that they can win some battles, and should not simply give up. For example, oriental bittersweet creates such devastating damage that landowners should make every effort to eradicate it.

Andrew's portion of the program centered on how individual landowners can both find help and provide it to combat invasives. He cited programs such as U.S. Cooperative Weed Management Areas (CWMAs;) and Cooperative Invasive Species Management Areas (CISMAs; see: <http://invasive.org/cismas/index.cfm>) — partnerships that can receive federal grants for managing invasive species (or weeds) in a defined area. CISMAs and CWMAs protect central (pristine) areas first, create a buffer zone around the protected core areas, and work outward to expand the amount of land treated. Landowners could copy that model on their individual properties. Cooperation is essential; even the best efforts to control invasive plants will fail if neighbors allow invasives to flourish on their property. Andrew also noted that it is most effective to destroy invasives when they are young: "Kill them when they're kids!" For a guide on how to create a CWMA in the Eastern United States, see: <http://www.mipn.org/CWMACookbook2011.pdf>

Andrew then described the value of mapping areas colonized by invasives, and drew attention to free online software available from Vermont Invasives (<http://www.vtinvasives.org/node/49>), which allows participants to map infestations using their smartphones. The website includes a primer on entering data into the database. The larger the number of users, the more effective the program will be; currently the small number of participants means that invasives are under-reported. For instance, the current map of Windham County does not show the presence of Japanese barberry, which everyone knows has infested the county. In response to a question, Bill and Andrew noted that practices used for timber management might open up the forest canopy and make a property more susceptible to invasives. Bill advises landowners to perform an assessment and treat the land before conducting a timber harvest, but he pointed out that treatment is not cheap and he cannot force landowners to follow this advice.

Another audience member pointed out that contractors who do not clean their mowing and logging equipment could inadvertently transfer invasives to new properties. The speakers noted that many contractors are now taught to clean their machinery; landowners should specify this requirement in the contract. State contracts do require cleaning of equipment.

The workshop attendees then drove to the properties of Bill Flynt and Jesse Palmer, where WOA trustee Dan Healey, of Long View Forest Management and Contracting, and Chris Polatin, manager of Polatin Ecological Services, LLC, led walks into the woods to illustrate problems and discuss control measures. One forest stand perfectly illustrated several of the points made during the earlier presentations. Bill Flynt had engaged a contractor to treat an infestation of barberry and succeeded in practically eliminating the bushes from the area, but a neighbor's property, separated from Bill's only by the stone wall marking the boundary, was a sea of barberry. This led to various questions about the appropriate use of chemicals. Chris usually advises against using a mist sprayer, except in relatively large, badly infested areas; otherwise he recommends a more targeted application of herbicide. He stressed the importance of always aiming downward when applying any type of spray treatment. All the workshop leaders emphasized that landowners must adhere to the guidelines on the container when applying chemicals such as the different glyphosates.

On Jesse's parcel, the group observed a winged euonymus (burning bush) outbreak that had spread rapidly in just a few years. Jesse has spent a great deal of time trying to eradicate his infestation by using mechanical methods, such as hand pulling and use of the Weed Wrench™.

When the tour returned to the Flynt house, Chris showed the group some of the equipment he uses when working for clients and described the sources and costs of different items. Regardless of whether they intend to hire a contractor or combat invasives on their own, all workshop participants came away with useful ideas and resources.

## Not All Invasives Are Aliens!

*By Diana Todd, WOA Trustee*

I've been battling a rogue's gallery of invasives (European buckthorn, Japanese barberry, Asian honeysuckle, Japanese knotweed) on my land in Halifax, so the most surprising thing I learned at a recent WOA program on invasives was that Jim Betteridge is battling a group of troublesome plants that are natives, not foreign invaders. On June 27, 2014 Dan Healey, a Trustee of WOA and the Woodland Services Manager of Long View Forest Management & Contracting, led a workshop on "Managing Forest Invasive Plants" at Jim's property in Marlboro, Vermont.

Jim's family has owned the property in Marlboro for three generations. In 2012, Jim harvested timber from a piece of land that had been a hay field when his grandfather bought the property in 1930. Most of the trees that grew on the site were low quality. A shelterwood cut was used, leaving the best trees in place to mature for another five years and to shade the new growth. Jim set aside 10 percent of the proceeds from the harvest to actively manage the regrowth so that he can get the forest he wants on that site as it regrows. A big part of the effort will be to knock back both beech and hay-scented fern, two native plants that have become problems in many northeastern forests. Japanese barberry, an alien invasive, is also present at the site.

Why are these two native plants, beech and hay-scented fern, considered invasive? When any one species grows and spreads so aggressively that it crowds out any other growth, it is considered invasive. Dan Healey says that the recent aggressive

growth of beech in northeastern forests is generally understood to be related to the beech bark disease that has been stressing the beech population for the last 40 years. I assumed that any stress on a species would mean that it goes into decline. Not so in the case of beech. Beech can reproduce via root propagation as well as by seed. When beech is stressed, it turns most of its energy into reproducing. The mature tree that is suffering from the beech bark disease may go into decline, but in the meantime it is sending up dozens or even hundreds of sprouts from its root network. This aggressive shade-tolerant young growth being fed from the roots of the mature tree out-competes growth from other species that start from seed.

Dan couldn't explain why hay-scented fern has become such a problem. This fern has always been in the northeastern woods, but it wasn't seen as a problem until recent decades. It grows in dense mats that shade out any tree seedlings that manage to find a foothold among the fern's rhizome roots. The fern is also allelopathic, meaning that it produces chemicals that inhibit the growth of other plants. (Don't confuse allelopathy, as I did, with allopathy, a type of medical practice!)

The plan for the site is to use chemical treatment (mainly glyphosate) to knock back the beech, hay-scented fern, and Japanese barberry. Ash and red maple seedlings have already taken hold, and aspen is stump sprouting. The aspen, while not very commercially valuable, serves an important role in succession by providing shade for hardwood seedlings. Oak is expected to appear soon.

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## Woodworking with a Difference

*By John Evans*

WOA's June tour of Waring Woodworking in Brattleboro was so filled with interesting commentary and illustrations of the creative use of highly figured woods that it's hard to make a choice about what to report.

A solo cabinetmaker, Nat Waring is very particular about his choice of raw materials. The beautiful, straight, clear boards that many seek for a

project are ignored. Favored are woods with very distinctive and unusual patterns in the grain, or signs of disease and hard times. Even the words used to describe the character of the wood stimulate the imagination — birds eye, curly, spalted, burl, gnarly and streaked.

Creating these patterns are the stains associated with maple tapping, twisted stems and logs with a

sweep and other stresses. Building what Nat calls “organic natural form furniture” with this raw material requires a high level of skill and the application of unusual creativity. The results are stunning examples of art forms in wood.

Nat admits to constantly searching the woods for timber that is unusual and provides the challenge of projects that “really stretch my imagination.” Logs are sawn to his specifications, and can be as wide as the capacity of Nat’s 52-inch Alaskan chainsaw mill.

Looking at a kitchen with cabinets built by Waring Woodworking you will see eye-catching grain patterns flowing across doors and drawers. Anticipating the project. Nat often will have numbered each log to enable the project to be completed with book-matching components.

“I buy a lot of logs that others don’t want and don’t like,” Nat said. It’s hopeful news for those of us worried that drilling tap holes into a maple stand will destroy the commercial value of butt logs in the future. If more woodworkers come to value wood with distinctive character, the market for tapped wood will improve over time.

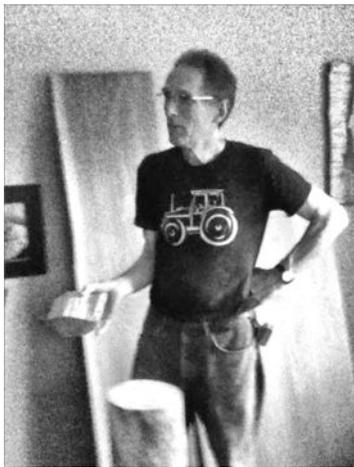
Nat started on this new direction in woodworking about 12 years ago. It required a 180-degree turn in the selection of materials. The catalyst was meeting Sonny Tappan, who would become his wife.

“I used to only do jobs with the cleanest, most defect free boards I could find,” he said. Sonny was attracted to figured wood and found clean boards to be boring, without personality.

What’s unexpected is to find that Nat works with what he calls “the dyslexia advantage.” “Our brains are physically different and we see things differently,” he explained. Using this advantage, Nat finds that when he looks at logs and boards it is easy to visualize a project, and the design and building process by which it will come together. “These images stay in memory,” he added. Nat also is ambidextrous and finds this is very helpful when working in the shop.

It makes one think of spending a few hours in the woods with Nat, taking the same walks he does in the continuing search for logs. The commercial part of our brain is attracted to long, straight stems creating a series of butt logs. Looking with Nat’s eyes our vision may linger on a standing dead log, gnarled and twisted, creating what appears to be a nightmare of difficulty to create straight boards for cabinet furniture. Nat will be thinking beyond the potential problems and may already visualize a piece of unique furniture, a coffee table top or display table.

Working with this kind of wood, especially burls and grains which so easily chip when passing across a planer blade, is much easier with specialized equipment. Nat’s 20-inch jointer is 100 years old, built at a time when America made exceptional tools to last more than a lifetime. Purchased in Maine, describing this machine requires words only hinted at by heavy-duty. It weighs 3,000 pounds. A 36-inch wide sander puts another 6,000 pounds of weight on the floor. Other equipment is similarly industrial in scale.



The new cutters installed on the planer are spiral, not straight blades. It’s like turning a hand plane at an angle to the grain and lowering the angle of cut to reduce tearout.

Nat and Sunny live off the grid in Marlboro. You would get a hint of Nat’s intensity and commitment to figured woods if you were to visit their home. Nat told us he loves to make drawers, and that currently there are 98 of them in the house.

If you wish to see examples of Nat’s work, visit [www.waringwoodworking.com](http://www.waringwoodworking.com) and navigate to the Portfolio section.

I left this wonderful, thought provoking WOA tour with a new appreciation for our extraordinary forests in Windham County, filled with the straight stems bringing good prices in log markets and the immense variety of tapped, burlled, swept and twisted trunks with the potential to create furniture that will remain useful and beautiful for the life of the owner, and succeeding generations. After all, a piece of furniture should have a life span longer than the cabinetmaker and the tools and machines that built it.

## More Good News from the Scholarship Committee

*By Barbara Cole, Chair, Scholarship Committee*

This year, at the Strolling of the Heifers, the winner of the beautiful cherry burl bowl, crafted and donated by trustee Peter Wimmelman, was Twin Valley teacher Chris Walling from Whitingham, Vt. The raffle for the bowl raised over \$750 for the scholarship fund.

This year we have three scholarship recipients: Marissa Smith from Guilford, attending Stockbridge School of Agriculture at UMass Amherst for her



second year; Connor Hunt of Wilmington, entering his junior year in Forestry related studies at Lyndon State College; and, Brendan Douglass of Bellows Falls, entering his freshman year at Paul Smith's College.

We appreciate the financial help that our membership provides in the form of scholarship aid for students of merit who will be furthering the goals of the Woodland Owners Association.

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## Spring and Summer 2014 Forest Health Update

*By Bill Guenther, County Forester*

This spring once again left us with white pine needle problems. Here is a department press release on the subject:

The Vermont Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation reported that white pine tree needle damage is widespread in the state again this spring. According to Windham County Forester Bill Guenther, "The golden hue of white pine needle blight exploded onto the scene in early June." Although the damage is very noticeable, it is not life-threatening to healthy white pines.

Widespread yellowing of white pine needles has been particularly noticeable in the region since 2010. Topmost branches are rarely affected by the disease. Although the white pine needle damage looks serious, the trees aren't dying, and their new shoots should grow normally. Trees will look better in early summer, once all the injured needles are shed.

Microscopic fungi have been associated with this disease, which has become noticeable throughout northern New England and eastern Canada. "White pine needle damage can become a problem in the year following a wet spring, which favors development of fungi," said Isabel Munck, Forest Pathologist with the U.S. Forest Service. Needle fungi have also been causing damage to other pine species.

The Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation is cooperating with the U.S. Forest Service and other states in conducting surveys to determine the cause and impact of the damage.

Even though there was yet another Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) find this summer, this time right on the N.H./Mass. border, we still have no known EAB in the Green Mountain State. During this past winter there were some indications from some researchers in Minnesota that the much colder than average winter could induce mortality. But Deborah G. McCullough, Professor of entomology and forestry at Michigan State, who led a study of ash trees in Lower Michigan over the winter, said, "We did not find a single dead larva." That was disheartening as I had hoped that severe cold could help reduce the insects' spread into Vermont. At this point, we must continue to be ever vigilant about looking for the signs of EAB, most notably the "blonding" that occurs from woodpeckers going after the larvae under the bark, exposing the much lighter inner bark.

One other interesting occurrence was visiting a landowner in West Brattleboro who had dwarf blue spruce being defoliated. We discovered that gypsy moths were the culprits. This seemed odd to me as this insect typically goes after the oak species and other hardwoods, although when populations get high enough, they have been

known to feed on pines and at extreme populations, on hemlock. After doing some research I found similar occurrences reported, and in Michigan, an Extension agent felt that this could be due to the gypsy moth adapting to an environment providing more cover from predators. Spruces' sharp prickly needles and dense

branching habit could offer protection to the gypsy moth. Even though a previously introduced fungus, *Entomophaga maimaiga*, has greatly reduced populations for the last 20 years, the spruce could be offering some sort of safe haven to this introduced insect. Mother Nature never ceases to amaze me!!

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## Ginseng Alert!

*By Bob Twitchell, WOA Trustee*

Woodland owners should be aware of the high prices being paid for wild ginseng. Your plants may be in danger of disappearing. Last Fall \$1,100 per pound was being offered by one buyer for ten-year-old or older roots. If sometime between mid-August and mid-October you find someone wandering around your woodlot, this may explain why they are there.

To dig ginseng, a license is required as well as landowner permission. As a landowner you have the right to ask to see the license if people are hunting, fishing, trapping or ginseng collecting on your land.

Landowners who are not aware of whether or not they have ginseng habitat should look on a north-east to southeast slope that is well stocked with

sugar maple and white ash, with a few basswood mixed in. Maidenhair ferns will be found among the ground plants. There will be no yellow birch, spruce or witch hobble found in good ginseng habitat.

What I do to protect my plants somewhat is to pick the berries as soon as they turn red, about the first of September, plant them nearby, and then break off the plant at ground level and put it in a bouquet at home. As the Fall colors cover our hillside, the ginseng leaves will change from green to yellow.

To find out more about ginseng, contact the Vermont Agency of Agriculture at 802-828-2431 or at [www.vermontagriculture.com](http://www.vermontagriculture.com). Another resource is the School of Natural Resources, Aiken Building, UVM, Burlington, VT 05405.

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## Use Value Appraisal (UVA) Program Legislative Changes for 2014

*By Bill Guenther, County Forester*

This past legislative session that concluded in early May was a real roller when it came to the UVA Program. Last year I reported that in the first year of the biennial session, the House passed their version of the bill known as H.329 with many changes. The most noteworthy portion would have changed the Land Use change Tax (a.k.a. the "penalty tax" or "development tax").

This year the Senate took up the bill after holding several hearings around the state and decided to entirely scrap the House version and wrote their own version. With much upheaval and many iterations put on the table, the Senate failed to come to an agreement in the waning hours of the session. There were however, two small changes made to the UVA law that were attached to an agricultural bill, H.869. The first was removing the 20 percent

limit on lands enrolled as ESTAs (Ecologically Significant Treatment Areas). There are six categories of land that can be enrolled as ESTAs including R,T & E (rare, threatened and endangered) species habitats, riparian areas, rare natural communities, vernal pools, old forests and forested wetlands. Landowners can now submit a request to the Commissioner of FP&R seeking permission to allow ESTA enrollment above the old limit.

The only other change to UVA this year was to allow for extensions of ten-year management plan updates. This is also done by submitting a written request to the Commissioner of FP&R. In the most extenuating circumstances, an extension of up to up to one year can be granted for submission of a ten-year update.

## New Vermont Farm & Forestry Program

Are you considering big changes to your business or your crew? Trying to sell to a different wood market? Looking to better manage your finances? Preparing to transfer your business to new ownership?

The new Vermont Farm & Forest Viability Program (VFFVP) provides one-on-one, in-depth business planning and related technical assistance to Vermont businesses in three sectors: forestry and forest products, food systems, and farming. Our goal is to provide these kinds of businesses with the skills they need to remain viable into the future. The Vermont Farm & Forest Viability Program is a program of the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board, with additional funding from the Vermont Working Lands Initiative.

VFFVP can provide:

- Enterprise Analysis to find out what's making money and what's losing money
- Business Planning to clarify the goals, finances, and future plans of your business and get it on paper so you can communicate to others where you are and where you're going
- Financial Record-keeping and Management to learn how to keep track of your

finances and use the information to make strategic business decisions

- Marketing and Sales to help you determine that you're getting into the right markets
- Human Resources Management to learn the skills and techniques for holding on to quality employees
- Retirement and Ownership Transfer Planning to make sure your business and your family have a plan for down the road

Businesses that enroll in the Program are matched up with consultant(s) from a growing network of service providers who specialize in forestry and the forest products industry, and they work together for up to 24 months.

Applications are welcome from woodlot owners, loggers, foresters, sawmill and kiln operators, as well as manufacturers and craftsmen. A \$75 enrollment fee is charged to businesses and program coordinator, Liz Gleason (802-828-3370; [liz@vhcb.org](mailto:liz@vhcb.org)), is happy to answer any questions. For further information and a copy of the application, please visit the VFFVP website: [www.vhcb.org/viability](http://www.vhcb.org/viability).

### Green Mountain Passport — A Discount Program For Seniors And Veterans

The Green Mountain Passport is for free admission to Vermont State Parks, excluding overnight camping and other park fees. Use the Passport also for free admission to Vermont State Historic Sites and to fully state sponsored events.

To be eligible a person must be a legal resident of Vermont *and* is also:

- 62 years of age or older or
- A veteran of the uniformed services

To receive a Green Mountain Passport, just fill out an application at your local City or Town Clerk's office and pay a \$2.00 fee.

*If you'd like information about other services and benefits for Seniors, contact your local Area Agency on Aging by calling the Senior HelpLine at 1-800-642-5119.*

## Mink v. Muskrat (not a court case)!

*By Sam Schneski, County Forester*

It was a cold, snowy morning, just after a sloppy, early spring snowfall, and I was driving to work on Weatherhead Hollow Rd. in Guilford. I was at the north end of the Weatherhead Hollow Pond when I stopped because two brown furry objects were rolling around in the middle of the road in my lane. After getting over the initial excitement of getting to see something play out in nature, I realized they couldn't care less that a big car was stopped 10 feet away from them. I shut off the car and began taking some pictures.

The animals were rolling around and grunting. At first I thought it was maybe some sort of courting or the result of successful courting. As they rolled closer to my open window I realized it was a mink with its teeth sunk into the head and eye socket of a muskrat. My guess was that after a long cold winter the mink was hoping for a muskrat breakfast. I knew mink could be slightly ferocious, but the muskrat was close to the same size as the mink! It was impressive to say the least. After a few seconds they rolled under the car. I decided to wait until they came out so I didn't drive off to the sound of *thump...thump*. About a half a minute later, sure enough, they rolled out from under my car behind me. I thought this was too good to pass up so I got out of the car with my camera phone and started walking towards them, figuring if the car didn't scare them, then a little human wouldn't either. I was wrong. The mink took one look at me, let go of the muskrat, and headed off the side of the road down into a drainage area. It stood next to a log and looked at me and made a low growly type noise before heading off towards the pond. I walked over to the wounded muskrat to hear it grunting and see it rolling around a little bit. I then did what any lover of nature would do. I used my boot to gently kick it down into the drainage area so the mink could finish what he'd started. I then decided to let nature take its course and got in my car and drove away.

Besides this incident, interestingly enough, I've heard more than one logger say they have been

logging in a machine and had moose, deer, or other wildlife come up to feed on fresh tree tops while the operator was still right there in the running machine. When these loggers exited their vehicles, in most cases the animal decided to run off. It must have something to do with the evolution of animals' fear of things walking on legs and not wheeled or tracked equipment...?

I recently shared these pictures with Furbearer Biologist Chris Bernier and here is what he said:

“The interesting thing to note about this incident is not that mink kill muskrat — that we've known for a long time — but that muskrat are in an apparent decline throughout the region (to a lesser degree here in Vermont to the best of our ability to determine) and much focus has/will have been given to determining the cause. A multi-state research project aimed at evaluating cause-specific mortality factors is pending. It is anticipated that Vermont will play a role in this research, perhaps in Missisquoi Bay, although that is yet to be determined. Of the many mortality factors ... discussed as drivers of the decline, increased predation seems to be most commonly agreed upon by regional biologists as being perhaps among the most likely/significant. At this point, I don't believe there is a 'smoking gun' responsible for the decline, but rather a variety of factors working in concert with each other, among them predation.”



# WOODLAND SECRET #15 — Stream Corridors and Lakeshores

*By Arthur H. Westing, Former WOA Trustee*

The woodland stream corridors and lakeshores in our region — technically referred to as **woodland riparian zones** — represent habitats of their own that call for special attention. These strips of land support a mix of trees, non-woody plants, and wildlife somewhat different from the woods beyond them. Moreover, they exert an important influence on the waters they abut. Trees likely to be found in our woodland riparian zones include Red and Silver maples [*Acer rubrum* & *A. saccharinum*], Black and Green ashes [*Fraxinus nigra* & *F. pennsylvanica*], Black willow [*Salix nigra*], Sycamore [*Platanus occidentalis*], Black spruce [*Picea mariana*], and Eastern larch (Tamarack) [*Larix laricina*].

Among the larger streams running at least in part through our woodlands are the Connecticut, West, Deerfield, Saxtons, and Williams Rivers; and our smaller ones include the Winhall, Green, Rock, North, and Fall Rivers, as well as the Ball Mountain, Wardsboro, Cobb, Turkey Mountain, Whetstone, Grassy, and Sacketts Brooks. Additional shorelines result from our many regional lakes (whether natural or artificial), of which at least two dozen are more than 20 acres [8 ha] in size. It is perhaps unnecessary to note that, owing to their topography in our very hilly region, many of our stream corridors have had their ecological integrity compromised to a greater or lesser extent by also serving as road corridors. Other common disruptions of this habitat have resulted from dams, channelization, agricultural pursuits, and various misguided flood-control measures.

Affording riparian zones special care is justified in many ways, important among them: **(a)** riparian vegetation helps prevent streambank and lakeshore soil erosion in these often ecologically fragile sites, thereby stabilizing the bank and reducing the amount of soil and associated materials (particulate pollutants) from entering the water; **(b)** riparian vegetation and animal life plus their decomposition and evacuation products con-

tribute substantially to the nutrients required by both the terrestrial ecosystem and the adjacent aquatic plants and animals; **(c)** riparian vegetation helps prevent noxious water-soluble chemicals (soluble pollutants) from entering the adjacent water; **(d)** in trout and other cold-water fishery streams, the shade provided by riparian trees helps to maintain favorably low water temperatures; **(e)** the habitat corridors created by riparian zones help to counter terrestrial habitat fragmentation, the latter an increasingly serious concern; **(f)** some wildlife (e.g., beaver, mink, moose, river otters, some turtles, some frogs, kingfishers, bald eagles, ospreys, wood ducks) require a combined woodland/water habitat; **(g)** riparian zones are generally considered to be aesthetically appealing or useful for recreational purposes (e.g., for hiking, cross-country skiing, hunting, fishing); and **(h)** to the extent that riparian zones are formally protected, they will add to the as yet insufficiently conserved lands in our region.

As to the width of a riparian zone, at least 20 feet [6 m] from the high-water mark would serve to simply stabilize a shoreline — although here and below somewhat more is necessary if the land goes steeply uphill. Indeed, the first 20 feet should always be left undisturbed. For supplying beneficial nutrients to the adjacent waters and greatly reducing the entry of pollutants, at least 75 feet [23 m] would be needed, with the portion beyond 20 feet (if desired) logged lightly on a sustainable basis. That extent of protection would also be more than adequate to provide the necessary shade for trout streams, but somewhat less wide than desirable as the above-noted woodland/water habitat or as wildlife corridors.

**Finally**, **(a)** our flood plains should be zoned to prohibit housing and other permanent structures; and **(b)** north-south corridors among our riparian zones should receive special protection because these will permit northerly range shifts of our vegetation as the climate continues to warm.

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*For membership information or email notices of upcoming programs, contact Carol Morrison, WOA Clerk, at [woodlandownersassociation@gmail.com](mailto:woodlandownersassociation@gmail.com)*

As of October 23rd, County Forester Bill Guenther's office — and with it WOA headquarters — will relocate to the Austine School in Brattleboro. Details and contact information will be in the Fall issue of *Woodlot Tips*.

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**Upcoming Programs**

***(See inside for details)***

**Saturday, September 20, 9 a.m.**

**WOA Annual Meeting, Jamaica State Park**

**Tuesday, September 30, 7 p.m.**

**The Public Health Risk for Lyme Disease in a Complex Forest Ecosystem — *What Can We Do?***

*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.