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WOODLOT TIPS

SPRING 2022



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Here we are, deep into Spring. The light green leaves are poking out, the lawn is almost begging to be mowed, but I will not be moved.

Mainly because I am adhering to “No Mow May”.

<https://beecityusa.org/no-mow-may/>

This is a movement to allow the honey bees, and others to find pollen and nectar in their early stages of returning from hibernation when food is scarce. It makes the front lawn look a little scraggly, and will tax my lawnmower June 1st, but should pay off in more vegetables and flowers later on.

And I can be lazy for a few more weeks.

I have been planting and pruning in the meantime. Radishes and Arugula are well established. Peas are about 4 inches tall. We have had a few Asparagus from our sad little plot in salads, (not enough for a real meal) and the Rhubarb is flourishing. Daffodils are on the way out and Flox on the way in. Cherry trees and Serviceberries are in bloom.

I just returned for my 56th Reunion (55th delayed by Covid) at Haverford College in Pennsylvania. It is a beautiful campus now and always. Everything Spring is now in bloom. The entire campus is an Arboretum designed in the 1800's. Some of the trees date from as early as 1834.

Unfortunately we arrived there in driving rain and howling wind. One of the oldest Oaks on campus lost large and heavy limbs to the storm. They were in the process of limbing it up and evaluating its future.

Fortunately, the arborists have for years engaged in succession planting, where new trees of the same species are planted beneath the older ones, so that when the time comes to remove the old trees, the replacement for them is already established. The Arboretum itself is fascinating to explore, even from far away.

<https://haverford.arboretumexplorer.org/map.aspx>

You can explore the types of trees, their locations with many photos. You can even see which trees have been planted to commemorate which people.

On the home front, I am pleased to announce that the WRWA is alive and kicking. Financially, we are holding our own, despite the last few years of Covid.

We had our first program this spring, with more on the way. We have had scholarship requests for the first time in a few years and are looking forward to supporting young people interested in Forestry.

As you may know, Phyllis Weltz is stepping down as Treasurer and we will miss her in that capacity. However, the great news is that (after very little coaxing) she has agreed to join the Board of Trustees and we couldn't be happier. She will continue to be an invaluable asset to the organization.

PROGRAMMING NEWS

A WALK TO THE ROARING BROOK FALLS

On June 4th (rain date June 11th) WRWA Bob Spenser will lead a walk to the Roaring Brook Falls in Vernon. He will be joined by Aaron Hurst, the State Lands Forester who oversees the Roaring Brook Wildlife Management Area.

The walk will start at 10am. It is about two and half miles of moderate hiking to the falls and then the same on the return. The plan is to hike to the falls, have lunch (if you bring it) and then return. All in all, you can expect about a 4 hour walk all told.

Parking is available at the Vernon Town Forest of Basin Road.

Here is a description of the area from The Roaring Brook WMA Long Range Management Plan.

Roaring Brook Wildlife Management Area (RBWMA)1 consists of a number of parcels totaling 1,428 acres located in the towns of Vernon (1,289.52 acres) and Guilford (138.55 acres), Vermont. The parcel abuts the northbound lane of I-91 from the Massachusetts state line northward for 2.4 miles.

The entire property is on steep to gently rolling terrain. Public access to the parcel is generally poor. The parcel is composed of 1,002 acres where F&W holds all rights (fee simple), 386 acres where the timber rights are privately owned, and 38 acres where F&W owns only hunting rights.

The entire parcel is located at the extreme southerly end of the Southern Vermont Piedmont biophysical region. A number of plant

and animal species are found here that are more typical of southern New England.

Wildlife Habitat and Species Highlights

The proximity of the WMA, Vernon Town Forest, several undeveloped inholdings, large private parcels to the north and east devoted to forest management, and conserved lands to the south in Massachusetts, results in a large area of forested habitat that can fulfill all the needs of a number of wildlife species.

White-tailed deer and turkey are common and abundant game species.

The Eastern Racer, an endangered species of snake, is found on the property along with vernal pools and wetlands that support a wide variety of amphibian and bird species.

Bat surveys indicated an abundance of bat species including little brown, northern long-eared, and big brown bat before white-nose syndrome had become established in Vermont. The current status of these populations is unknown.

Important habitat features include large areas of deer winter habitat, stands of oak and hickory that provide wildlife food, numerous wetlands, and Eastern Racer habitat along the Interstate and power corridor.

The WMA is adjacent to several large conserved parcels in Massachusetts (conserved lands map on page 17) creating an approximately 5,000-acre area of conserved habitat in the region.

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Natural Community Highlights

Black gum swamps, also found on Vernon Town Forest, are the most unique natural feature on the WMA. (Some of these black gums are among the oldest trees in Vermont at 400+ years). Occasional stumps of large American chestnut and numerous chestnut sprouts can still be found more than 100 years since the introduction of the chestnut blight fungus. Most of the forested acreage is occupied by Hemlock-Northern Hardwood Forest.

There are numerous small wetlands on the parcel totaling 94 acres; the largest at 50 acres is comprised of 11 acres of open water and 39 acres of forested, shrub, and herbaceous wetland.

Roaring Brook, with several scenic falls, is a small stream which drains the property flowing west into the headwaters of Falls River. Streams and wetlands, including Newton Brook, are common in the two western most Fox Hill Lots.

Nineteen of the 80 natural community types recognized in Vermont have been identified on the property. Hemlock-Northern Hardwood Forest is the most common natural community followed by Northern Hardwood. These two types cover most of the land area (95±%) of RBWMA. Thirteen of the natural community types are variations of wetlands.

Two uncommon to rare upland communities, Dry Oak Forest and White Pine-Red Oak-Black Oak Forest, are also important community types on the WMA.

There are four wetland natural community types which are classified uncommon to very rare in Vermont; the remaining wetland communities are common throughout the state although they only account for a small amount of acreage statewide. There are fourteen rare, threatened, or endangered plant species found on the WMA, all associated with wetlands or exceedingly dry areas.

The complete wildlife management survey can be accessed at

https://fpr.vermont.gov/sites/fpr/files/State_Lands_Administration/Lands_Management_Planning/Library/roaringbrookwma.finallrmp.03012012.pdf

Forest Health Update:

Happenings in 2021 and things to look for in 2022

Sam Schneski, Windham County Forester

Spongy Moth Defoliation

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Spongy moth has gone through some name changes lately, but it's the same moth it used to be. Previously known as gypsy moth, and then LDD (for the latin *Lymantria dispar*), the moth is now officially called spongy moth.

This moth made its presence known last June primarily in the Champlain Valley. In a very short period from early June to late June it had defoliated large portions of that area of the state. By the time it was done feeding, our department had mapped just over 50,000 acres of forest affected. Spongy moth prefers oaks but when it has had its fill of that, it will eat foliage on many other hardwoods including maple.

Last year the population was believed to be extremely high because of the drought conditions throughout the state and especially in the Champlain Valley. There's a natural fungus and/or virus that will kill these moths when in caterpillar form. Non drought like weather is crucial for control.

The forest health team has monitored for spongy moth since 1986 including 2 sites in southeastern Vermont. The way they do this is to wrap burlap around some potential host hardwood trees slightly below chest level in the spring to create an enticing shelter for the moths. In the fall they lift the burlap and count egg masses. The numbers in 2021 were the highest we've seen.

It remains to be seen what the population will do as it is very dependent on wet or dry weather conditions. So far, we've had ample moisture, so at this point the expectation is similar defoliation levels as last year. For more info on how to treat spongy moth on your property go to <https://fpr.vermont.gov/forest/forest-health>

Hemlock Woolly Adelgid (HWA)

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The news with Hemlock Woolly Adelgid is mostly the same as last time I wrote an update. I say that because it has been established in Windham County for some time now and is not going away. We continue to see infestations at fairly high levels in the county. There are a few biocontrol sites being tried out which include the release of predatory beetles.

Forest Health HWA project leader Jim Esden has been monitoring those sites as well as other impact plots. Winter mortality from this past winter looks low at 61%. Consecutive years of 90%+ mortality is needed to really knock the population back for a bit. The last time we had consecutive years like that had been from 2014-2016, with a high of 99% mortality and a low of 97%.

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Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) -

Emerald Ash Borer is now federally deregulated, meaning APHIS is no longer monitoring for new finds. They are however involved in some exciting biocontrol projects happening in Vermont. In 2020 two biocontrol sites were established in South Hero and Plainfield.

This year there is one new biocontrol site being established in Bennington at the Whipstock Hill Wildlife Management Area. Over 4500 insects are released at each site. These 3 parasitic wasp species will lay eggs in the larvae or eggs of EAB. EAB only has one generation per year, but the wasps have multiple.

Hopefully this will help reduce the population of EAB. The goal with the biocontrol wasps is not to eradicate EAB from our landscape, but rather to bring the population down to low enough levels to ensure ash as a species survives and regenerates.

Our department continues to monitor using trap trees by girdling ash to stress them and then to cut and peel their bark in the fall looking for EAB larvae.

White Pine Needle Damage –

This disease is reliant on the previous year's spring moisture. Last year it was quite prominent, but we can expect it to be lower this year due to our wet spring. We'll know more by June.

Maple Leaf Cutter -

Maple leaf cutter is a late season defoliator. In 2021 it was the 2nd most observed type of insect or disease damage in the state (2nd to spongy moth) with around 28,000 acres defoliated mainly in northeastern Vermont. Because of the fall timing, when trees are done photosynthesizing and are storing energy in their roots, it doesn't tend to have a huge affect on sugar maple health.

Multiple years of reported defoliations could have a negative effect, so we are keeping our eyes on that. The forest health team will look for adults this spring to estimate the potential fall population.

Beech Leaf Disease (BLD) -

Beech leaf disease has not been found in Vermont to date. Dark banding in beech leaves disrupts photosynthesis and other function. The banding is caused by invasive nematodes. Until recently, only mortality in saplings and small trees has been observed. Recently in Connecticut there has been some large mature beech tree mortality resulting from BLD.

Our Vermont forest health folks have set up some monitoring locations and have not found any in Vermont but will keep looking. Vtinvasives.org –

As always, if you think you've found an invasive insect or disease please visit vtinvasives.org to report it.

Getting Paid to Grow Your Trees- Update #3

By Bob Zimmerman, Trustee, Secretary, Clerk
robert.rzimmer@gmail.com

I have been a writing series of article about my exploration into the world of forest carbon credits for the small landowner. In Summer 2021 Woodlot Tips I described my initial investigations into the carbon market and how one might get started. In the Fall 2021 edition I described applying to 2 companies that were doing business with small landowners. In the Winter 2022 edition of Woodlot Tips, I described how NCX was not a good fit and how I continued to work with Forest Carbon Works and how they were preparing an offer for our consideration.

Well that offer never came. Instead, I received a phone call letting me know that our forestland would not fit their requirements. Unfortunately, the details of why we were not a fit are hazy.

Apparently, we did not qualify to get paid for growing trees because our forest carbon content is only slightly above that of an average forest in our region. It seems that the California carbon market where the credits are traded for cash insists on forests with lots of trees. Maybe this rejection is related to our logging project (TSI) in 2015.

In some ways I was having some doubts as there was a commitment of 125 years involved with Forest Carbon Works. But, not to be totally left out. Forest Carbon Works has a new program that may be a fit for their new carbon project pathway involving voluntary-market opportunities. My guess is that is has something to do with their recent acquisition by Kimmeridge which provided them with increased capital to explore new options in the carbon market.

Indeed, just this morning I received written information about this new opportunity to participate in this carbon market. This newer option partners with Verra and the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) to verify carbon storage and forest management during the period of participation (nominally 125 years as in the original plan). This “voluntary” opportunity is designed to allow smaller landowners (>40 acres) with lower amounts of carbon (smaller than average trees or recently harvested forests) to enter the carbon market.

Verra is a 501c(3) non profit that is in the business of encouraging and facilitating sustainable development and fulfilling climate action goals. It has been around since 2007. FSC was founded in 1993 to certify sustainable forest management.

I plan to keep looking into this rapidly changing world of carbon markets for the small forest owner. Stay tuned, or better, keep on reading Woodlot Tips.

Riding The Wind

Summer 2022

Dan Dubie
Member WRWA Board of Trustees

As we welcome the warmth from the high rays of sunlight and the forest leaves slowly make their way into the world after a cold spring, don't forget to explore some of the more dryer parts of the region. I know that the moist secluded ravines and remote wetlands are always enchanting, we don't want to forget the dry summits and hillsides that all too often get overlooked. These places can easily be passed by but to the visitor that does not mind some hot dry hiking, these rocky areas are homes to some of the most intriguing plant communities in our region.

Both in Vermont and New Hampshire many places that are perched on the South facing summits, ridges, and slopes with shallow soil and exposed bedrock have unique communities of plants that are specially adapted to hot droughty conditions. Two natural communities that have a presence in the region are the Pitch-Pine-Oak-Heath Rock Summit and the Dry Red Oak-White Pine Forest. Both communities are dominated by pines and oaks, some of them such as Pitch Pine and Scrub Oak found in the Rocky Summit are rare or uncommon in Vermont and are a treat to get to know.

Along with a forest or woodland canopy of oaks and pines, the ground in these communities is commonly covered by amazing thick layers of heath shrubs, namely lowbush blueberries and huckleberries which provide a tasty treat during late June and Early July. Also, during that same time if a Red Oak-White Pine Forest is visited a special treat may be given. For in these communities the Pink Lady Slipper Orchid can

commonly be found, standing tall below a scraggly canopy of oaks. Look for the two large egg-shaped orchid leaves with a tall bright pink fringed blossom, a special reward for the wary hiker that has made it high above the valley floor.

Also, as you explore these perched homes of warm winds and strong sun, look for evidence of past fire. Charcoal in the ground and on old stumps and trees will show you of even hotter times when fire periodically has visited these places. Increasingly uncommon now, fire was more common in centuries past but still is known to visit these dry places.

Though these communities feel as they have been on the mountain side for a long time, and they certainly have been, know that they are also incredibly fragile. The shallow soils and many of the plants that are adapted to live on them, are very susceptible to trampling by human visitors. Please be mindful of where you move here, step on open rock whenever possible, and please do not collect plants except berries. If flowers are desired to be seen, only take pictures and let these hardy plants continue their lives in these extreme environments.

These places are very special and deserve the utmost respect and appreciation. Share their knowledge, love, and respect with others in ways that keep them intact and resilient. And next time as you decide where to hike look to the rocky places where no one else wants to go, bring extra water, and don't forget to stop at the top and look to see who may be riding on the warm summer winds.

STUDENT UPDATES

Scholarship News

We are happy to announce that just recently two applications for scholarships have been received and accepted. We have not been able to award scholarships recently so it is with great pleasure that we can do this now.

About our Scholarships

Established originally in the early 1970's as the Woodland Owners Association Scholarship, the WRWA Scholarship each year offers funding to a high school graduate about to enter college as a freshman intending to major in a subject related to forest or wildlife management, or to a student in that area of concentration who will be a sophomore, junior, or senior in college during the next academic year. Previous recipients who meet all the qualifications may apply annually for renewal of the scholarship, but WRWA will give preference to new applicants

WRWA Partners with Career Center

A few weeks ago I read an article in The Reformer (Brattleboro's newspaper) about the Forestry studies at the Windham Regional Career Center. I thought that there might be a way to connect WRWA with the program and so I got in touch with Errold Nelsen who teaches the hands on project.

He thought it was a great idea. I suggested that the students in his program could benefit from membership in the WRWA and we offered the idea that students could get a free years membership if they wanted.

Andrew Morrison, one of our Trustees, had already spoken to the students at Leland and Grey and I thought we could also extend this type of connection elsewhere.

The Career Center programs in Forestry are more than twenty years old. Currently there are two for credit courses available.

In Forestry/Natural Resources class the students learn Dendrology, map and compass use, tractor safety and maintenance, how to use and maintain a chainsaw. They can participate in The Game of Logging, as well as learn about, sawmill operations and sugaring. Recently that worked with the Brattleboro Country Club, clearing trees and upgrading drainage. Of particular interest is learning the basics of soil mechanics.

The course provides students with the proper vocabulary, understanding, technical knowledge; and physical skills necessary for natural resource careers. Some students enter the workforce right after graduation while others continue their education in two or four year programs.

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Mission of Windham Regional Woodlands Association

WRWA 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, WRWA 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.