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WOODLOT TIPS

Summer 2023



The President's Page

This will be my last President's Report as I have reached the end of my two terms and must leave the board for awhile as per our bylaws .

It has been an honor and a pleasure to serve on the board with the help of many enthusiastic board members. I hope that moving forward you will continue to support the new board.

Speaking of support, I would like to acknowledge those members who have given generously to our two funds; The Scholarship Fund and the Halsey Hicks Education Fund. Their support has made it possible to give scholarships to deserving students and continue our programs in general.

They include;

Robert W. Adams
Alan Binnick
Carl M. Boyd
Mary Byrnes
Bruce & Barbara D. Cole
Philip and Alice Edelstein
Barbara Evans
Scott Farm
William A. Flynt
Don and Linda Fuhrman
Franklin and Roberta Geist
William Guenther
Elizabeth Harrison
Joy Hayes
Marcy Hermansader
Thomas and Susan Hernon
Munson Hicks
Eve Hochwald
Carl and Linda Johnson
Chrisman Kearn
Linda & Steven Lembk
Margaret MacDonald

Albert and Margo Matt
David Matt
John Neuhauser
Richard Nichols
Donald & Flavia Polensky
Martha Rabinowitz
C. Charles Richardson
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Yasuko Sanborn
Bill Schmidt
Jeremy P. Schrauf
Byron Stookey
Lee & Diana Todd
Frances Uptegrove
Geoffrey VanKirk
Richard A. Warren
George and Joan Weir
John Widness
Robert E. Zimmerman
Meadowsend Timberlands Ltd.
Windham Co. NRCD

This list does not include all the other members who generously donated but wished to remain anonymous .

WRWA Annual meeting scheduled.

We have scheduled our annual meeting for Saturday, August 26th at the Molly Stark State Park Pavilion. (Rain date -August 27th) If you have a senior day pass to the State Parks, please bring it. Otherwise, the five dollar entrance fee will be covered by the WRWA.

Please check our website for further information as we hope to add a tour and times for the event, which will include a luncheon cookout along with the annual meeting.

www.windhamwoodlands.org

Game of Logging Course Offerings Increase

BY MATT STINCHFIELD

The best chainsaw skills training around goes by the peculiar name, The Game of Logging. The “game” refers to the friendly and supportive aspect of the training, and also reinforces the importance of a winning game plan or strategy for felling trees and working safely. A fun scoring system helps focus participants’ attention on the most important details and allows them to measure their progress each day. Sometimes the day’s top scorer even wins a prize.

In the 1980s, a Swedish logger named Soren Eriksson, came to the states with extensive training in Scandinavian logging techniques. He preached a scientific approach to felling, limbing, and bucking trees. His methods challenged the status quo of logging at that time, much of which was based on old buck saw and ax methods, or simply by watching what others were doing. Trees often behaved unpredictably when felled without an understanding of the physics at work and fellers spent far too much time close the stumps of falling trees: a very dangerous place to be.

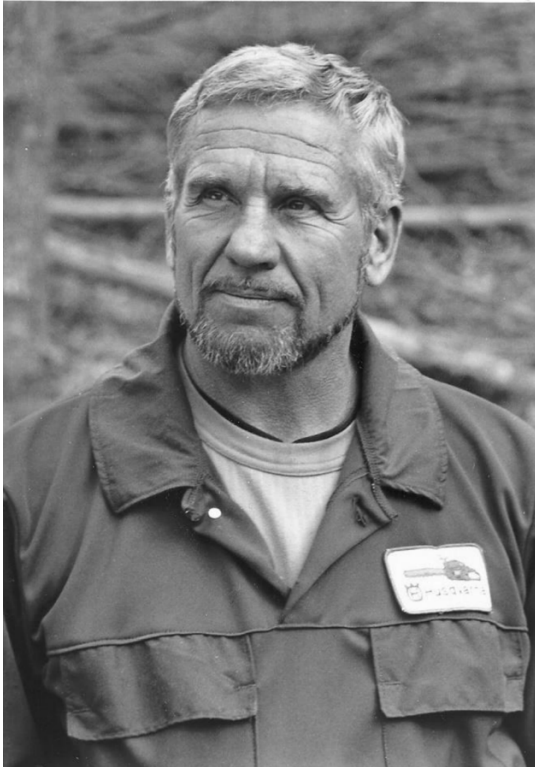


FIGURE 1 SOREN ERICKSSON STARTED OUT TEACHING LOGGING PRODUCTIVITY, BUT BECAME MOST WELL-KNOWN FOR HIS SAFE FELLING TECHNIQUES. SOURCE: OHIOFOREST.ORG.

The Game of Logging is a world-recognized training curriculum that teaches chain saw skills. The skills taught are more important than ever due to the apparent uptick in damaging storms, more land being placed in conservation trusts, and because people are seeking a greater sense of self-reliance in the region's forested landscapes. One challenge for homeowners and woodlot managers has been gaining access to these courses. More on that later in this article.

Southern Vermont is lucky to have Northeast Woodland Training (NEWT) with its cadre of five highly experienced trainers. At a recent workshop held in Guilford, saw users were trained by John Adler, co-owner of NEWT and a professional logger operating out of Chester, Vermont. Adler was an early adopter of Game of Logging principles and was a student of Eriksson.

"His ability to communicate complex concepts clearly and understandably was truly impressive," says Dan Carmody of Wallingford, Connecticut. That is a strong endorsement coming from someone who has spent three decades instructing emergency services classes. He appreciated that Adler took his time to "provide individualized feedback and guidance," adding, "I learned a lot from his experience and how he delivered his lesson to the class."



FIGURE 2 THIS FINE GROUP HAS JUST COMPLETED THEIR LEVEL 4 STORM CLEANUP WORKSHOP IN GUILFORD, VERMONT. INSTRUCTOR JOHN ADLER IS FRONT ROW, LEFT. COURTESY LESLIE CARMODY.

Adler is a thoughtful and agile 60-something who has been training others for forty years. He stresses the importance of sizing up the hazards around you and making a plan. "People get into trouble when they say 'just one more' or 'that's the way I've always done it.'" He should know, in addition to his own near misses, he has had to carry injured sawyers out of the woods and has testified as an expert witness. But it is clear watching him in action, what he loves most about logging is the strategic task planning and efficient motions that define his chainsawing more as choreography than as tiring work.

Game of Logging Curriculum

The Game of Logging has four course levels, which are taken in succession. In Level 1, trainees learn the five point felling plan. The first three steps are about safety and include checking for overhead hazards, observing lean, and planning and clearing an escape route. Most logging fatalities happen within about 15 feet from the stump, either from kickback or falling material, so getting away as the tree begins to go over is essential.

The last two parts of the felling plan involve the front cut, which sets up the alignment of the hinge, and the back cut(s), which will allow the tree to be felled in a predictable, safe manner. Rules of thumb for the size of the face cut opening and the thickness of the hinge are taught, as is the bore cut, which must be made in a way to avoid the kickback zone of the bar. Often, students will practice these individual cuts on stumps, building principles into practices.



FIGURE 3 TRAINEES PRACTICE BORE CUTS AND CONTROLLING HINGE THICKNESS BY WORKING ON A STUMP. COURTESY NEWT.

“The 5-point cutting plan was an easy way to remember all the major things to think through before touching a saw to the tree,” says Linda Fuhrman of Marlboro, Vermont. “We kept repeating it for each tree,” she adds, “and now it is engraved in my memory.”

Instructors emphasize maintaining control over the tree, to the greatest extent possible. Reading tension, compression, and lean are key to selecting the best approach. Course levels three and four focus on trees other than the more predictable straight, moderate forward leaners.

Old Dogs, New Tricks

Those who haven’t adopted Eriksson’s methods commonly fell the tree by making a back cut from the back side of the tree towards the hinge – the straight-thru back cut or felling cut. This method leaves the feller right at the stump as the tree is falling and encourages the feller to stay in the cut and reduce the hinge wood until the tree tips convincingly. Consequently, the feller is

dangerously close to the stump and falling limbs when the hinge releases. With the bore cut the hinge is already sized to the right dimension. The feller only has to release the last bit of holding wood on the back side of the tree and then retreat.

With the straight-thru felling cut, if the tree backsets because of improperly reading the lean, a wind comes up, or pressure from another tree, the sawyer can easily pinch the saw. With the bore cut and wedge method, the back cut kerf remains unimpeded and snapping the trigger wood causes the final cut to open up, not close. One person in class was heard saying “Real men use bore cuts.”

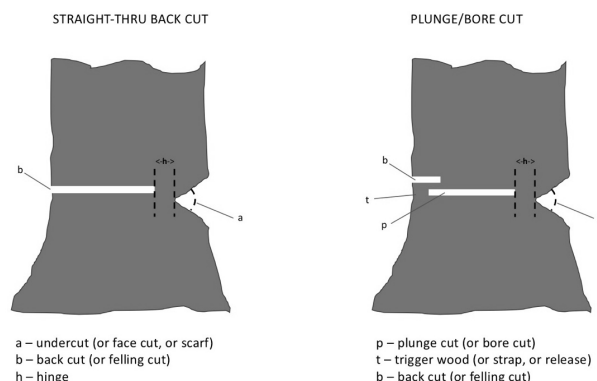


FIGURE 4 ADLER TEACHES THE BORE CUT FOR SAFETY AND CONTROL, AND DISCOURAGES THE STRAIGHT-THRU FELLING CUT. IN THIS DIAGRAM FOR A STRAIGHT OR SLIGHTLY FORWARD-LEANING TREE, FIRST THE FACE CUT IS MADE (A), THEN THE PLUNGE CUT (P) FROM ONE OR BOTH SIDES, DEPENDING ON TREE DIAMETER. THE HINGE (H) IS MADE PERPENDICULAR TO THE FALL LINE OF THE TREE AND IS 10-PERCENT OF THE TREE’S DBH. TRIGGER WOOD (T) IS LEFT HOLDING THE TREE. ONE LAST CHECK DOWNRANGE FOR ANY PEOPLE, DOGS OR VEHICLES, THEN THE TRIGGER IS CUT. ADLER’S MANTRA IS “SNIP, CLICK, AND GO!” CUT THE HOLDING WOOD, CLICK THE SAW BRAKE ON, AND GET DISTANCE. DRAWING BY THE AUTHOR.

Some of the games played in Level 1 training include: creating a uniform hinge without accidentally making it too thin or thick, identifying the four different cutting positions on the chain and bar, and stating the five-point plan. Each gets to fell their own tree. They talk through the felling plan with the instructor and place a target stake downrange.

After felling the tree, they are graded for accuracy and also perform a stump evaluation to notice hinge and back cut characteristics. A good job gets cheers from everyone in the class. If one needs improvement, encouragement is similarly given. Furrman speaks to this equanimity. “Even though I was the only woman in any of the sessions I attended, gender was never an issue.”

Level 2 training, often the very next day, begins with understanding the saw and chain better. Trainees learn the detailed anatomy of wood fiber, saw chain teeth, each cutting face’s purpose and strengths, and of course, chain sharpening. The second half of the day is devoted to springpoles: trees that have bent over by other trees, wind or snow. Improperly cutting them causes many injuries since they are springloaded. The method to safely diffuse stored energy in these trees is counterintuitive to many, and useful for everyone.

Pro Tips for Non-Pros

For those who have passed Levels 1 and 2, Level 3 continues working with more difficult trees, including those with strong side- or back-lean, trees tied up in the crown of other trees, or broken or diseased trees. Topics include estimating tree height, creating a workplan for felling multiple trees, using wedges and cookies to apply force, and then limbing and bucking downed trees.

This is where the instructor often demonstrates some of the real tricks of the trade. How do you get a tree down that is snagged in another canopy? How can you thin the canopy by piecing up a small tree vertically instead of trying to push it to the ground? What is “chunking up” a hung stem? What is the “pole in a hole” method? Then there is the “tab cut” and the “slow release front cut.” When does one make the back cut first, pack it with wedges, then make the face cut?

The uniqueness of each forest stand will allow the instructor to demonstrate various pro techniques. Students often comment that seeing these methods applied is “worth the price of admission.”

Level 4 has two different curriculum options. One is for professional loggers. The one more commonly available in open enrollment sessions is Level 4 Storm Cleanup. After multiple debilitating snowstorms during our last winter, there are ample challenging scenarios to practice with.

At the recent Guilford training, a cluster of springy hardwoods, dying pines, and tenacious grapevines had come down across more than 30 yards of forest trail. The group worked through standing dead trees, hung-up dead limbs, hardwoods bent and pulling out of the ground, and massive white pine trees, all tied up together with vines. Clearing that bit of trail took the whole morning.

In the afternoon, the class tackled a multi-stem mature maple tree that had uprooted into a pond. Portions of the tree were tied off, bucked, then brought through and out of the pond using a capstan winch.



FIGURE 5 NOT EVERY LEVEL 4 CLASS WILL HAVE STUDENTS USING A MOTORIZED WINCH TO RECOVER LOGS FROM ACROSS A POND, BUT EVERY CLASS WILL HAVE CHALLENGING STORM CLEANUP PROBLEMS TO SOLVE. COURTESY THE AUTHOR.

In the last remaining hour of class, the group dropped two standing dead pines and used a rope pulling come-along to bring a back-leaning damaged red maple to fall into a cleared area. In the storm cleanup class, throw lines, bull ropes, nylon webbing and carabiners, pulleys and winches, peaveys and felling bars all featured at one time or another.

Are these courses valuable? Recent trainees used words like “lifesaving,” “essential” and, poetically, “game changing.” Carmody reflected, “The hands-on activities were especially helpful.” For Linda Fuhrman, who has taken all four levels this year, “I no longer have a blanket terror of the chainsaw... I can execute each cut with confidence and determination instead of abject fear.”

Getting More People Trained

Most of the training NEWT provides are to dedicated audiences, like powerline crews, municipal departments, or forest management agencies. These classes are not open to the public. Open enrollment classes for

homeowners, land trust volunteers, and small business forest care professionals are less common. People have reported waiting up to two years to find an open enrollment course to take. That situation is changing.

One thing that is helping is an important financial incentive created by the Windham Regional Woodlands Association (WRWA). For some time now, new and existing members have been offered a fifty dollar rebate for each level they complete. With a modest membership fee of only twenty bucks per year, taking even one class saves money. Over the past __ years, at least __ rebates have been paid out, adding dozens of new memberships to WRWA. Beyond the cash savings, members receive Woodlot Tips and can connect with others during informative field trips.

Matt Stinchfield is a member of the WRWA and author of this article. He has taken all four levels of Game of Logging and also become certified by the US Forest Service to use a chainsaw for felling and bucking in the National Forests. Having experienced his own difficulty in finding courses, he began in March of this year to host training on his 34-acre property in Guilford.

NEWT publicizes open courses, but managing enrollment is up to the individual host. So the difficulty for many hosts becomes finding, registering, and collecting payment from trainees. Pricing the course competitively means filling the course to the maximum of ten persons. There can also be hundreds of email communications going back and forth with registrants. Additional expenses can include snacks for trainees and a portable toilet if the site is remote.

Stinchfield developed his own registration system on Google forms, set himself up to take electronic payments, created Excel worksheets, and built a series of value-added email messages

he calls “the game within the game of logging.” In these emails he sends out advanced lessons on important topics to be covered in the course. These short emails help trainees get the most out of their contact time with the instructor.

“After I constructed a system to manage the registration, I realized how much time I had invested and why there is so much difficulty finding open enrollment hosts,” he says. NEWT’s administrator, Nancy Gucker-Birdsall, told him they have known for while that the bottleneck was finding willing hosts who could manage the enrollment. “So they are really happy working with me,” he adds. His business, E. Burns, LLC, is one of only a handful of outfits offering the course multiple times this year.

The pressure for Stinchfield is the number of training days he can absorb on his small property. But the end of June he will have hosted ten days of training this year. Each class leaves quite a few trees on the ground, and aside from some limbing and bucking in the advanced levels, most everything is left as is. This requires a lot of work after the classes are gone,

whether for collection of firewood, sawlogs, or collapsing to the ground for forest stand improvement.

Now that he has the registration system developed, a reputation for good hosting, and a database of interested candidates, he is looking to manage additional dates on other host properties. He will advertise, enroll, and manage the classes, act as the landowner’s representative during training, and keep any proceeds for his time. “It is not lucrative, and there is real risk of losing money if the numbers don’t materialize,” but, he adds, “I strongly believe in getting as many people trained in safe use and felling techniques for arguably the most dangerous power tool on the market.” In tandem with the WRWA subsidy, he believes these course offerings are among the best value going.

Those who wish to enroll in a future class, or have their woodlot assessed for suitability as a training location can reach Matt Stinchfield at (802) 258-8748 or by email at palatejack@gmail.com. He is currently looking for forest stands for Level 1&2 training in August and all four levels in November,

Sugaring Season 2023

By: Sam Schneski Windham County Forester

I’ve been hearing mixed reports regarding this year’s sugaring season. I think I could just use that as the opening sentence for every maple update that I write for WRWA. It always seems to be true, but there are trends to report. This year’s crop was not like last year’s bumper crop that was produced region wide. Most sugar makers I’ve spoken to in southern Vermont had an average to below average season.

The season started early for some in our region making syrup in our January thaw. Most of those folks were the big producers that must

start tapping by then to be ready for the “regular” season sap runs. The next opportunity came in mid-February around the 13th. I wasn’t ready to tap for the first few runs of sap but was able to get tapped by the 18th. My season essentially went from then until the big storm on March 13th. Sugar content was higher than normal (around 2%-2.2%) and as a result I made almost all light-amber rich syrup. This was the case for my neighbors too. The March snowstorm was heavy wet snow that took down trees, powerlines, and sap lines.

Once we were dug out, I checked tanks, it seemed like every day for the next two weeks, thinking the conditions were just right for sap

flow. There was plenty of snow on the ground, the ground wasn't super frozen, the days were in the high 30's to low 40's and the nights were low 30's to high 20's.....perfect! Except, it wasn't perfect, for whatever reason mother nature shut off the spigot. Every time I checked tanks, I found just a little bit of sap weeping in from the lines. I still use the small diameter 3/16th natural vacuum tubing so I thought maybe that had something to do with it, but checking with sugarmakers I know who use mechanical vacuum I learned their trees had stopped producing as well. Interestingly, when I came to grips with the fact that I was done, I had a conversation with my Orleans County counterpart, Jared Nunery. He said folks up north were just getting started and that was late for them. I think they ended up having a shorter than average season.

This year I added a 3rd membrane to my homemade reverse osmosis machine. It was everything I had hoped for and more. Some of the big runs when I had 1300 gallons of sap to boil ended up being very manageable. With the RO running and me boiling at the same time I was removing water at a rate of about 200-250 gallons per hour. My season turned out to be fast and furious and the second best on my current set-up.

Finally, I want to share a sneak peek into an innovation on the horizon being developed at the Proctor Maple Research Center in Underhill. They are working on developing a barbed spout. The short article I read explains that much of the sweetest sap and the highest volume of sap is often blocked off by the spout in the tree. Picture a tap hole being drilled 1" to 1.5" deep into a tree and the tap being hammered into that hole 1/2" or so. That 1/2"-3/4" of hole being blocked by the spout is conductive tissue in which sap flows. One of the reasons we seat the taps in that far is so they can withstand the freezing and thawing that occurs throughout the season without losing their seal. That seal is great for vacuum and for blocking sap leaks as well as blocking the introduction of bacteria that would otherwise slow the flow of sap prematurely in a season.

As I understand it, based on the very short teaser article I read, these barbed spouts would be shorter, not need to be seated into the tap hole as far, and be able to retain the all-important spout to tree seal throughout the season. Stay tuned for more information. I look forward to hearing more results from Proctor's study.

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Summer 2023

Upcoming Programs

WRWA Annual Meeting- Molly Stark State Park Pavilion 8/26 from 10-2

Cersosimo Sawmill and Kiln Drying Operations Tour 8/31 from 5:30-7PM

Please check www.windhamwoodlands.org for information and updates.

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.