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WOODLOT TIPS



Autumn 2025

Notice of Annual Meeting

The Windham Regional Woodland Owners will hold their annual meeting on October 8th at the Brooks memorial Library in Brattleboro, Vt at 7 pm. Following the brief usual annual meeting “housekeeping” agenda, WRWA member Stephen Sosynski will be presenting the incredible footage gathered through the use of game cameras on his property, paired with discussions on best practices for getting the most out of having a game camera and forestry practices that can promote habitat for a wide array of wildlife species. All are welcome, members and non members alike.

Membership Renewals

It's that time of year, again.

By now, most of you will have received your membership renewal letter with the enclosed remittance envelope. Already, many of you have returned your members dues along with additional generous contributions to both the Scholarship Fund and the Halsey Hicks Educational Fund.

We encourage those who haven't “re-upped” yet to do so, and if you have friends who might enjoy becoming a member to encourage them to join, If you have misplaced your remittance letter, you can always go to our website, <https://windhamwoodlands.org/> and join using a credit card.

Scholarship News

The WRWA Board is pleased to announce the Tenzin Mathes of Guilford has been awarded our annual scholarship and will be continuing his studies at Paul Smith's College in upstate New York.

An Appreciation

The board wishes to thank Andrew Snelling for his long association with the WRWA. He is now stepping away from actively working with the board where he has been a Trustee, has managed the website, our Facebook presence, and our membership rolls for many years. His presence will be greatly missed and it will take several people to fill his shoes. (any takers?)

Thanks, Andy !

Use Value Appraisal Manual Being Updated

by Diana Todd

Are you a landowner enrolled in the “Current Use” program? If so, you might be interested in reviewing the draft update of the manual that foresters use to prepare the required 10-year Forest Management Plans for landowners. The draft is out now for public review, with online information sessions aimed specifically at landowners scheduled for Sept 15 and 16. Additional in-person sessions are also being scheduled.

Currently 16,000 forestland parcels encompassing over 2 million acres are enrolled in the program, and every year about 2,000 new or revised plans are submitted to the state for review and approval. The state’s 13 County Foresters are the primary reviewers. That averages out to about 150 plans per reviewer per year. About a quarter of all submitted plans need to be returned for revision – often because of missing information or some other administrative problem, rather than because the proposed management activities (such as harvests or thinnings) don’t meet the objectives of the program.

Here in Windham County our County Forester, Sam Schneski, can tell you that the amount of time he spends reviewing plans in the office has far eclipsed the amount of time he is able to spend out in the woods. One goal of the update is to standardize the formats of the plan submissions, which should make the review process go more smoothly.

The last time the manual had a comprehensive update was 2010. Since then there have been piecemeal revisions, such as when detailed guidance was added for sugarbushes and when the Reserve Forestland enrollment category was adopted. This update consolidates all the Forest Management Plan requirements in one place, with more explicit guidance on the content and format required for submissions. (Note that these standards only apply to the forestland part of the Current Use program, not agricultural land.)

Use Value Appraisal Manual Being Updated

continued

This update does not change the program. You as a landowner won't suddenly have to meet new eligibility criteria or need to adopt different management techniques or schedules for your forest. The changes will primarily affect the work done by the people who prepare the plans – usually professional foresters. Some will find that their current template for preparing plans aligns closely with the new guidance, so their workflows won't be significantly affected. Other foresters might find that the new standards require them to collect and report more data than they are accustomed to. In those cases, the forester might be spending more time on plan preparation, increasing the cost to the landowner.

If your current Forest Management Plan expires in 2025, your new plan, due by April 1, 2026 won't be subject to the new standards. Plans due after April 1, 2026 will need to conform to the new standards.

To learn more about the update and to find information about attending one of the online or in-person information sessions, go to fpr.vermont.gov/dr/CurrentUseForestLandStandardsRevision.

Vermont Offers New Grant Opportunity For Loggers Working in the State

By [Jon Humphrey](#) July 21, 2025

Cost-share program aids pro-active water quality protection and climate adaptation practices on timber harvest sites

MONTPELIER, VT – A new grant-funded cost-share program created by the Vermont General Assembly in 2024 to help logging contractors that work in Vermont implement proactive water quality protection and climate adaptation practices on their harvest sites is now accepting applications.

The Supporting Loggers to Comply with Acceptable Management Practices Program (SLoCAMP) is funded by the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks & Recreation and administered by the Professional Logging Contractors of the Northeast (PLC). The program supports contractors in preparing harvest sites responsibly – with long-term forest health in mind. It began accepting applications on July 21.

Logging contractors wishing to apply for the funds may apply online at:
www.plcloggers/slocamp

Funding is available through SLoCAMP for materials and labor tied to pre-harvest site preparation, including but not limited to:

- Hardening truck roads and landings
- Skid trail improvement
- Temporary stream crossings
- Permanent stream crossings

To qualify for the program:

- A project must be approved and completed by June 30, 2026. Requests for project extensions beyond the June 30, 2026 deadline will be considered on a case-by-case basis for projects in good standing at the time of request.
- The harvest site must be in Vermont, over 10 acres, and focused on long-term forest management.
- The applicant must be a logging contractor and own more than 50% of the equipment used on the project. Commercial timber harvesting must account for more than 50% of the applicant's income.
- The applicant must be in good standing with the Agency of Natural Resources and the Agency of Agriculture, Food, and Markets (Act 154) and Vermont's AMP Enforcement and Compliance Program.
- The land must have been under the same ownership for at least 5 years, be currently enrolled in forestland Use Value Appraisal (UVA), or have a current conservation easement in place on the harvest area.
- The applicant must have a contract with the landowner before operations begin. (Note: This does not apply if the applicant is harvesting on their own land.)

State lands owned in fee simple are not eligible as AMPs are built into stumpage rates. State-owned Wildlife Management Areas where others own timber rights are eligible.

The PLC has created tools to guide loggers through the SLoCAMP grant program and help them determine if it's a good fit for their operation. To learn more and to apply, go to <http://www.plcloggers.org/slocamp>.

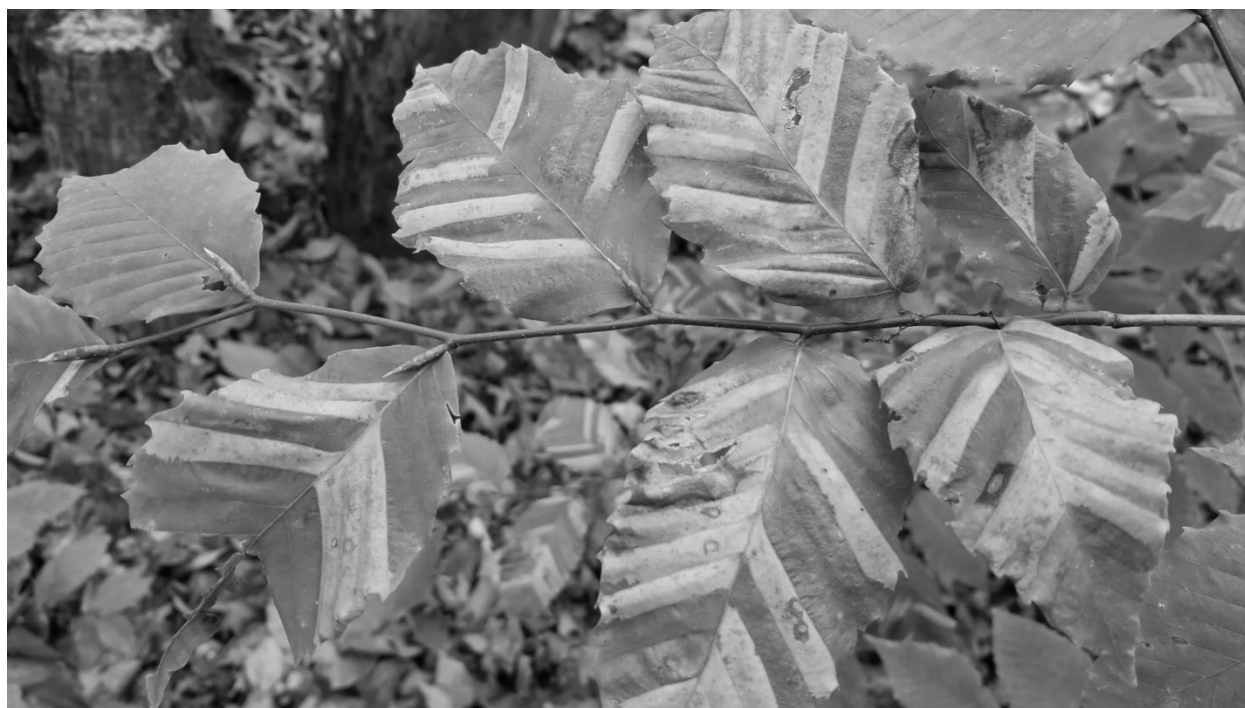
Anyone with questions about the program is also encouraged to reach out to Jeff Benjamin, Deputy Executive Director of Certification at the PLC. He may be reached at jeff@plcloggers.org or by calling (207) 688-8195 Opt. 2.

Beech Leaf Disease: Woes and Possibilities

By Matt Stinchfield

Beech trees are a hardwood tree ubiquitous in Southeast Vermont. Their broad canopy, smooth grey bark, and muscular root flares are pleasing to admire. Their beech nuts (also called mast) provide fat and protein for black bear, deer, squirrels, turkey and grouse. Indigenous peoples used beech leaves and bark to calm the nerves, relieve pain, and treat skin diseases, as well as consuming the beech nuts.

You may have noticed beeches with discolored or crumpled leaves, as well as a general paucity of leaves. We call this newcomer tree blight: beech leaf disease, or BLD. It is especially noticeable in the understory generation, but also affects mature trees. In some parts of our region the disease has already hit every beech in sight.



In combination with our other long-standing beech diseases, namely, beech bark disease (BBD), eriophyid mites, aphids, and anthracnose fungal disease, beeches are falling on hard times. Beech-prevalent understories look barren. In combination with the exceptionally dry summer, some woods appear more like early winter than the lush green forest-scape we are used to.

Baseline Facts

Beech leaf disease is caused by a microscopic nematode (wormlike critter) that eats and lays eggs in the buds. In the spring they hatch and spread. And spread they do! The blight was first detected in Vernon only 24 months ago and it is now found in every town in Windham County.

The invisible nematodes are spread by rain and wind and in tree tissue fluids. The worms pass alive through the digestive tracks of birds like nuthatches and chickadees. They can presumably hitchhike on birds, squirrels, and even our clothes and shoes, though it is currently believed they do not survive for long in the leaf litter.

The disease is often fatal, killing between 30 and 100-percent of affected trees. Saplings go first and larger trees may die in 6-10 years. This difference can be attributed to greater carbohydrate stores in the roots of larger trees. Without many leaves, photosynthesis of new stored resources is severely limited and the trees rely mostly on finite reserves.

Downstream Effects

Because BLD reduces the number and quality of leaves, the tree's ability to make food through photosynthesis is reduced. The cascading effects of this include: die-off of beeches, loss of an important foundation species, reduced mast for forest animals, increased danger for loggers and arborists. Perhaps you can think of a few other consequences, too.

Black bears consume significant amounts of beech mast in the late summer and fall. Beech nuts are rich in protein and fat. In healthy beech forest, mast production fluctuates on two- to three-year cycles. With the scarcity of beech nuts, this seasonality will be greatly emphasized. The net result: bears will be more likely than ever to search for food in compost piles, at bird feeders and beehives, and tear through our trash bins.

Squirrels and whitetail deer are beech nut consumers, as are turkey, grouse, and blue jays. If they are unable to find suitable alternative resources, we can expect to see their populations decline. Their search for food may have a ripple effect, as well. Deer may increase browsing pressure on oak saplings, for example.

It is reported that over one hundred varieties of moths and butterflies utilize the beech at different times in their life cycles. Some species, like the rare iridescent blue Early Hairstreak butterfly, rely exclusively on beech leaves.

Beyond the wildlife considerations, there is a broad safety consideration with dying beech trees. Beech's large trunks and stems become weak and pithy as they die. Bracket fungi take hold and hasten their decay. These trees cannot reliably be climbed by arborists, so safely felling them either requires adept felling skill while the tree still has some core strength, or hiring a crane service, which can be an expensive proposition. Rotten beeches will increase the likelihood of power and communications outages, too.

What Can I Do?

Early in the spread of a plant disease or invasive species we are asked to report observations to the State. In this case, there is no need to report it to the State. Vermont is tracking its spread and is in the process of building a working group to consolidate expertise from several agencies.

As with other tree blights, human movement of wood products and transplanting of trees is liable to lead to even faster disease spread. If vacationing or camping, buy firewood near your campground, don't bring it from home. An even more pervasive notion is that one can spread BLD on clothes and shoes simply from being in an infected forest. Indeed, plant pathologists often employ a spray bottle of bleach as a boot disinfectant.

There is no effective treatment for BLD in a forest setting. Since the disease was first spotted in Northeast Ohio in 2012, some chemical treatments have been tried. The 0-0-30 phosphorous fertilizer known as Polyphosphite 30® can bolster trees fighting the disease, but it has to be applied in shallow trenches around the trees twice per year for five years to have some chance of success.

Some licensed fungicides have toxicity to the nematode, namely those containing fluopyram or thiabendazole. Fluopyram formulas have to be applied to the leaves ("foliar spray") – a difficult proposition for a mature tree. Spray treatments are also expensive and may cause collateral damage in a forest setting, and if untreated trees are nearby, the chances of success are reduced. Thiabendazole products are injected into the tree's vascular system. These products may be helpful for saving a specimen tree in a town common or yard, however. BLD affects all manner of ornamental and non-native beeches as well as the American Beech, *Fagus grandifolia*.

Beech trees are trying to help themselves survive the infestation. Their beech nuts are sprouting into new saplings. Trees are also root suckering. A simple observation of root suckers this summer revealed that in groves affected by the disease, root sucker leaves were unilaterally affected as well. Only time will tell whether the beeches have enough stored energy to withstand cycles of infestation.

A woodland owner may decide to cull beech trees with obvious BLD infestation. However, it is advisable to keep individuals who are showing less severe BLD and BBD on the chances that these trees may survive and even develop defense mechanisms against the nematode.

One other helpful strategy is to consider planting other mast producing trees for the long term. These can include species of oak and hickory. Saplings are subject to deer browsing. Ideally one would overplant and fence replacement groves, removing the fence and thinning after several years.

For further information on BLD disease:

- <https://vtinvasives.org/invasive/beechnut-disease>
- <https://holdenfg.org/?s=beech+leaf+disease>
- <https://njaes.rutgers.edu/E376/>

**Windham Regional Woodlands Association
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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.