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WOODLOT TIPS



SPRING 2018

Programs

Sunday, May 20, from 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. (Bring your own lunch.) — Gathering and processing local forest products to create natural skin and hair products.

Winston-Prouty Center, 130 Austine Dr., Brattleboro, Vt.

Join herbalist Santalena Groves, Alchemist/Creator of Heart Grown Wild, LLC, an herbal skincare company based in Wardsboro, to take a deep dive into how essential oils are produced through live distillation of wild harvested plants. The purpose of the workshop is to educate attendees through a visual demonstration of the amount of plant material it takes to produce one drop of essential oil. Join us for a plant walk outside and learn first-hand how to make hydrosol and essential oil from start to finish.

Space is limited to 20 participants. The plant walk will take place in the woods behind Holton Hall. Expect about ¼ to ½ mile with hills and be prepared for rain, sun and ticks! We ask that you please leave your dog at home as they are not allowed in the building.

Directions: Enter Holton Hall using the main entrance and take the elevator to the 3rd floor. There will be signs. The indoor portion of the program is handicapped accessible. Please RSVP Dan Healey, 802-387-6128 or dhealey@longviewforest.com

Saturday, June 16 at 10 a.m. — A look at Natural Tree Art: The Work of Artist Dan Ladd

We will tour a property in Putney Village that has some interesting botanical manipulations that have created a special type of art form from trees. We will meet behind the Putney Town offices (right in the center of Putney Village) and car pool a short distance up Kimball Hill to the site of Dan's work. The tour will be about an hour in length. Should you have any questions please contact County Forester Bill Guenther at 257-7967 (Ext. 305) or bill.guenther@vermont.gov. The tour will happen rain or shine so please bring appropriate footwear. We ask that no dogs be brought on this tour as it is a private residence.

Dan Ladd is an internationally recognized expert in the art of nature collaboration. Dan has devoted more than 38 years to observing, then utilizing suggestive interventions in the living world. The results are often startling: the creation of unfamiliar and unique art forms manifested from plants growing under his guidance. Much of Ladd's work takes place in the outside world, and he is currently artist-in-residence at Smith College's prestigious MacLeish Field Station campus. There he maintains an outdoor studio and a score of ongoing botanical architecture projects including the grafting of trees and the unique molding of tree roots and hard-shell gourds.

Dan Ladd has won several grants from the NEA, the Gottlieb Foundation, and Art Matters, among others. His work has shown in dozens of indoor venues as well. You can learn more about him at www.danladd.com and at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tree_shaping#Dan_Ladd



Thursday, July 26, from 5:00 – 7:00 p.m. — Tour of Cersosimo Lumber Company Facility

On Thursday, 26 July, the Cersosimo Lumber Company will host WRWA at its facility in Vernon, Vermont. This sawmill operation produces hardwood lumber and White Pine lumber from local forests that reaches markets all over the globe. Eric Parenti, the Chief Forester will be our tour guide. The tour starts at 5 p.m. sharp!

Dress appropriately for a short walk; **closed-toed footwear is required**. Our hosts will provide hearing protection and safety glasses. All participants must be at least 12-years old, and no pets are allowed on the tour. The tour is limited to 30 participants.

If you plan to attend, please contact the Woodlands Section at Cersosimo Lumber at (802-254-4508) or woodlands@cersosimo.com **no later than Friday July 20 at 4:30 p.m.** so Cersosimo will know how many guests to prepare for. **You must have an advance reservation to attend, due to safety considerations.**

Directions: From the south end of Main Street in Brattleboro (near the Brattleboro Food

Co-op) go east towards the bridge over the Connecticut River. Just beyond Main Street, make a quick right turn (south) onto Route 142. (*Do not go over the bridge into N.H.*). Continue south about two miles, looking for a red Cersosimo office building on the right. From the south it will be on your left. Park across the road from the red building.

Saturday August 25 — WRWA Annual Meeting! Celebrating the “Career in the Woods” of Bill Guenther! In Newfane — Newfane Hill Old Common, Newfane Village Common (The Green), and at Bill’s place on Bensch Mountain.

This Annual Meeting will be a big one with optional events from 8:30 a.m. to late afternoon (maybe into the evening!). First, a tour of the Newfane Town Forest (“The Old Common”) at the top of Newfane Hill which includes the old village, accompanied by someone from the Windham County Historical Society, located in Newfane.

Then we move down to the current Newfane Village for some history and discussion of legacy tree maintenance at the Newfane Green. Again, the Windham County Historical Society will be there with some great background.

At 11:30 the annual business meeting will be at Bill’s place, followed by the traditional barbecue lunch and potluck. Bill will lead an afternoon workshop on small acreage management for sustainable home firewood production. The day will be capped by an appreciation of Bill Guenther’s years as Windham County Forester, aided by Munson Hick’s memories of his father, Halsey Hicks, the first Windham County Forester.

This will be the time for members also to share stories of Bill, and enjoy cake, libation and good company. All events are open to non-members.

See inside for directions and full details.

September Event Alert!

On a date and at a location to be announced, there will be a family friendly woodland exploration to learn about tree identification, flowers, leaves, twigs, and other interesting things to be found in our forests. Details will be on the website, in the Summer issue of *Woodlot Tips*, and also at the August 25th Annual Meeting.

President’s Message

By Marli Rabinowitz

Early Spring in Windham County was more like late winter, but the last few days have been sunny, and warm enough to send me outside for new reasons, raking and picking up fallen limbs. I am trying to stay away from the lure of the (soggy) trails until they dry. I have a large pile of firewood for next winter in my yard already, thanks to that wild windstorm. Birds are everywhere, frogs are just starting to peep, and bloodroot is opening. No trees in flower yet but by the time you read this they should be out and small leaves will be appearing. Every day has something that I am grateful I had the chance to see.

There is some WRWA news. As you know, after many years Carol Morrison has retired. We wish her all the best and are grateful for all she did for WRWA. We have hired a new administrator and Clerk, Cindy Levine. Carol has turned over the

windhamwoodland@gmail email address to her, so you can still use that. Please help Cindy learn the ropes and welcome her when you meet her. Getting to know the membership and the many State and local employees who keep forests and forestry in their view, is one of the best parts of her job, and I am sure that soon she will be familiar with everyone and the many acronyms and agencies we network with. See more about her in the hiring committee letter in this newsletter.

On the topic of so many groups and agencies, all creating programs in Windham County and statewide, we are looking to coordinate better with many of them so that we don’t overwhelm people with identical programs. Bonnyvale Environmental Education Center (BEEC) is looking to establish a website to help with this. We look forward to participating in this effort to plan programs

cooperatively. Also, there is a wonderful new statewide website created by UVM Extension and the Dept. of FP&R, www.ourvermontwoodlands.org, created for the forestry community. It has links to many organizations including us! Take some time to explore the site, it is visually appealing and they would love feedback. You can sign up to get weekly notifications of events for any county. We will be submitting WRWA program information to this site as well as our own.

At WRWA, we have some great programs coming up this Spring and Summer. We are trying to be useful for those newly interested, those with years of experience, and forestry professionals. Each program takes time to produce and if you can volunteer for any event, please let Cindy know. It would be great to have you, and with help, we can maintain our diversity of offerings.

We are really looking forward to our all-day Annual Meeting extravaganza, on August 25! Come to all or to any part. On that day, some board members' terms expire and we hope at least two WRWA members (you?) will step up to the board to replace them. The trustees meet four times per year for an hour and a half, so it's not much time out of your busy life. We keep emails to a minimum, and it's a great group of like-minded people who would all rather be outside, but put in the time for the sake of the forests and those who work in them. You don't need to be an expert forester to be on the board (obviously, since they let me join!). We are the only county in Vermont with a *local* forestry group! Please contact Bill Guenther if you would like to take a turn helping to run this great organization.

Enjoy watching the Spring unfold!

Remembering Soren Eriksson, Founder of "Game of Logging," 1938 – 2017

By Eileen Townsend, Editor-in-Chief

"The Northern Logger and Timber Processor" magazine, Old Forge, N.Y.

As a County Forester and frequent chainsaw user and trainer for Vermont Forestry Department staff, I was surprised to hear of the passing of Soren Erickson. I've heard tons of stories about him throughout the years, not only about his skill and confidence with a saw but about his ever-apparent desire to challenge professionals to think more in depth about timber extraction systems. Getting the tree on the ground is the first step, but it is followed by many more (some might argue more dangerous) steps including proper stem placement, limbing, bucking, and extraction of logs from the forest to a landing. Separating faller from hauler, or "cooling the system down" is emphasized to reduce the likelihood of an accident, or unplanned event.

I have an old VHS Stihl-sponsored video of Soren felling and limbing trees sometime in the 1980s. A friend of mine borrowed the video; when he returned it he said, "That was awesome. Soren flawlessly and effortlessly using his saw was like watching Jimi Hendrix with his guitar!" The Windham Regional Woodlands Association has hosted or co-hosted the Game of logging (GOL) chainsaw training for around 20 years now. Many of our members are GOL graduates, and I'm sure they will appreciate Eileen Townsend's article. I know I did!

Sam Schneski

When Soren Eriksson arrived on job sites to train loggers, he was often met with skepticism. The athletically-built Swede wore a baby blue jumpsuit and spoke a homebrewed version of heavily-accented English. He claimed to be able to teach standards of efficiency and safety that would improve production and prevent injuries. The loggers he'd come to train, many of whom were veterans of the industry and cynics about mandatory trainings, seemed wary.

The loggers' skepticism didn't bother Eriksson. Before he started each session, he'd size up the

group of 12-15 loggers, asking each man about his background. Then he'd get to work. As the loggers watched, he'd point out where he wanted the tree to fall and then use a bore-cut technique to drop it. He worked without wedges, using only a well-filed chainsaw. At the end of his demonstration, which took about an hour, he always held the rapt attention of all the loggers present. Even the most seasoned men were curious about how he achieved this degree of accuracy and speed.

When Soren Eriksson, the founder of "Game of Logging" safety training, passed away in late

December, he left behind a legacy as one of the most influential voices in the past century of American logging. Eriksson's contribution to American logging safety can likely be quantified in hundreds of saved lives and thousands of avoided accidents. But Eriksson didn't start out to improve logging safety – he sought to teach loggers efficiency, only to realize that safety and efficiency go hand-in-hand.

Said Richard Lewis, president of the board of the Pennsylvania Forestry Association, "Soren really got into the business of 'Game of Logging' because he wanted loggers to be more efficient and be able to make more money and to do a better job in the woods. What he didn't realize – or maybe he did – was that safety was a key part of his message. His work led to a huge reduction in severe logging injuries and fatalities over the years he worked in America." Across the country, "Game of Logging" became the gold standard of safety training, and Eriksson became a familiar face in many corners of the North Woods.

Among Eriksson's innovations was an emphasis on bore-cutting, as well as the chisel-cut filing of chainsaws. Said Jeffrey Jenkins, Director of Fiber Supply at Glatfelter and a friend of Eriksson's, "He wanted timber cutters to be as independent as they could be. The timber cutter could work pretty efficiently on his own, so Eriksson trained him to get the trees on the ground without using heavy equipment. This 'total system training', as he called it, was about cutting trees and putting them down in a particular pattern, so that the guy with the skidder could come in and also work efficiently. That increased productivity."

Eriksson was born in Sweden in 1938. In addition to working in the woods as a young man, he trained as a boxer and later used those skills to inform his felling and limbing techniques. In his trainings, he emphasized the importance of ergonomic cutting. Mark Ridall, a logger in Pennsylvania, recalls Eriksson asking Ridall if his back hurt during a training. When Ridall replied that it didn't, Eriksson said, "Well, it will if you keep cutting that way." Eriksson viewed safety as a holistic practice – loggers needed not only to be aware mentally, but to have an athlete's knowledge of their bodies. He encouraged loggers, like boxers, to keep their arms close to their chest while cutting, to squat rather than bend over at the waist, and to always be light on their feet.



*Top: Soren Eriksson's hand-built home
Bottom: Eriksson and his wife, Britta*

Though Eriksson initially came to the United States in the early 1970s to do trainings for Scott Paper Company, he was soon hired by the Forest Resources Association to demonstrate directional felling techniques across the South, Mid-Atlantic, New England, and Lake States regions. His business continued to pick up from there, and he contracted with many major timber companies throughout the U.S. Eriksson was fascinated with American games, including football and baseball, and felt that he could gain people's attention by building an element of competition into his train-

ings. With that in mind, he branded his business not as a humdrum required safety course, but as a game. His trainings were arranged into four different modules: Basic safety training, bore-cutting, and open-face felling; proper chainsaw maintenance; managing difficult trees; and maximizing productivity.

Over the years, Eriksson expanded his repertoire of techniques by, as he put it, “stealing” from the men he met along the way. Though he had a strong methodology, he was not inflexible, and he often pointed out that he learned many things from the veteran loggers he trained. According to those who knew him, Eriksson had a knack with people

that extended beyond his trainings. He went above and beyond for those he worked with, and he often connected different parts of the industry by making introductions between business owners throughout the country. He was passionate about the woods, about his friendships, and he had a particular soft-spot for animals and wildlife.

In recent years, Eriksson returned to his home country, where his family still lives. He built several cabins on his property and enjoyed a retirement in the woods. He will be fondly remembered for his huge contributions to the industry, as well as for his friendship with and mentorship to many North American loggers.

Sugarhouse Tour at Matt's Maple Syrup

by Margaret MacDonald

On the afternoon of March 24, Dave Matt and his son Eric hosted WRWA members for a tour of Matt's Maple Syrup, the family's sugarhouse in Marlboro. Sam Schneski introduced Dave, who gave us a brief background about the sugaring operation. Dave noted that his family has lived at the Marlboro place since the 1770s, although he himself grew up in Connecticut. The Matts have been sugaring since 1979, and have upgraded their equipment several times since then.

The drive up to the sugarhouse is lined with stacks of logs, some of which are eventually used to fuel the wood-fired evaporator, but most of which the Matts process for sale to their firewood customers. Dave said that he can cut the logs to size and split a cord of wood in about an hour and a half; the wood is then piled on one-cord racks and stored in a drying shed with greenhouse panels and solar-powered fans to heat and move the air. Dave uses a backhoe to bring a rack of dry wood from the shed into the sugarhouse and sets it near the arch; this makes loading the evaporator very efficient. Dave estimates that the evaporator uses one cord of wood to produce 30 gallons of syrup; the one-cord rack in the sugarhouse was practically empty when we arrived at 1:00, but had been full at 10:30.

Dave explained that the Matts don't use reverse osmosis to extract water from the sap before boiling; sap that has been put through reverse osmosis boils for a shorter time, and he believes that the

shorter boiling time harms the flavor of the syrup. He noted that reverse osmosis would make sense for a large sugaring operation that sets out 20,000 taps, whereas the Matts set out about 1,800. Of those 1,800 taps, about two-thirds are connected to a vacuum system and the sap is drawn directly into a transfer tank in the sugarhouse. The other third are simply gravity lines that empty into three tanks placed along the road; the Matts collect the sap from the tanks and bring it to the sugarhouse on a pickup truck. Dave estimates that each tap produces about 1 quart of sap.

This year the Matts began sugaring at the end of the third week in February, and made 230 gallons, or about half of their expected crop, in the first week or so. The brutally cold temperatures this winter caused considerable damage to the plastic tubing in the sugarbush, so they were constantly finding leaks. On warmer days sap would collect in the tubing; then the sap would freeze in the lines, and when it warmed again the line would burst, or the tubing would come apart at the T-joints. Dave commented that the day of our visit, with high air pressure and temperatures ranging from 25 at night to 45 in the daytime, conditions were ideal for sugaring.

The Matts's evaporator is a mix of Dominion & Grimm parts and Leader parts. The 5'x16' Dominion & Grimm arch has a Dominion & Grimm fluepan. The Leader evaporator has a steam-away, so boiling the sap takes 40 percent less time than

their previous evaporator. Eric uses heavy cream to keep the foam down in the boiling sap, but almost any kind of oil would work. A tour member commented that the Matts could cook hot dogs over the evaporator; this would have the benefit of producing both great-tasting hot dogs and fat that would drip into the pans. Eric said that the family did try cooking hot dogs on long sticks in the heat of the coals under the arch, but not over the evaporator, and that the family has cooked hard-boiled eggs in the flue pan. He also noted that the water captured from the steam-away is hot enough to cook eggs, although it takes longer because the water is at approximately 190° rather than the boiling temperature of 212°. The Matts also use the water, which is very pure, to clean the equipment.

The evaporator processes about 400 gallons of sap per hour, and since it takes 40 gallons of sap to make one gallon of syrup, the Matts can make about 10 gallons of syrup an hour. They also make tea from the sap. An automatic draw-off system with a digital thermometer monitors the temperature of the sap and notifies them when it's time to draw off syrup. The system opens a valve and pours the syrup into a bucket; the valve shuts automatically when the temperature of the sap drops. Eric demonstrated how he uses a hydrometer to check the sugar density of the syrup. If the sugar content is too low, the syrup is returned to the evaporator; if it is high enough he empties the

bucket into a tank from which the syrup is pumped through a filter press. Eric adds diatomaceous earth to the syrup in the tank; the diatomaceous earth increases the surface area of the filters through which the syrup must pass and gets rid of the remaining niter (the mineral form of potassium nitrate) in the syrup; it is filtered out as the syrup passes through the successive filters. The filters can process about 30 gallons of syrup before they have to be cleaned. Syrup that drains from the press is put back into the bucket to be refiltered the next day.

From the filter press, the purified syrup is pumped into the canner, which keeps it at the required temperature of 180° until it is drawn off, checked for color, graded, and put into appropriately labeled containers for sale. Eric drew off some of the freshly made syrup (the Matts were making Amber grade syrup on the day of our visit) and gave us an opportunity to taste it; not surprisingly, it was delicious. We also had the opportunity to sample the Matts's Delicate and Dark syrup and compare the flavors of the three grades, and took advantage of the opportunity to buy syrup from this year's crop.

Eric has made a video about the Matts's sugaring operation, from drilling the tap holes to packaging the syrup and cleaning the equipment; you can find it at <http://www.mattsmaplesyrup.com>

Welcome Cindy Levine!

Dear Fellow WRWA Members,

On behalf of the Hiring Committee, we would like to extend a hearty welcome to our new Clerk, Cindy Levine.

Cindy lived many years in South Carolina before moving to Newfane several years ago. She has her own business doing website design and development, PC and network consulting and services, as well as bookkeeping for several small businesses.

In her own words, "Cindy considers herself a computer geek, having more than 20 years of educational and work experience in operations and procedures." Her interest in the forests led her to join WRWA last year. She was impressed with our organization's mission, educational opportunities and commitment to good forestry practices.

In addition, Cindy is a Certified International Health Coach and Yoga Teacher. We feel very lucky to have Cindy join us, and look forward to a long association together.

A special thanks to our former Clerk, Carol Morrison, for staying on and training Cindy for her very important position with WRWA.

For the Board of Trustees,
WRWA Hiring Committee

Windham Regional Woodlands Association Annual Meeting
Celebrating the “Career in the Woods” of Bill Guenther!
Newfane Hill Old Common and Newfane Village Common (The Green)
Potluck and cookout lunch at Bill’s place on Bensch Mountain
Saturday, August 25 (*Rain or shine*), 8:30 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.

This year’s meeting will have a few twists. We will start at two locations for field visits and then convene at Bill’s place for lunch, tours and late afternoon libations. Bill will likely be hanging up his County Forester’s hat and retiring either this fall or early winter, so this will be his last official hurrah with WRWA as the Windham County Forester!

IMPORTANT: Please provide information by Monday, August 20, if you plan to attend the meeting. Please let our new Clerk Cindy Levine (windhamwoodlands@gmail.com) know whether you would prefer a hamburger made from locally produced beef, Grand Kosher hot dog (low-fat, no filler), or a vegetarian burger. Your timely notification will help to ensure that we have adequate grill foods. You are welcome to enjoy more than one of the items; just let Cindy know. Thank you!

Let’s have a “Green” Meeting! To help, we ask that everyone be part of the Green Team.

What to bring:

Potluck dish for lunch, including a serving utensil

Travel mug for beverages

Chair, if you prefer a seat with a back. There will be a few chairs, but please try to bring your own if able.

For the field trip, suitable footwear for forest trails with moderate hills; insect and tick repellent; and, if it suits your needs or style, walking sticks.

\$8.00 registration fee per person to cover grilling supplies and other meeting expenses

We ask that you please leave your dog at home. It is a long and complicated day!

Program:

Morning

8:30 – 9:45 a.m. — Did you know that Newfane Village used to be in a different place? Way back when, it was up at the top of Newfane Hill. Laura Bacon-Wallingford of the Windham County Historical Society will give us some background on “Old” Newfane. Bill will then discuss the small, but very sensitive timber sale done on the parcel in 2010. We’ll provide cider donuts and coffee.

9:45 – 10:00 — Travel to Newfane Village

10:00 – 11:00 — Meet with Larry Robinson, a multi-generational Newfane native, also with the Windham County Historical Society. Larry will give us the background on how the Village ended up in the valley as well as some fascinating insight into the ownership of the courthouse. Bill will discuss the long-term tree care program on what may be the most photographed green in Vermont. He has worked with the county for 25 years managing the trees on this scenic piece of real estate.

11:00 – 11:15 — **Travel to Bill Guenther’s place: 51 Bensch Mountain Rd., Newfane, Vt.**

Registration: Sign in for the rest of the meeting and make your lunch payment. This will give you a chance to meet Cindy Levine, our new Clerk.

11:30 – 12:30 — **Business meeting** presided over by WRWA President Marli Rabinowitz.

Lunch

12:30 – 2:00 p.m. — Grill Master (and Windham/Windsor Counties Forester) Sam Schneski will cook our hamburgers, hot dogs, and vegetarian burgers. If you can, please bring a potluck dish to share as well as a suitable serving utensil. At a recent meeting, past president Stu Thurber remarked that the lunch gets better each year!

Again, please let Cindy Levine (windhamwoodlands@gmail.com) know **by August 20** whether you will want a hamburger, hot dog, a vegetarian burger (or all the above!). If you do not have email, please call Dana Ruppert at Bill Guenther's office (802-257-7967, Ext. 302) to make a reservation.

Afternoon

2:00 – 4:30 p.m. — Bill will provide a tour of his 23.6-acre woodlot and discuss his 30 years of forest management. He has supplied his own firewood during that time saving about \$30,000 on fuel oil. The walking will be on moderate but uneven terrain, so wear good sturdy footwear. The program will focus on small woodlot firewood production, including harvesting, blocking, splitting, stacking and drying wood.

On the tour there will also be a discussion of deer browse and how it has impacted the landscape in this part of Newfane. Pruning of hardwood tress will also be mentioned.

Late afternoon

4:30 – 6:00 p.m. — This will be time for a general discussion about Bill's career, with contributions by Munson Hicks's memories of his father, Halsey Hicks, the first Windham County Forester. Celebratory libations will be served; Bill will make up a batch of his special Mai-Tais. Should you want beer or wine, please BYOB.

Directions:

To the Old Newfane Common:

Coming from the South — Travel up Route 30 and a few miles north of the Dummerston covered bridge, you drive over the Rock River. Continue up a short steep hill and just before you get to the NewBrook Elementary School, make a **Left** onto Grimes Hill Road. Go 0.3 miles and make a **Right** onto Newfane Hill Road. Travel 2.8 miles up Newfane Hill Rd. and just past Otis Lane, the Old Common site will be on your right. Pull off on the shoulder to park.

Coming from the North — Travel south on Route 30 to Newfane Village. Continue south on Route 30, 2.1 miles from the Newfane Village courthouse, to Grimes Hill Rd. Make a **Right**. Then follow directions above.

To the Newfane Village Green — retrace your steps back to Route 30 and make a left heading north and in 2.1 miles you will reach the Newfane Village Green on your left. At the courthouse make a **Left** onto West St. Park around the courthouse.

From the Newfane Green to Bill's woodlot on Bensch Mountain — Continue out West St. for 1.5 miles. Make first **RIGHT** onto Wiswall Hill Rd. Cross bridge and leave pavement and go straight thru crossroads and up main hill bearing right. At 1.25 miles you'll come to the second 4-way crossroads where there is a row of mailboxes. Go **STRAIGHT** down onto Bensch (Mountain) Rd. for 0.25 miles and Bill's place is the first one on the left.

Parking:

I have very limited parking at my house. With care, I can handle about six cars. So as long as you are able, please go past my driveway about another 200 yards and bear **Right** onto the Barnard property. There is a big wide flat area on both sides of their driveway for parking, just before their small bridge. We will try to have folks there to assist in parking.

Emerald Ash Borer Update

By Bill Guenther, Windham County Forester

Since our winter newsletter, we have now learned more about this insect's presence. Initially it was discovered by an alert consulting forester doing a UVA plan update in the town of Orange in Orange County. Once we had 100 percent confirmation of the insect's identity, my Department of Forests, Parks & Recreation started to put our EAB Response Plan into place.

The first step was to conduct a "delimiting survey." We were racing against the clock as the adult stage of the insect emerges from inside the infested trees starting in May, and with a two miles per year rate of spread by using their own wings, we wanted to get a handle on the extent of the infestation.

Our survey consisted of driving all passable roads in the area (there was still lots of snow up there in early March into mid-April!) and looking for any ash trees. Since we did not have time to get land-owners permission for access, we focused on trees along the roadsides. Each ash was observed and studied with binoculars if any suspect symptoms were showing. As I have written before, likely the best diagnostic indicator for EAB is "blonding." This is where woodpeckers detect the insects in the tree and peck at the corky, darker outer bark, exposing the lighter inner bark.

The survey turned up four additional towns besides Orange that are infested: Barre Town

(Orange County), Plainfield (Washington County), and Groton (Caledonia County) were all found to have EAB-infested trees. At this point, we feel that the infestation is roughly five miles wide.

Nate Siegert, the U.S. Forest Service expert on EAB, said that an infestation is usually present for 4-5 years until it is detected. Then the population grows exponentially, which draws in the woodpecker attack. Generally, after 9-10 years of infestation, tree mortality drastically increases. The woodpeckers are quite effective as predators as they cause up to 90 percent mortality in the larvae's latter states. However, the problem is that by the time woodpeckers are working on trees, the infestation is typically too far along for any hope of control.

Our Department will be publishing UVA Standards for Management Related to Emerald Ash Borer Infestations.

At this point, given the distance of the Vermont infestation, and the ones in New Hampshire and Massachusetts, Windham County does not seem to be at immediate risk of the insect spreading here on its own. But we will need to be ever vigilant about not moving firewood long distances.

We will be continuing surveys and I will write a longer update in the next newsletter.

Big Trees and Old Forests

By Marli Rabinowitz, WRWA President, with some additions by Bill Guenther, County Forester

On March 29, Bill Guenther led a crew of 11 trusting souls up into the wilds of the unorganized town of Somerset on the west side of the Reservoir, to some land that was donated years ago to Townshend's Leland and Gray High School when it was a private seminary. On this land is an area with old, forest grown trees, and the state Big Tree champion yellow birch (*Betula alleghaniensis*).

It was a beautiful early spring day, yet a misty rain was predicted. This walk had been canceled for weather the last three years, but we used the tools of democracy to have a vote and everyone

was all in; we voted to go ahead this time. The snow was deep and not yet slushy, deep enough that we were lifted over the top of the plentiful hobblebush (*Viburnum lantinooides*), which is nearly impassable on the ground during the summer, snowless months. Snowshoeing and skiing over the tops of bushes and small trees can be hazardous, especially over spruce or fir; their dense foliage prevents snow from falling through and creates deep air pockets that are dangerous to step into. These are called "spruce traps" by hikers. Bill recalled one trip to northern Maine when he fell into an eight-foot-deep spruce trap (on May 15th!)

and had to have his climbing partner dig him out with a snowshoe for 45 minutes. We did see examples of these traps and thanks to the warning, avoided falling through. A good piece of trail lore to know.

What is an old growth forest in New England, where almost all sites were logged at one point in history? Certainly not the 18'-diameter redwoods you see on the West coast. In Vermont, a forest of mixed species with many trees over 150 years old qualifies (for your UVA plan at least) as old forest. One indicator that a forest was never converted into fields is the “pit and mound topography” created when large trees upend and rot in place; their tipped-up root bolls and the pits they leave behind slowly blur and become little swells and dips in the forest floor.



Intrepid WRWA members getting ready to make their way to the old forest-grown trees.

After an hour's journey, Bill paused and had us look into the forest. He pointed out some large red maples and yellow birches. What was notable about them is that each rises unbranched to 50 or 60 feet before the crown opens up to claim its place in the canopy. Many trees that grow very large in diameter are open grown, receiving full sun and no competition. Their trunks are wide, and their branches spread at 10 feet or so off the ground. (Most Champion Big Trees are thus open grown). The trees we were looking at grew up amongst tall, established trees and had to rise straight up to the light before branching. Growing tall and with lots of competition from trees next to them, means they did not put on as much girth per year. The energy went first to driving the tree's metabolism. Second, excess food was used for primary cell division that added height to the tree

so it could compete against its neighbors for light. Third, food went to the tree's reproductive systems. Any additional food went to the tree's fourth growth step — secondary cell division, which adds girth to all parts of the tree, from the main trunk to the smallest branch. Therefore, any tree grown in the open with a big wide crown has a huge food factory that allows much more food to get to the stage that makes the tree bigger in girth. These trees have very wide growth rings.

Since these yellow birch trees appear to be “forest grown” with competition, they are quite tall but not as big in diameter as you would think given their more than 250-year-old age. So the rings are narrow and the wood is dense, and the diameter less than you might expect for their age.

These very old yellow birch and red maples were not easily identified without craning the neck to look at the high up buds and twigs. Their bark at ground level was very different than what we were familiar with for these species: the birch bark fractured, almost like black cherry, into 4-inch plates, no shine or shreds visible. Several of us mused that trees have a whole part of their life cycle that we never see or even know of, these elder trees.

Many of the trees on this Hardiness Zone-3 ridge had major limbs that were broken and trying to regrow. This is from the high amount of icing at this elevation (around 2,300 feet).

If you have a section of forest that currently has trees over 150 years old, you can have old forest preservation as a part of your UVA plan, and just admire and foster this rare forest type. For timber, foresters are looking for large diameter trees. This is why thinning younger (40–50-year-old) trees to put on girth is worth the effort, and then harvesting the stand, generally between 80–120 years.

Did we find the champion yellow birch? Self-described Luddite Bill, who found it originally, does not use GPS to mark, so you just have to “know” or follow him. Yes, we did find it, 46" DBH, 45' limb spread, 85' tall, 60' to first limb. How old? Well, the power company, just to the north of here, cut a similar birch tree and counted 210 rings, not even counting the rotted center. Bill wants to return “someday” with a special extended core-boring instrument and get a precise age, so stay tuned!



It is hard to perceive how large a tree like this is, until you really stand near it. To experience this, there is a Big Tree Champion Sycamore tree in Harmonyville on Route 30. Try looking at it from your car, then walk up close; it will seem so much bigger than you imagined.

A bonus forest fact from this walk: Have you ever looked at a gangly black cherry that twists and turns, and wondered why? At one pause we were enlightened: this is an example of phototropism. Cherries are particularly sensitive to light levels and grow markedly more in light-filled canopy breaks, which slowly shift over time, and their form follows.

It was great to spend the afternoon with WRWA members old and new, each having interesting experiences and knowledge to share about trees, the location, life, and also enjoying the time outdoors. Please come to some other walks and bring your friends and neighbors.

This article is condensed from “A Taxing Season: The voice of family forest owners preserves important federal tax policies,” by Madeline Bodin in the spring 2018 edition of AFF (American Forest Foundation) magazine Woodland: Sustaining America’s Family Forest, used by permission. AFF is in D.C., and one of the main points of this article was that a few AFF landowners were able to go and talk directly to their representatives and actually influence the tax code that was worked out. Your expertise about your land really does matter. www.forestfoundation.org

— Marli Rabinowitz

Your Forest and the New Tax Code

If you paid your taxes in April and are looking forward to long summer months outdoors without worrying about them, let me ruin that for you. Now is the time to start planning for next year and keeping records of your forestry expenses. (Disclaimer, of course you need to consult a professional for your personal situation!)

Thanks to efforts from American Forest Foundation members and others, the new Federal tax code retains your ability to deduct forest management costs from income. And timber harvest income can be filed as capital gains rather than regular income, which means you pay a lower rate.

You can deduct expenses for qualified forest management and reforestation practices. Removing

invasive species, thinning trees, upkeep of roads and culverts, and disease prevention or reduction are all tax deductible. Fees paid to licensed foresters, accountants, and attorneys if needed, are also deductible. Equipment is deductible and, remember, Vermont is making forestry equipment sales-tax free.

A business that does not make a profit three out of five years is considered a hobby and expenses are not deductible. Income from a harvest may occur only once or twice in a lifetime while expenses to maintain this resource are constant, so forest income is treated specially. You can use your deductions yearly even though the “profit” is far in the future. But, in order to qualify there is a catch: You must intend to cut for profit at some point. (It

helps to have “profit” as one of your goals in your management plans). If your forest is for “personal use” you cannot call it a business, it’s a hobby.

Replanting after a harvest is not so common in Vermont but you can deduct up to \$10,000 the first year and spread the rest of the expense over the following years.

Inheritance tax: If you sell land and it has appreciated in value since you bought it, you will have to pay capital gains on your “profit.” But, if you leave the property to heirs, all the gain is ignored and they start over with a new basis value for the property when they inherit it. Your heirs only pay gains tax if they sell the land, and their gains ac-

crue only from when they inherit to when they sell. This helps immensely in being able to keep a forest property intact and in the family.

While you are outside working, this may never enter your head, but when you come in, pile all your receipts for equipment and any help you pay for into a folder for tax time. Income from firewood and the like should be reported as well. Some of this information goes into your yearly activity report if you are in UVA, so it’s good to keep for that reason too.

AFF says: “The IRS is still working out exactly how the new tax code will work and what forms must be revised or proposed.” So stay tuned.

Winter Watershed Harvest



Windham County Forester Bill Guenther and Brattleboro Public Works Director Steve Barrett stand in front of some nice quality White Pine logs.

Bill is partnering with Long View Forest and Long View forester Dan Healey, also a WRWA trustee, on a harvest on the Brattleboro Watershed land around the Pleasant Valley Reservoir.

The plantations of red, and white pine, along with Norway spruce, were set out in the 1920s and were overdue for a thinning. The project consists of thinning 24 acres of red pine plantation and 24 acres of mixed white pine and hemlock.

A longer, more detailed article about current forest management in the Brattleboro Pleasant Valley Watershed will be in the next issue.

Heather and Grouse: A Gardener’s Gift to Attract Wildlife!

From Ruth Marx, Dummerston —

I would like to give heather plants to people who want to encourage grouse on their land. I’ve read that in Scotland it’s a good combination; the May 2017 issue of National Geographic has an article about Scotland’s moors. There is a picture of gamekeepers selectively burning patches of aging heather, *muirburn*, “to encourage new growth for red grouse to feed on.”

Over 20 years ago I bought 10 different heather plants from Walker Farm in Dummerston. I planted them on a dry, acidic, afternoon sun-facing

bank. Some grew into plants about three feet in diameter. Over time they reseeded the whole bank area, as I never pruned off the flower stems. I have a few dozen plants to give away. You dig, and I will supply soil for you to fill in the holes!

We are 1.5 miles north of Dummerston Center, 721 Park Loughton Road. Call 802-257-1121 after supper, as I spend most of my days outside and rarely check my email. If you leave a message, speak clearly, and if I don’t respond, call again.

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Upcoming Programs

(See inside for details)

Sunday, May 20 from 9 a.m. –3 p.m.	Gathering and processing local forest products for natural skin and hair products, by <i>Heart Grown Wild</i>
Saturday, June 16 at 10 a.m.	A look at Natural Tree Art: The Work of Artist Dan Ladd
Thursday, July 26, from 5:00 – 7:00 p.m.	Tour of Cersosimo Lumber Company Facility
Saturday August 25, all day!	WRWA Annual Meeting! Celebrating the “Career in the Woods” of Bill Guenther! In Newfane — Newfane Hill Old Common, Newfane Village Common (The Green), and at Bill’s place on Bensch Mountain.

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.