

PO Box 6004  
Rutland, VT 05703  
802-747-7900  
vermonttreefarm.org

Volume 3, Issue 4



Vermont Tree Farm

## *The Incredible Tree Farm Database Clean-up*

*By Al Robertson*

First, I'd like to tell everyone that the database cleanup the committee has been working on for almost two years has been completed! As a reminder, we started the cleanup around April of 2015 with the award of a significant grant from AFF as a part of the States Voice- States Choice state committee improvement and certification program. We developed a phone protocol and started calling all our Tree Farmers in earnest around the fall of 2015. The last of the calls to Windham and Windsor counties, the last in the cleanup, were completed in early January.

There were a lot of interesting findings and results from all these calls. On a positive note we did find a lot of errors and mistakes in the information we had on all our landowners. Typical corrections we made included new home addresses (a lot of you moved), new phone numbers (conversions back and forth between landline and cell phones, or numbers reflecting your real or winter home and not just your summer number), a lot of new e-mail addresses (we had never asked for these before, and we won't give them out), new foresters, acreage changes, changes in ownership from parents to children, and better information on the location of your Tree Farms.

On the slightly negative side we found a significant number of properties that we had to place in our Pioneer program primarily because we could determine that a management plan was not up to the recent AFF standard, or a forester or landowner wasn't available to tell us whether a property was up to the standard- this based primarily on the date of the management plan. On a very negative note, since 2015 we have decertified in the neighborhood of 80 Tree Farms due to changes in ownership, deceased tree farmers, and either a lack of interest from the owner or the forester.

Today, Vermont has 440 fully certified Tree Farms covering 139,879 acres, and another 88 Pioneer Tree Farms awaiting actions from landowners and foresters.

The most important take away from the cleanup is that maintaining accurate information and good communication (both ways!) with you is critical if we are to have a program of value to you, and credible to the public. With this in mind the committee has placed this at the top of our annual work assignment, and made this work a quality indicator for evaluating committee success.

For the immediate future we are going to concentrate on reducing the number of Pioneer Tree Farmers, and making calls to 20% of our Tree Farmers, again, who are approaching the five or six year anniversary of the last contact with us- generally through their forester via our inspection form 004. For many of our Pioneer Tree Farmers all that we need to put you back in the fully certified status is that 004 form from your Tree Farm forester signifying that the management plan is up to our standard, and that your activities on the land are in accordance with the plan. For those of you who have elected to have your forester update the Tree Farm portion of the plan on the current use management plan

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# Vermont Tree Farm Newsletter

## *VT Tree Farm Standards Review: Standard #1 Commitment to Practicing Sustainable Forestry* By Ryan Kilborn, Forester & TF Cmte member

The American Tree Farm System program has 8 standards that serve as the foundation for its certification, which is recognized by the Program for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC), the world's largest forest certification program. These standards help guide landowners towards long term sustainable forestry. Because it is the responsibility of the landowner to make sure these standards are being met on their property, the Vermont Tree Farm Committee has decided to review one standard in detail in the next 8 Tree Farm newsletters. The first standard being covered is arguably the most important, this being the development of a management plan for your tree farm.

### **Standard 1: Commitment to Practicing Sustainable Forestry-Landowner demonstrates commitment to forest health and sustainability by developing a forest management plan and implementing sustainable practices.**

The preparation of a good management plan helps layout goals and objectives, while also providing the foundation for how the seven remaining standards will be met or developed. One of the most important aspects of a management plan is to keep the document dynamic and adaptable. Your plan should show evidence of your planning process, what resources were used to determine presences (or lack of) natural resource elements on your property, and outline a strategy that is appropriate for your woodlands. Keep in mind that a plan prepared for a 1,000 acre wood lot may look very different from a 50 acre property. This is where using a consulting forester to work with you to prepare a plan can be beneficial.

Your plan should also include notes or communications as to why changes or adjustments have occurred. This is often a result of monitoring your woodlot for changes from natural disturbances or a change in your goals and objectives. This could be as simple as a hand written note within the plan as to why a harvest prescription changed. If the property is also enrolled in Vermont's UVA program, then approval to a change in the plan must be received from your county forester. A map must also accompany the plan showing access, water features,

stands, special sites, and other related features that assist in the management of your wood lot.

Subjects and information required to be in your plan are:

- Current forest conditions
- Landowner objectives
- Management activities aimed at achieving the landowner's objectives
- Stand prescriptions
- Forest health
- Soil
- Water (streams, wetlands, vernal pools ect.)
- Wood and fiber production
- Threatened & endangered species
- Special sites
- Invasive species
- Forest of recognize importance (FORI)

Please keep in mind that if your property is enrolled in Vermont's UVA program, you are required to have a management plan and update it every 10 years. This does not necessarily mean that your approved UVA plan meets all the requirements set forth in the ATFS standards. Since certification in 2009, there have been two updates to ATFS standards; first in 2010 and again in 2015. This 5-year review is required by the certifier, PEFC. It could result in your plan not meeting current standards if you wait to update your plan on the 10 year schedule set by Vermont's UVA program. A simple fix to make sure your UVA approved plan meets the tree farm standards is to fill out the management plan addendum offered by ATFS with every new standards update. This is a simple document that can be downloaded from Vermont's Tree Farm website at <http://www.vermonttreefarm.org/TreeFarm-Standards.asp> or obtained from your tree farm inspector/consulting forester. This document can be filled out by you or your consulting forester and then simply inserted into your management plan. If you have this document that corresponds with the current ATFS standards and a county forester approved UVA plan, then you should be in good standing as a Certified Tree Farmer! If you would like to learn more regarding this standard and the remaining seven standards prior to future newsletters,

*Standards, continued on page 7*

# Vermont Tree Farm Newsletter

## *When In Doubt, Leave It*

By Kevin Hall, 2016 VT Tree Farmer of the Year

I want to share with fellow tree farmers a story of interest to those who love to work their land the way I do. Perhaps it will prevent an accident, or even worse.

About 25 years ago, I attended a chainsaw safety seminar in Rutland. It was my first as a relatively new tree farmer. I remember the instructor showing slides of problem high-risk trees in the woods and discussing the safest way in which to take them down. One in particular really stood out. It had every hazard you could imagine, all wrapped up in one ugly, poor excuse for a tree. As with the other slides, he proceeded one by one around the room, asking each of us how we would safely cut it down. There were 25 or so seasoned woods workers in the room, all of whom offered a somewhat different approach. It seemed as though each one was trying to top the rest by coming up with what sounded like a more professional skill level than the person before him. There were some pretty far-fetched, crazy ideas by the time he reached me. I was the last person in the corner of the room, and I felt shy and embarrassed when he pointed at me. I was just learning, and had no real logging experience like all the others in the room. I remember feeling bad that I couldn't think of some fancy maneuver or "macho" way to get it down. So, here goes: I said, "I see no way to do it safely, so I guess I would just leave it." "RIGHT ANSWER!" the instructor shouted out, waving his arms. Without knowing much at all, I had just come across as being the smartest person in the room!

As time passed and my woods experience increased, so did my courage and the level at which a problem tree became too "iffy." Sound familiar? Luckily, it was a pleasant winter day many years later that I received a harsh reminder of that "leave it" concept. I say "lucky" because if it hadn't been a rather mild day, and if the snow hadn't been really deep and fluffy, I wouldn't be here today.

I was doing a hardwoods improvement cut, trying to rid the forest of the ill-shaped, low grade trees to feed the firewood processor the following summer. Because the snow was so difficult to walk in, I plowed around a crooked banana-shaped maple, including an escape route. I knew that due to its curved trunk it was going to do bad things when it hit the ground. I under-estimated

how badly it would behave! I made the final cut, and because of the crooked, heavy lean, it fell unusually fast, and, as expected, kicked its 12-inch butt high in the air. I failed to anticipate how far that butt wanted to travel sideways toward me. I looked over my shoulder as I moved away, just in time to see the butt coming for my face. The reflex was to look away to protect my face, and as I did, it struck my shoulder, wrapped me around its trunk, and carried me with it about 10 feet through the air. It came to rest across my chest, pinning me in the soft snow. If it had carried me just six inches further, it would have driven my head into the 16-inch maple that I noticed later was in the path of my flight. I went back after the snow was gone in the spring, and could see just how lucky my landing was. Not only did I come to rest just shy of the tree behind my head, but I landed in a small depression just exactly the width of my shoulders. And that's not all. On each side of that narrow depression there was a spruce blow-down with many dead limb spikes sticking straight up, inches from each shoulder.

I had been pinned down in really the only survivable spot. I would have certainly been crushed if the snow hadn't been a cushion. My face was out of the snow, but nothing else. My head was tilted forward, just shy of the tree behind me. I dug in my heels and tried to push my body out from under the tree spanning my chest. Oooh, ouch- no way! I could feel lots of bones moving, and I didn't move an inch. Tried again- nothing! The pain was the worst I had ever experienced. I began feeling anxious and faint. I was a mile from the landing, alone. (I say "alone" but it turns out I wasn't.) There was a whistle and smelling salts in my pocket first aid kit. You guessed it- shirt pocket was under the log. No cell service at that location, so no cell phone. I think the snow on my face helped to keep me conscious. I was trapped - what now?

I could see up through the hole in the snow and noticed a small patch of blue sky in the midst of an overcast sky. That blue spot was directly over me. I focused on it and began to calm down. "It could be a lot worse," I thought. "I'm not bleeding, and it's a rather mild day to lie in the snow with no coat on. And, ah yes, I am still alive!" A couple more failed attempts to move, and then I did something I don't do very often- I prayed. I looked into

*Leave It, continued on page 5*

# Vermont Tree Farm Newsletter

## *Book Review: Thirty-Eight: The Hurricane That Transformed New England* By Allen Yale, Tree Farmer and TF Committee member

Whenever I attend the VWA annual meeting, I always visit the book tables to see what's new in the area of forest management. Among the book vendors was Stephen Long with his latest book, *Thirty-Eight: The Hurricane That Transformed New England*. I have long admired Stephen's writing, so I bought a copy, suspecting it had little to do with woodland management. **Was I wrong!**

While other accounts of the "Hurricane of '38" often focused on the devastation to humans, especially in coastal areas; Long's book concentrates on its impact on the forests along its path as it traverse up the center of New England, tracking along the western side of Vermont. After tracing the history of forest clearance for farming and subsequent abandonment of cultivated land to explain the composition of the forests in the 1930s, Long gives a brief tutorial on tropical cyclones (hurricanes). This prepares the reader for understanding why the storm damaged where it did, but also to explain why the hurricane of September 1938 was "a perfect storm." It was one of only three Category 3 hurricanes in the history of European settlement to devastate the interior of New England.

The damage of the hurricane is a combination of wind, rain, and terrain. Here Steve's explanation of hurricane dynamics helps us understand why the devastation varied from place to place. With counter-clockwise cyclical winds of ninety MPH and a northerly forward speed of fifty mph, the winds on the east side of the track were from the south at 140 mph while winds on the west side were northerly at 40 mph. Slopes exposed to the full force of wind experienced most damage, while those in the lee the least. While sporadic, the devastation was immense; 2.6 billion board feet of timber blew down, 430,000 log-truck loads. A site's damage also depended on species and age of the trees. For example the Harvard forest suffered a loss of 70%. This research facility in Peterham, MA has extensive archives on forest plots before and after the storm. Studies based on the data demonstrate that softwoods were more prone to blow down than hard woods. White pine, the tallest and fastest growing tree, is the most vulnerable. Older

trees of all species were more likely to uproot than snap, while small stems bent and survived. Different land-use history in Vermont and Connecticut resulted in different patterns of destruction.

Once the storm was past, three concerns faced the survivors. The first was to open up the roads and restore communications. A second concern, real or imagined, was the threat of fire due to the massive fuel load of the downed and shattered trees. The final task was to salvage the massive amount of downed timber. With weak markets and an overabundance of supply, the U. S. Forest Service devised a plan in which the government would buy up the salvaged timber and release it gradually.

Despite its focus on the forests, Long uses the experience of individuals to help tell his story: teenager Fred Hunt who took shelter under a huge pine that almost crushed him; Jim Colby who worked in his father's sawmill during the salvage; seven-year old Put Blodgett, whose father was heading home from the Eastern States Exposition when the storm hit; Gus Silcox who headed up the USFS fire prevention and timber salvage operations in New England after the storm. These and many more had important stories to add, and Long does an excellent job of interweaving them into a coherent whole.

As the salvage woodlands began to regenerate, alternative theories on forest succession as it relates to the forests damaged by the storm emerge. In conjunction with this discussion is Steve's fascinating search with Charlie Cogbill for remnant evidence of storm damage seventy years after the fact.

I had just finished VT FPR's *Creating and Maintaining Resilient Forests in Vermont: Adapting Forests to Climate Change*, when I started *Thirty-Eight*. *Resilient Forests* presents evidence of global warming in Vermont, projects probable changes that will affect Vermont's forests, and makes recommendations on how woodland owners might mitigate some of the negative effects. Among these are an increase in extreme meteorological events such as floods, short-term droughts, storms, and fire. Globally, clima-

*Hurricane, continued on page 7*



# Vermont Tree Farm Newsletter

## Welcome New Tree Farmers

**I**t's always a pleasure to welcome new woodland stewards to the ranks of our Vermont Tree Farm System.

You join an elite group of about 500 land-owners who share a passion for the land and a desire to leave it better than you found it. You have all met the Standards of Sustainability and now have the right and privilege to display the Tree Farm sign. Do so with pride. You've earned it.

- 1705 Robert & Zoe Aicher, Chelsea
- 1708 Sarah & James Curran, Lunenburg
- 1710 Ronald & Christine Millard, Hancock
- 1712 Village of North Troy

If you do not have a Tree Farm sign, please contact the office. We love to see Tree Farm signs dotting the landscape and will gladly help you get yours.

And many thanks to our inspectors who enrolled new Tree Farmers or completed reinspections:

- Markus Bradley
- Beth Daut
- Ryan Kilborn
- Jeff Langmaid
- Kyle Mason
- Paul Harwood

The success of the Tree Farm program is totally dependent on a dedicated corps of inspectors who help us uphold the high standard of excellence.

## Inspector's Log

*Kathy Beland, Co-Chair and Forester Trainer... has been missing and no transmissions are coming through. Perhaps she's fallen into a black hole!*

*Leave It, continued from previous page 3*

that blue spot and said, "I have gotten myself into a pickle. I am going to need a little help here." That prayer made the difference. I dug in my heels, pushed with fingers and elbows, and within 30 seconds I was out. A miracle you say? Yes. The most amazing part of the miracle was there was absolutely no pain while I was scrambling out. After several very painful attempts over a period of 20 minutes or more, I popped out painlessly! That was short-lived, however, for as soon as I stood up the pain returned.

I clawed my way onto the dozer for a 100-yard ride to the skidder. With a snowball in hand to prevent fainting, I drove the skidder the one mile to the landing. It was a four mile ride in the truck to the Emergency Room, where I kicked off my spiked boots outside and walked up to the desk. I could tell by the girl's face that I must not look too good - broken collar bone and several broken ribs. I guess I was traveling on adrenaline, because the pain sure settled in once I stopped moving. With time I healed, and after a bit of a "gun-shy" period I am back at it, working in our woods, trying to make them a better place.

The purpose of sharing this story is to emphasize to other tree farmers that when you come across a tree

you are not completely comfortable attempting to cut, remember that instructor. When in doubt, leave it! Learn to recognize the purpose and value in all trees. Look closely; perhaps that tree you choose to leave has loose bark, providing underlying meals for the woodpeckers. Or maybe it has a cavity that offers a home or shelter to small animals or birds. Perhaps it provides some shade in an otherwise too open spot. It could be a support tree for its more handsome neighbor. Which way does the wind come from? It might be a windbreak for its nearby shallow-rooted friends. Many trees provide nuts or berries that the L.C.W. (little creatures of the woods) need for survival. Not to mention the mast benefits to the deer and turkeys. And consider this, if the woodlot was nothing but perfect trees, it wouldn't be nearly as interesting to look at. Some of these low-grade trees are in a way a product of nature's art. "Unusual, with lots of character" may be enough of a reason to walk away from it with your saw. And who knows, seeing its value and purpose standing in the woods might just save your life.

Author's Note: I highly recommend that all tree farmers attend a Game of Logging chainsaw safety course. It's well worth the cost for chainsaw users of all levels.

# Vermont Tree Farm Newsletter



## *Project Learning Tree Makes an Impact*

*By Rebecca Roy, Vermont Project Learning Tree Coordinator*

Four schools in southern Vermont are engaged in hands-on service learning projects, thanks to the generous funding from the American Forest Foundation (AFF) through the southern Vermont Woodlands, Wildlife, and Warblers program.

In Bennington, high school students are building an outdoor classroom. Students in Rutland are building a sugarhouse on school property, using lumber harvested from the Rutland town forest. Fifth grade students at Union Street School in Springfield are learning about how forest health affects water quality with hands-on science. Students at Dummerston School are designing an interpretive hike and brochure telling stories of birds using particular forest habitats. What these four schools have in common is their commitment to service learning and their use of Project Learning Tree (PLT) in teaching and learning.

Both Tree Farm and PLT are programs of AFF. PLT is an award-winning environmental education curriculum for grades preschool through twelve. The curriculum materials, available through participation in professional development workshops, use forests as a window on the world to increase students' understanding of our complex environment. David Dence, Forestry Instructor at Southwest Vermont Career Development Center regularly engages students in hands-on, project based learning. This grant gave them the opportunity to build an outdoor classroom for Oak Hill Preschool by funding

the materials they cannot cut and mill themselves: roofing material, and the pressure treated lumber needed to complete the project. Over the past year, David's students have cleared an area behind Oak Hill Preschool, making it safe for the young learners there. This project will culminate with a community PLT workshop, co-facilitated by David's students, sharing the process and project they completed. Workshop participants will receive bound copies of PLT Family Activities, to inspire outdoor learning and exploration.

Mark Raishart, Forestry Instructor at Stafford Technical Center in Rutland is using this grant to build a sugarhouse for the school in collaboration with a Science teacher at Rutland High School. Mr. Raishart's students will cut and mill the lumber needed for the project, this grant will fund the materials they cannot cut and prepare themselves. Students at Rutland High School have been boiling sap to make maple sugar for many years, with their evaporator out in the open—exposed to weather and vandalism. This new sugar house will ensure the safety and security of this expensive equipment. This project will culminate in a maple sugar open house hosted by students for the community.

Vanessa Stern, fifth grade Math and Science Teacher at Union Street School in Springfield, regularly teaches outside with her students. Ms. Stern has weekly



*PLT, cont'd on next page*

# Vermont Tree Farm Newsletter

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*PLT, cont'd from previous page*

outdoor classes covering many topics from literacy to measurements, and ecology. Students learn outdoors in the school forest, and also at the new Muckcross State Park in Springfield. This project will fund an interactive study of how forests affect water quality. Students will place mesh bags of leaves in the Black River, leave them in the river for a few weeks, and then dig through the bags examining the insects present. Water quality can be clearly identified by the presence, and absence of certain insect species. Students will use this data to determine the quality of water in the Black River at different points along the river, this information will be collated with the land use at the locations, and upriver to help students understand how the health of the forests affect the quality of the water in the river. Students will present their results to the Black River Action Group, who will use student data for planning in the watershed. Students will also display results along with other projects they are working on, at a public display in the Great Hall in downtown Springfield.

Lynn Levine, Forester and PLT facilitator, is working with students at the Dummerston School to create an interactive interpretive hike. Students will plan stops along the trail, research, write, and design a brochure for people to use while hiking the trail. PLT activities will facilitate explorations of the trail, and students will research the forest needs for warblers. The resulting hike will be based on warblers, and their unique forest habitat needs. A kiosk at the trail head will hold paper copies of the brochure, and it will also be available digitally on the town and school websites.

This is just the first year of this three-year project, so all of these schools will build on these service learning projects to dig deeper, engage their communities, and produce meaningful results over the next few years.

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*Update, continued from page 1*

update we simply ask that you remember to tell us so we may place you back in the fully certified status. And we still need your help in keeping us updated on your personal information if it changes- home addresses, phone numbers, e-mails, and changes in acreage or your forester, or changes in family ownership. Please send these changes to Kathleen Wanner at [info@vermontwoodlands.org](mailto:info@vermontwoodlands.org).

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*Standards, continued from page 2*

than please visit the website listed above where you can download and review the 2015-2020 tree farm standards. If you're still worried that your plan may not meet the current standards for 2015-2020, then a simple phone call to your consulting forester will help. Remember, your consulting forester is like your family doctor and should be contacted on occasion to revisit the changing conditions of your woodlot that constantly occur.

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*Hurricane, continued from page 4*

tologists are predicting more and bigger hurricanes as the ocean's temperature increases. Steve's final chapter suggests that if a hurricane like the Hurricane of '38 were to hit us today, the consequences would be much worse. The population has doubled, value of property damage would be eight times worse, and we are much more vulnerable to loss of electricity and communication. With 2.5 times more land in forests which are more mature, the damage could be ten times worse. To top this off, Long suggests that the federal government would be less likely to step in and the area's decline in wood harvesting and processing facilities would hinder salvage efforts. It was fascinating the first time I read it. I learned more as I read it a second time to prepare this review. I suspect I will read it again to internalize some of the lessons I learned about regeneration in a white pine forest. It is a good companion to Creating and Maintaining Resilient Forests in Vermont.





Vermont Tree Farm Program  
C/O Vermont Woodlands Association  
PO Box 6004  
Rutland, VT 05702-6004

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Project Learning Tree Coordinator*

*Mary Sisock  
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*Allen Yale  
Tree Farmer, Derby, VT*

*Program Administrator  
Kathleen Wanner  
Rutland, VT*

## **Mark Your Calendars!**

The Vermont Woodlands Association Annual meeting will be held on Saturday April 8 at the Vermont Technical College in Randolph from 8:30am to 3:00pm. It promises to be an informative and interesting day. Agenda includes updates from FPR Commissioner Michael Snyder and State Forester Steve Sinclair; an opportunity to meet and hear from Sam Lincoln, new FPR Deputy Commissioner; AMP update with Dave Wilcox; Low-grade market outlook from Paul Frederick; Forest Products Networking with Christine McGowan; and Keynote speaker Jere Daniell, Log Drives on the Connecticut River.

A highlight of our annual meeting is the presentation of Tree Farm awards. We recognize Tree Farmers who have been enrolled in the program for 25 and 50 years with silver and gold signs they can display on their properties with great pride. We also announce our 2017 Tree Farmer of the Year and our 2017 Tree Farm Inspector of the Year!

**REGISTRATION AT [WWW.VERMONTWOODLANDS.ORG](http://WWW.VERMONTWOODLANDS.ORG)  
BE THERE!**