

# Vermont Tree Farm Newsletter



## **Vermont Tree Farm Committee Members**

*Alan Robertson, Co-Chair  
Tree Farmer, Sheffield, VT*

*Kathy Beland, Co-Chair  
Forester, Clarendon, VT*

*Jayson Benoit  
Forester, E. Charleston, VT*

*Richard Bizzozero  
Tree Farmer, Brookfield, VT*

*Paul Harwood  
Tree Farmer, Forester,  
Tunbridge, VT*

*Ian Martin  
Forester, Newfane, VT*

*Kyle Mason  
Bennington County Forester,  
State of Vermont*

*Rebecca Phelps  
Project Learning Tree  
Coordinator, State of VT*

*Allen Yale  
Tree Farmer, Derby, VT*

*Program Administrator  
Kathleen Wanner  
Rutland, VT*

## *News from Your Tree Farm Committee*

Welcome to the first edition of the Vermont Tree Farm program newsletter. In an effort to keep you all better informed as Tree Farmers and Tree Farm Inspectors, we anticipate publishing two issues per year.

First... why are you receiving this newsletter? According to our records, you are either a Tree Farmer enrolled in the American Tree Farm System or a certified Tree Farm Inspector - and we hope you know where you fit.

If that sounds like a silly statement, it's really not. All across the country there are landowners who do not know they are Tree Farmers. Perhaps they enrolled years ago and simply forgot; or their forester enrolled the property and they never really knew; or the land has been transferred to the next generation and the family didn't know. There are also inspectors who took training as part of continuing education requirements or because they had a Tree Farm client but were never actively engaged in the program.

If the above paragraph describes you, don't worry. Just let us know that you've lost track of your involvement with Tree Farm and we'll be happy to bring you up to date. The Vermont Tree Farm program benefits when our members - both Tree Farmers and Inspectors - participate, advocate, and represent exemplary management strategies.

Over time, we anticipate that all of you will become more familiar with the Vermont program. In fact, we're hoping that you'll be an active member of Tree Farm, perhaps by, attending or hosting a Tree Farm tour, competing for the Tree Farmer or Inspector of the Year awards, joining the committee, or a host of other activities.

The committee members are listed to the left and we would love to add your name. If you would like to be an integral part of Vermont's Tree Farm growth, we need you. Our strategic plan outlines a very aggressive path to the future that will require decisive action on the part of the committee, our Tree Farmers, and our Inspectors.

## ***Kathy Beland Named Northeast Regional Inspector of the Year!***

*In its first ever nomination, Vermont is pleased to announce and congratulate the Northeast Regional Outstanding Tree Farm Inspector for 2014, Kathy Beland. She will be honored at the Tree Farm National Leadership Conference in Savannah during February.*

**K**athy is a true Tree Farm Champion! She has been a Tree Farm inspector since the 1980s, member of the VT Woodlands board, Tree Farm committee member and committee co-chair for three years. Her committee involvement extends to representing the State at National Leadership Conferences, participating in strategic planning, offering recommendations to strengthen the Vermont program, reviewing and signing Tree Farm inspection reports, working with administrative staff to ensure completion of required inspections, regular reinspections, and audit preparation. Kathy recently completed facilitator training with AFF staff and has trained four new inspectors in the last few months.

In 2007, Kathy nominated Dick Rose as Tree Farmer of the Year and hosted a tour of the property in celebration of his winning. She planned and implemented a next-generation Tree Farmer workshop, in partnership with our County Forester and the son of our 2009 TFOY, Dave Potter. She has planned and held two Tree Farm Inspector Field Days that had a combined attendance of about 45 inspectors and she presented on this program at the 2012 Leadership Conference. Kathy regularly writes to our inspector corps, with encouragement to step up their activities and serves as a mentor for those who are new to Tree Farm or have been inactive.

As a member of the Vermont Woodlands consulting Foresters, for the last four years Kathy has served on the five-person advisory committee that evaluates new member applications, addresses and resolves any issues that come to the committee's attention, and plans educational programs. She also makes a significant contribution to the forestry community as the coordinator of the Forestry Building at the Vermont State Fair. Her year-long effort as coordinator brings together numerous organizations and dozens of volunteers who put a knowledgeable and friendly face on forestry in Vermont during this 10-day event held each September.

In 2013, Kathy completed fourteen Tree Farm inspections. Eleven remained certified and three properties were decertified.

The Vermont Tree Farm program is fortunate to have such a strong supporter and we extend our sincere thanks to Kathy for her outstanding service to landowners and to stewardship of our forests.



*Not only does Kathy love forestry, she loves fishing.*

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## ***Our thanks to Tree Farm Inspectors for 2013 Actions!***

During 2013, there were 80 Tree Farm actions performed by our Tree Farm foresters. Actions include initial inspection for new Tree Farm enrollment; reinspection for recertification; status change to pioneer pending a management plan update; or decertification when a landowner is no longer interested, cannot be contacted, or is deceased. We appreciate the work of our active inspector corps and their help in completing inspections. Even decertifications are important as they help to maintain the integrity of the Tree Farm program and ensure that every Tree Farmer enrolled in Vermont has a desire to manage to Tree Farm's high standard.

We would like to recognize and thank the following inspectors for their service to the Tree Farm program during 2013.

*Russ Barrett  
Rose Beatty  
Kathy Beland  
Jon Bouton  
Markus Bradley  
Rich Carbonetti  
Beth Daut  
John Fogarty  
Charlie Hancock  
Steve Handfield  
Luke Hardt  
Paul Harwood  
Robbo Holleran  
Frank Hudson  
Don Huffer*

*Ryan Kilborn  
Tony Lamberton  
Jeff Langmaid  
Ian Martin  
John McClain  
Ross Morgan  
Nancy Patch  
Jim Roberts  
Richard Root  
Andy Sheere  
Steve Slayton  
Chris Stone  
Ray Toolan  
Randy Wilcox*

## 2013 Third Party Audit Report

If you haven't followed the important changes in Tree Farm, the program is now third party certified through the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (or PEFC). In May of this year, Vermont completed its second certification audit by an outside auditor. Our first audit was in 2009, the year that third party certification began.

So, what does it mean to undergo an audit? Vermont is in the Northeast Regional group certificate. The states within this region are audited on a regular 4-year rotation. During our 2009 audit, there were 24 properties randomly selected; this year, there were 17. Tree Farmers are given ample notice of an upcoming audit and even the opportunity to decline. We have not had that happen in Vermont and, in fact, found all Tree Farmers to be very accommodating, if not looking forward to the visit. To us, this is a sign that you are doing the right thing on your land and proud to show it off. For this, we thank you and especially thank all Tree Farmers who so graciously hosted the inspector this year. Our 17 Tree Farmers were the best!

It's not just the Tree Farmers who are audited. The process begins in the administrative office where the auditor inspects record keeping, systems, procedures, 004s, etc. to ensure that paperwork is handled quickly and efficiently. This takes about half a day. Then the visits begin, generally with the Tree Farmer and forester present. Each visit is about 1 to 2 hours in length and generally involves visiting areas with recent activity and asking questions relative to the management plan. It's an awesome task for the auditor, who is putting on many miles and spending many hours.

The audit results in the following outcomes:

- Major and minor nonconformities that are addressed by AFF through action plans agreed to by the auditing agency
- Opportunities for improvement (OFIs)
- Identification of good management practices

We are very pleased to report that the audit report for Vermont included no major or minor nonconformities and no OFIs. It did, however, recognize many good management practices. Notice of these GMPs has been sent to all participating Tree Farmers and foresters along with our thanks for a job well done.

In addition to the routine audit we must also complete an assigned number of national sample inspections each year. These are considered "required" inspections and are selected randomly from the national database. This year, 13 properties have been selected for required inspection and both Tree Farmers and inspectors have been notified.

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## Welcome New Tree Farmers!

During the last twelve months, the Vermont Tree Farm program has enrolled fifteen new woodland stewards to the membership. The total enrolled acreage of these 15 Tree Farms is 2223, ranging in size from 30 to 383 acres. New Tree Farms are scattered around the state in nine different counties.

**Welcome new Tree Farmers! We appreciate your thoughtful stewardship and hope you will be an active participant in Tree Farm activities.**

- 1602 Peter Demasi, Roxbury
- 1603 Todd Schill, Mendon
- 1604 Demovick Ventures, Landgrove/Weston
- 1605 Jonathan & Linda Park, Brookfield
- 1606 Michelle Difilippo & Paul Schmolze, Northfield
- 1607 David & Susan Priest, Chittenden
- 1608 Mike & Linda Quinn, Middlebury
- 1609 John Bornemann, Hyde Park
- 1610 Allen & Cyndee Lord, Northfield
- 1611 Barbara Orlovsky, Craftsbury
- 1612 Sally Schleuter, St. Johnsbury
- 1613 Michael Mason & Micheline LeClair, Northfield
- 1614 Stephen Geandreau, Coventry
- 1615 Orchard St. Partners, Stratton
- 1616 Richard Korchak, Wallingford
- 1617 Elizabeth Crosier, No. Bennington

It is about more than just the very cool green and white sign but if you are on this list and haven't received yours, please let your forester know that you'd like one. Show off your stewardship with pride!





## *National News: Your voice in Washington*

I'm sure you can guess the most often asked question by foresters, Tree Farmers, and prospective Tree Farmers... "What's the benefit of being a Tree Farmer? Aside from the green and white sign, is there any reason to belong?" The simple answer... "Yes" and here's why.

Our new Vermont Tree Farm program brochure addresses the question of benefit and what you get in return for your good stewardship. Leading the list is **advocacy for legislation and policies important to woodland owners**. What does this really mean?

The American Forest Foundation has a team of Capitol Hill policy wonks (in relation to politics, this is defined as a person who studies or develops strategies and policies) working every day to advocate for your needs. This advocacy takes many shapes and also involves many Tree Farmers, like you, who serve as Grasstops Leaders. In fact, AFF's new Free the Trees Campaign is the result of input from Vermont's Grasstops Leaders on the importance of battling invasives, a problem that impacts woodland owners nationwide. (<https://www.forestfoundation.org/free-the-trees>)

Twice each year, AFF plans and funds a "Fly In" for Grasstops Tree Farmers from around the nation to visit Capitol Hill. Participants are given ample resources that include materials, training, and pre-arranged visits with their congressional delegation members. Vermonters are fortunate to have a delegation that understands and supports the needs of woodland owners and can count on Senators Leahy and Sanders and Rep. Welch to listen and respond. As a Tree Farmer, if you are ever asked to contact your delegation, please take this seriously as it's critical to the future of our forests.

As of this writing, the federal government is preparing to pass an omnibus (or an "everything") spending bill in which forest appropriations did well, according to AFF. Here are just a few of the highlights on programs that will remain at or near level funding.

- USDA APHIS invasive species programs: good news on at least level funding, especially given the pressure to reduce spending.

- Forest Service State and Private Forestry programs: NRCS conservation programs, and research programs all have strong funding levels.

- Green Building: Appropriators specifically highlighted the need for the USFS to invest in green building research with their R&D budget because "the Committees believe green building markets are a growing opportunity for American-grown wood."

On the topic of forest roads, several appropriators worked to get a permanent fix to the forest roads issue included in the omnibus bill, but unfortunately it did not make it in. Along with partner, AFF is continuing to work to get a permanent fix passed in the Farm Bill.



## *Local News: Your voice in Vermont*

It would be an oversight if we did not mention the important work of Vermont Woodlands Association at the state level. VWA is the sponsor of the Tree Farm program and has been generous in its financial support. They have underwritten Tree Farmer of the Year, tours and workshops, administrative costs, and much more.

VWA is also your voice in Montpelier. It is an active member of the Working Lands Coalition, leader of the Current Use Tax Coalition, has a seat on the Working Lands Enterprise Board, maintains working relationships with other forestry-oriented associations and state agencies, and is regularly called upon for expertise or testimony at the State House.

There are two very important things you can do, as a Vermont Tree Farmer, to ensure that VWA can continue its sponsorship.

1. Pay your \$10 per Tree Farm annual assessment to support administrative costs.
2. Join VWA today! Visit the website at [www.vermont-woodlands.org](http://www.vermont-woodlands.org) for details.

# *Call Before You Cut: or, the outreach efforts of one Tree Farmer after the storm*

*By Alan Robertson*

**O**n July 19th of 2013 the Vermont heat wave was relieved by a cold front from our Canadian neighbors. When the front reached Sheffield it got ugly and devastated several areas of the town; fortunately (?) only the forests were affected. Sheffield probably lost about 300 acres of trees (blown down, broken off, or deep “leaners”) over a large swath of the landscape.

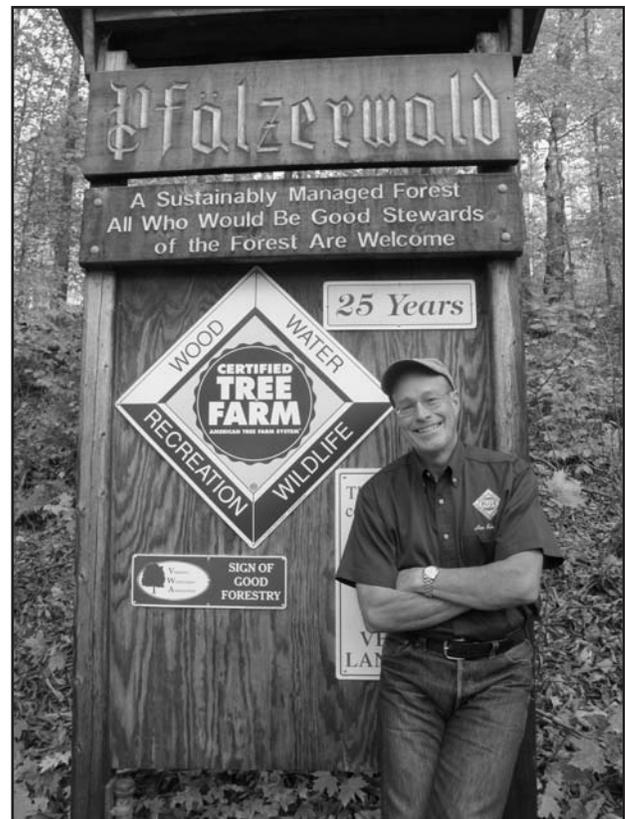
Almost immediately, several loggers started making the rounds of the area offering to clean up the mess. For a landowner facing very intimidating debris over a lawn, a forest, or along their access to the highway, and having no experience in dealing with loggers, this would seem to be an incredible bit of good fortune. Why not take advantage of the offer? Well, here’s the rest of the story...

Two of my neighbors, both of whom had significant damage, called me because they knew of my involvement with forestry, and careful woodland management. While being pleasantly surprised, I offered to ask the county forester to come out and advise them about what they should do. The visit took place about a week later, and had some very good results. The county forester was able to explain the benefits of involving a professional intermediary - a forester - in dealing with the need to remove and clean up the mess. Some of those benefits included a contract that protects and benefits the landowner, not the logger, impartial advice on the value - or lack thereof - of what is laying on the ground, the timeline on how soon something needs to be done, what a landowners expectations should be, the characteristics of a good logging operation, the potential costs of forester involvement, and the advantages of professional oversight of the logging operation. Some good local information about local foresters, etc was also dispensed. No downside to a forester’s involvement, but this is a lot for the average landowner to digest...

In the time since my first visit, the news has been rewarding. There have been no loggers here yet and the landowners are actively involved in considering their plans on handling the damage. A forester will be involved with at least one of the neighbors and prob-

ably both. Their overriding concern is the fear of a logger leaving their property in a bad condition. This fear is based largely on past logging operations in this vicinity of Sheffield, but varying levels of similar fears seem to permeate Vermont. It is a principal reason many woodland owners literally fear the “management” of their forests and illustrates the major effort we all have to educating our landowners, and promoting the good work that can happen with forester involvement.

I’ll report on the results of this effort in the coming months and hopefully there will be some good lessons learned from my neighbors.



*Al Robertson is a certified Tree Farmer, co-chair of the Tree Farm committee since 2001, past member of American Forest Foundation’s National Operating Committee, an inspector trainer, and a staunch advocate for the Tree Farm program. He was profiled in the most recent issue of Woodland, Sustaining America’s Family Forests (published by AFF). He can be found in his “silo” in the hills of Sheffield or tending his woods according to the German management technique called Dauerwald, or “continuous forestry.”*



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## *Exemplary Stewardship Deserves Recognition*

Don't be modest about your exemplary stewardship. There are many ways that you can be recognized for the excellent work you do on your woodland.

Each April at the annual meeting, VWA recognizes one Outstanding Tree Farmer of the Year. This year is no exception but you'll need to attend the meeting on April 5th to discover the identity of our 2014 OTFY recipient or read the next newsletter.

How does one become eligible for the OTFY honor, you ask? It's by nomination. How does one get nominated, you ask again? You can nominate yourself, or you can be nominated by another active Tree Farmer, forester, or natural resource professional from Vermont (or a neighboring state).

Vermont's Tree Farm program takes this award very seriously. We look forward to receiving applications, visiting properties, and selecting award recipients. For the last four years, our Vermont OTFY has gone

on to be recognized as the Northeast Regional OTFY and honored at the annual Tree Farm Convention. These winners include Mike & Vivien Fritz, Trevor & Stefanie Evans, Put & Marion Blodgett, and Allen & Kathleen Yale.

Please make it a point to visit our website where you'll find much more relevant information about Tree Farm in Vermont ([vermonttreefarm.org](http://vermonttreefarm.org)). You should also visit the ATFS website ([treefarmssystem.org](http://treefarmssystem.org)) where you can learn about the important advocacy and education efforts that benefit all Tree Farmers and woodland owners in the nation.

And, let us remind you that we need your support! Please consider joining the committee, hosting a tour, attending a tour, talking up Tree Farm with your neighbors, making a contribution when you receive our fundraising appeal, attending the annual meeting in April, or... you fill in the blank ... to participate in Tree Farm in your own meaningful way.