



2008 Annual Report

Note from the Founder

Writing the annual report for Vermont Family Forests always provides an opportunity to look back at, to learn from, and to celebrate the accomplishments of the year just past. This one is no exception. However, this year is different in that there were so many exciting and new energies emerging globally, nationally, and locally. The United States of America accomplished unthinkable good things in 2008 such as electing a bright, energetic, post-baby boomer as President and who also happens to be black. While testing the soil on Mars, we also joined the rest of the world by waking up to the realities of a rapidly changing global climate, peaking oil supplies, and a teetering economy. And at the end of 2008, we are all much more aware of the limits of our earthly nest, of the need to reduce our ecological footprints, and of the importance of conserving what is left of the earth's ecological capacity. We are finally ready to do good things!

Locally we are beginning the transition to an economy that is sustainable—ecologically, energetically, and ethically—including local food, shelter, energy, health, and art. Our Addison County Relocation Network (ACoRN) friends are leading that charge and there is now a very real sense that we can succeed in addressing the issues that face us, though we do not have time to waste. We must be bold as *Climate change requires culture change!* Thomas Berry called this “our moment of grace” and there certainly is plenty of work for all of us.

VFF's piece of this puzzle is to help conserve the health of our local forests. To paraphrase our friend and mentor Aldo Leopold, “Health is the capacity of the land for self-renewal.” The five best indicators of healthy forests are: clean, clear, highly oxygenated flowing

waters; rich, stable, productive soils; diverse biology and ecology; accumulating carbon in forest biota and soils; and resistance to invasion by disruptive exotic species.

Left to their own devices, our forests could probably manage themselves quite well through their time-tested re-wilding processes. However, we are not going to leave our forests alone. In fact, we are already tapping our forests more aggressively for fuel in the form of firewood, chips,

and even pellets in order to address our energy needs. It is no longer a question of “if?” but “how?”.

Reducing total energy use is a first critical step. Can we use our forests to help reduce energy consumption? Substituting renewables for fossil fuels, local for global, and organic for non-organic is the next step. Can we harvest more wood in ways that are at once sustainable, efficient, local, and fair? Can our forestry be more restorative and natural and less extractive and utilitarian?

VFF started working intensively on these issues and questions in 2008. We continued

to accomplish our mission through public education, application of sustainable forestry practices, research, and celebration. The highlights of the year are described on the following pages and if you want to learn more about our work, please visit our website, www.familyforests.org. Keep your eye on us. We will do even more in 2009!

We deeply appreciate all of the encouragement and support that we have received from the community. We are in this together and for the long haul.

May the forest be with you!

Locally, we are beginning to transition to an economy that is sustainable — ecologically, energetically, and ethically.

2008 Highlights

Logging Education

Eight sessions of the Game of Logging Levels I through III were offered in the Spring and Fall at the Watershed Center's Waterworks Property in Bristol. The Game of Logging was developed in Sweden by Soren Eriksson to improve safety, quality, and productivity. More than seventy-five students attended the day-long sessions.

PUBLIC EDUCATION

The *raison d'être* of Vermont Family Forests is to conserve the health of family forests. We know that the three great conservers of forest health are: well-informed stewards; sound economic returns from ecological forestry; and a community-shared land ethic. All of our educational efforts promote ecosystem thinking, full lifecycle assessment, and an economic system based on *ecology, ethics, and efficiency*.

Organic Sugaring Workshop

About 35 people attended an organic maple sugaring workshop co-sponsored by VFF and hosted by Don Dolliver with Kurt Kling in Starksboro. Sugarbush management, maple syrup production, marketing, and organic certification procedures were covered.

Forest Guild Charette

VFF participated with several other members of the Forest Guild to tease out the learning from our Community Wood Energy Project. An article by Bob Perschel, Forest Guild Northeast Region Director, entitled "Community Wood Energy Project: Using Local Sustainable Wood Supplies to Meet Rural Community Energy Needs" was published in the fall 2008 issue of *Forest Guide* quarterly.

Amphibians in the Self-willed Forest

In early June, after Jim Andrews presented a slide show on amphibian life at the VFF office, attendees headed to the Waterworks Property for some hands-on exploration.



Rewilding Ourselves

Look for our newly redesigned display and message at conservation events throughout the community. The display directly connects The Colby Hill Ecological Project with VFF's conservation practices. Entitled "Family Forestry: Re-wilding the Forest Community," the display highlights the lessons learned from Lester and Monique Anderson's self-willed Lincoln forest. Once intensively managed for



Rebecca Elder

sheep and cattle farming, the Andersons' land shows how an exploited piece of land goes about restoring its natural communities — how it re-wilds itself."

Celebrating Family Forestry

David Brynn presented a talk entitled "A Family Forest Journey: From Farming to Rewilding Vermont's Private Working Woodlands" as part of the Fall 2008 Howard E. Woodin Colloquium Series of the Environmental Studies Program at Middlebury College. Brynn suggested that we need to heed Wendell Berry's advice on narrowing the split between what we think and what we do. "We must get our thinking right by: evolving from stewards to members of the forest; thinking holistically; and tasting the feedback. We must get our doing right by: mimicking natural local forests; putting forest health before use; and by conserving first and substituting second."

FAMILY FORESTRY

Vermont Family Forests coined the phrases Family Forest and Family Forestry. Like any family, all members of the forest community have inherent value. We see ourselves as respectful members and we promote practices that, as Aldo Leopold suggested, conserve those functions and values by which forests maintain themselves as healthy ecosystems.

Family Forest®

Tree Farming is not family forestry though some tree farms will now be referred to as "Certified Family Forests" by the American Forest Foundation. VFF will remain the *Original Certified Family Forest*. However, AFF will proceed to use the phrase as well. With the help of our attorney, Vermont Family Forests did reach a settlement with the American Forest Foundation to protect our brand for forest products. AFF has agreed "not to use the term **Family Forest** or **Family Forests** as an element of a mark for any wood products, including, without limitation, the products listed in VFF's federal registration."

Vermont Reptile and Amphibian Atlas Project

The Vermont Reptile and Amphibian Atlas Project (VT Herp Atlas) joined forces with VFF and Jim Andrews will continue as the Atlas Project coordinator. The VT Herp Atlas was begun in 1994 as an effort to gather the data needed to make informed recommendations regarding the appropriate status and conservation of reptiles and amphibians in Vermont. Since then, the goals have been broadened to incorporate public education, encourage citizen involvement, and promote conservation. The ultimate goal of the Atlas is to gather and disseminate data on reptiles and amphibians in a way that involves and informs Vermont residents, landowners, and land managers, so that they will become more informed and effective stewards of wildlife and wildlife habitat. They provide outreach information through their website http://cat.middlebury.edu/herpatlas/the_atlas.htm, radio and television, newspapers, posters, workshops, field trips, and a new DVD entitled *Rattlers, Peepers, and Snappers: The First Complete DVD Guide to all of the Amphibians & Reptiles That Breed in New England*.



Oak-Pine-Northern Hardwood Forest Research Project

Marc Lapin is working through VFF on a project funded by the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife to identify, map, and rank the best examples of Oak-Pine-Northern Hardwood Forest blocks in Vermont.



Community Wood Energy Study

RESEARCH & DEMONSTRATION

As the Chinese would say, "We live in interesting times." Global climate change and a global economy present enormous challenges. We must re-invent our relationships with forests and each other and we must identify new ways to achieve harmony between the people and the land.

Emily Schadler, graduate student with the University of Vermont's Field Naturalist Program, published her work entitled "A Case Study of Woodchip Fuel at Mount Mansfield Union High School in Jericho, Vermont." The study was prepared for VFF and UVM's Green Forestry Education Initiative.

Green Wood Collaborative

Using VFF's Forest Management Checklist as a base, VFF participated with the Vermont Land Trust and the Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund to develop a baseline standard for FSC-certified forestry in Vermont. The standards were reviewed by foresters and forest ecologists across Vermont. The practices are essentially the same as VFF's with several important exceptions: whole tree harvesting, synthetic pesticides, and large clearcuts are permitted. This puts the standards very much in line with Vermont's Use Value Assessment Program. Just imagine if Vermont's UVA Program was FSC-certified! For a copy of the standards contact VFF.

Use Value Appraisal Study

David Brynn and Brendan Weiner worked with Deb Brighton on the *Review and Analysis of the Use Value Appraisal Program*, a report for the Vermont Legislature. Data on the effectiveness of the program were collected through surveys and interviews. The Use Value Appraisal Program is an essential and effective tool for conserving working forests in Vermont. The report suggested ways to move beyond a timber focus and to enhance protection of natural ecological systems including wetlands, riparian zones, and rare natural communities.



Colby Hill Ecological Project

Now in its eighth year, research continued at the Colby Hill Ecological Project Lands under the direction of Marc Lapin and administration of VFF. Research foci for 2008 included: phenology studies, mammal-tracking, bird population monitoring, small mammals and camera trapping, and herpetological study.

CELEBRATING FORESTS

People are made better when they have the opportunity to know, to love, to invest in, and to steward forests. Vermont Family Forests is dedicated to extending the opportunities for these healthy, symbiotic relationships to all members of our community.

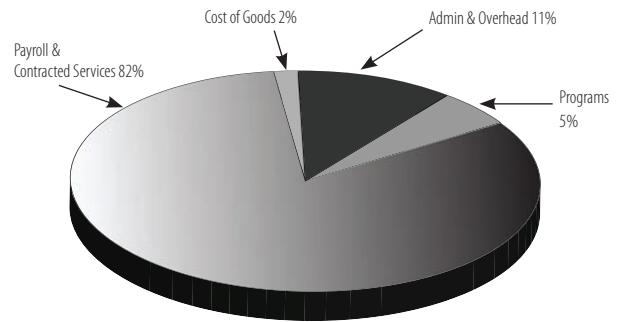
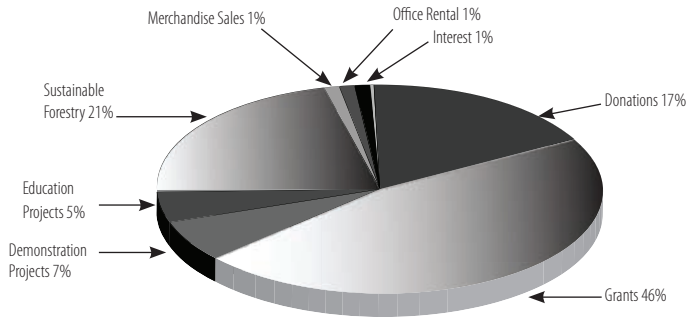


FINANCIAL STATEMENT

INCOME

Donations	\$ 41,468.71	Admin and Overhead	\$25,525.18
Grants	110,100.59	Programs	12,134.57
Demonstration Projects	15,520.56	Payroll & Contracted Services	189,976.24
Education Projects	11,340.00	Cost of Goods	3,685.08
Certified Ecoforestry Projects	445.00		
Sustainable Forestry	50,840.00		
Merchandise Sales	2,567.00		
Office Rental	3,000.00		
Interest	2,791.23		
Administrative Services	50.00		
Total Income	\$238,123.09	Total Expenses	\$231,321.07

EXPENSES



Winter Solstice, Bristol Best Night, and Beltane



Jonathan Blake

VFF co-sponsored Beltane, Winter Solstice, and Bristol Best Night again this year. The Beltane celebration at the Waterworks included maypole decorating, music by Jeff Pratt and Bruce Catlin of the Hibernators, as well as Susan Borg and Dick Nesson. At Winter Solstice, folks enjoyed music by Rick Ceballos and friends, and a group of singers led by

Sue and Dick. A mysterious figure in a black cape delivered light from the east. And more than 600 people attended the fourteen Best Night performances at Holley Hall and the Bristol Baptist Church.

STAFF NOTES

New England Wild Flower Society's 2008 Vermont State Award

David Brynn, VFF Founder and Executive Director, received the award that is "For exemplary and innovative work to conserve and cultivate forests of Vermont, benefiting private woodland owners and the community at large."

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The Watershed Center
Vermont Land Trust



Vermont Family Forests™ is a nonprofit education organization whose mission is to conserve the health of the forest community and, when appropriate, to promote the careful cultivation of local family forests for community benefit.

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2008 ADDISON COUNTY CONSERVATION CONGRESS

The seventh Conservation Congress, entitled “Addison County in Transition: Visioning Our Community in 2020 and Mapping the Next Steps to Get There” was held at Mount Abraham Union High School in Bristol on October 25th. About 150 people attended this year’s event, which was co-sponsored by VFF and the Addison County Relocalization Network (ACoRN). Jonathan Corcoran was the creator and artistic director of this year’s Congress. One attendee said it was the most exhilarating day-long conference she had ever attended. “The next day I slept eleven hours,” she said. A copy of the proceedings, entitled a “Declaration of Interdependence”, can be obtained by visiting our website, familyforests.org

Our Community Declaration of Interdependence: Opening Statement

Our world is at a crossroads. We have entered what has been called the “Transition,” the “Great Turning,” and “Our Moment of Grace.”

Three clouds now hang over this consumer age: 1) peaking oil supplies and the beginning of the end of the era of ‘cheap’ fossil fuels, 2) rapidly changing climate and the disruption of the earth’s basic support systems and 3) the collapse of our debt-ridden financial system. As this age draws to a close, we must move swiftly to a more just and sustainable world.

We cannot expect to know nor be completely ready for what is coming. However, it is clear from the three clouds that very significant change is coming. This change will require that we become more realistic in our wants and more local in meeting our basic needs. As William McDonough has said, “All sustainability is local.” We must cultivate responsibility at the grassroots level and get back to the basics in our local communities. Many of us will have to learn how to live and work in partnership with nature and to recognize and respect her

limits. We will have to live more frugally and to depend upon each other much more. Many of our elders will be a great help here. If we do this work well, life will be richer, healthier, and happier.

“Community” means “to share our gifts together,” be they the gifts of nature, our work, our families and friends, or our selves. Addison County has been endowed with a rich inheritance of beautiful farmland and forests, lakes and rivers, and mountains. Its citizens are resourceful, intelligent, caring, honest, and hard-working. We celebrate these gifts and are confident that we can and will find our way if we work together.

VISION 2020 is an exploration of our Addison County community in the year 2020. It is a vision of a culture of interdependence, participation and collaboration rooted in ecological sustainability, energy efficiency, resource conservation, and ethics.

VISION 2020 calls for a creative—and even radical—redesign of the way we think, work, and live with each other and with nature. We hope you and yours will read it in its entirety and find your way to participate in bringing this collective vision to life. This is our moment of grace. This is our time to manifest a new era. There is much to be done. *There is no time to waste.*



Jonathan Blake