Wild Ideas
Wilderness & Wildlands Proposals for the Northern Forest
Special Section Pages 11-19

Protected Wildlands in Maine's Baxter State Park

Inside

News from Across the Region
Railway Herbicide Victory in Vermont p. 6
Failure of Forest Practices Reform in Maine pp. 9 & 25
Coastal Waters Watch p. 10
Quebec Wilderness Under Siege pp. 20-23
NH Liquidation Report p. 24
Acid Rain Corroding the Adirondacks p. 28
& much more
Why Wilderness?

The recognition that Nature is greater and more awesome than humanity creates the unfortunate confidence that Creation can absorb whatever we throw at it.

Whether we consider human population, the burning of carbon, or the destruction of habitat, it has been long assumed that we could not destroy, merely defile.

We are thus at an awesome crossroads in at least human thought. The possibility that we could destroy Earth itself has crept into human psychology. The Grateful Dead in their song Throwing Stones suggest we shall leave our planet a blackened stone. Like Neil Young’s silver seeds flying to a new home in the sun, some seek a transcendental way out—but whether any other planet in its right mind would welcome time-travelling humans is a good question. After expulsion from Eden the human stories just get worse...

Why Wilderness?

Herein the Northern Forest we enjoy a certain insulation from poverty and destruction—we already have the car. We have the economic power to export any destructive energy, and read about rather than experience most of the world’s ills.

Environmental Apocalyptic is not necessarily on our minds. We can believe in the ultimate victory of Nature. But we do not know.

We can see however that our economic system is not content with limits. It will eat what it can. Every sizeable town in the region has its strip, its new homes, its growing population. We do not live simply; we eat from stores, we burn gasoline, we consume paper.

Our developed landscape and its dictates are more than external, however. Their internal corollary is the lobotomization of psyche. Our culture is marching; it favors the conforming; it stifles the expressive.

Wilderness will not make up for the untenability of human consumption—but it will address the survival of other species—and perhaps Life itself. Wilderness is also liberation of the human mind, a suggestion that it is not entirely paved.

Adirondack Model

If we were to apply the example of the Adirondacks to the wider Northern Forest, and the model of non-extractive reserves of our marine ecosystems as well, we could restore significant missing pieces of the region’s ecology. We could ensure survival of bear, wolf and catamounts and creatures that rely on big trees and decaying wood. Unmanaged forest could sequester more carbon than forty year rotation plantations.

Should it also be within humanity’s capacity to unravel the life process of Earth itself, the wilderness areas we establish will also be a humble, fitting and untamed gesture. We occupy a chunk of Earth here; we have no other home. Trees, creatures and water may be able to knit back together what we so blithely assumed could never be destroyed.

—AW

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How Now Brown Cow?

Some cows refuse to be milked and are soon hamburger. Perhaps this is the lesson of the failure of forest practices reform in the state of Maine and its intangible progress in New Hampshire (jury out in Vermont).

The conservation community, if this phrase is still apt, should turn to the more fundamental task of organizing the public support for creating wilderness. A coherent plan for purchasing paper company lands (and smaller parcels liquidated by contractors) as they come on the market across Northern New England should be put forward as a positive alternative to another referendum or failed legislative effort.

Sustainable silviculture and low impact forestry are important to the future rural economic health of the region. An industry that down-sizes, mechanizes, pollutes, and runs down its resource base undercuts its own viability. But at present we are at a stalemate between reform and the status quo.

Wilderness transcends economic arguments and justifications. Challenging economic interests will continue to raise obstacles that a wilderness campaign for the region can sidestep altogether (well, almost). Bear, moose, wolves and catamounts are positive icons that can excite a public in a way that residual stocking standards never will.

—AW

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NARP Mission Statement

The Northern Forest Forum is the voice of the Northern Appalachian Restoration Project (NARP), a non-profit grassroots activist network dedicated to promoting sustainable natural and human communities throughout the Northern Forest region of New York, Maine, Vermont and New Hampshire. For information about NARP or its individual projects, please write to: NARP, PO Box 6, Lancaster, NH 03584.

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Page 2

The Northern Forest Forum
To the Editor:

Re. Caroline Snyder's recent letter to the editor regarding the position of the Society for the Protection of NH Forests on House Bill 1431, an act prohibiting the aerial application of herbicides in forestry.

We respect Ms. Snyder's right to disagree with the Forest Society on this and any other issues. However, it is unfortunate that she chose to publicly disparage our policy director's credibility—and by implication the Forest Society's—without first checking on how, and why, the Forest Society took the position that it did.

Our position to oppose HB 1431 was debated and approved by our Policy Advisory Committee, comprising both board and non-board members. It is consistent with positions taken by the Forest Society in 1994 and 1997, prior to Mr. Niebling's employment here, on legislation relating to aerial application of herbicides. Last year, the Forest Society opposed HB 463 in favor of a continuation of the regulatory review process undertaken by the Pesticide Control Board (PCB). We offered extensive comments to the PCB on new regulations concerning public notification, information required of the applicant, criteria for permit review, and appeals of the PCB decisions to approve or deny permits.

Our mission in land conservation and promoting sustainable forestry requires that we weigh many issues in taking the position that we did on HB 1431, not the least of which is the comparative risk associated with the chemicals and methods used by Champion and Mead, the two landowners in northern New Hampshire who utilize this practice. It also reflects a commitment to let the regulatory review process run its course, consistent with our position, and the position of the NH Legislature, taken last year.

What is truly unfortunate about this debate is that the prohibition on herbicide spraying contained in HB 1431 forces the issue to be portrayed as either black or white. To those who oppose this practice, there is no middle ground. Ms. Snyder has chosen to interpret the Forest Society's position as against herbicide spraying, rather than against a prohibition on the practice. An organization which seeks to find a reasonable middle ground on this issue is thus vilified by those who support the prohibition.

Again, we respect Ms. Snyder's position and the dedication that she brings to advocating her perspective. Readers may contact the Forest Society at 534 Portsmouth St., Concord, NH 03301 for more information on this issue.

Sincerely,

Jane A. Difley
President/Forester

Forest Society Seeks Middle Ground

Low Impact Forestry Workshop

Saturday, May 16, 1998
Ellsworth, Maine

Dear Editor:

Your readers might be interested in a low impact forestry workshop and demonstration we have planned for Saturday, May 16, 1998. This session, which will be held in Ellsworth, focuses on low-impact harvesting methods and should be of interest to woodlot owners, loggers and foresters.

A demonstration of equipment options will be held in the afternoon at The Black House in Ellsworth. Workshops are planned in the morning on various topics including wood utilization and product marketing options. Loggers attending may be able to obtain CLP (Certified Logging Professional) re-certification credits.

Those interested can contact me at 207-667-7131 for additional information.

Thanks,

Ron Poitras
Hancock County Planning Commission

Forest Ecologist Lauds Ice Storm Coverage

To the Editor:

I enjoyed reading the articles on the ice storm in the recent Northern Forest Forum. Combating the knee-jerk reaction to salvage everything that gets damaged from any natural event is an uphill battle, but articles and suggestions like yours should help.

The enclosed article ["Forest Response to Disturbance and Anthropogenic Stress: Rethinking the 1938 Hurricane and the Impact of Physical Disturbance vs. Chemical and Climate Stress on Forest Ecosystems," by David R. Foster, John D. Aber, Jerry M. Melillo, Richard D. Bowden, and Fakhri A. Bazzaz, published in BioScience, July/August 1997] summarizes the comparative research in our LTER [The Harvard Forest Long Term Ecological Research program, initiated in 1988] and strongly supports your perspective on salvage. We basically came to two conclusions: anthropogenic stresses like N deposition and global warming may be much more disruptive than "catastrophic" physical damage and, in retrospect, the aftermath of the 1938 hurricane was much like a massive logging event.

Best,

David Foster

Note: David Foster works at the Harvard Forest in Petersham, MA. He is one of the most respected researchers in forest ecology in the region.

Allagash Wilderness Waterway Public Meetings

Public meetings for comment on Maine's Allagash Wilderness Waterway Management Plan have been announced by the Bureau of Parks and Lands.

The Waterway has unfortunately become a focal point in Maine's current controversy between "Sportsmen" and others who demand drive-in access and increased motorized recreation, and wilderness advocates who prefer limited access and a "remote" canoe and fishing experience. Anyone who knows or cares about the Allagash should try to attend one of these meetings. The Bureau needs to hear in no uncertain terms that there is a constituency for wilderness and remoteness, as well as easy access.

There are many important issues to be addressed. Call Jon Luoma at (207) 586-7106 for more information.

If you are unable to attend, please send written comments to: Tom Critelns, Bureau of Parks and Lands, State House Station #22, Augusta, ME 04333. Copies of the latest management plan draft can be obtained from this address.

Public Meetings will be held on:

May 12, Black Bear Inn, Orono; 6:30 PM.
May 14, Ashland High School Gym, Ashland; 6:30 PM.
May 19, Ramada Inn, Lewiston; 6:30 PM.

Patagonia International Design Competition

Patagonia, the outdoor equipment company, announces its International Design Competition, with a first prize of 15,000 smackers. Design ideas for outdoor products will be judged on form, function, beauty and impact on the Earth. The entry deadline is August 1st, 1998. For more information, call 888-344-4567 ext. 4809. Or visit http://www.patagonia.com.

SPNHF Does It Again

Dear Editor:

At a March 3 public meeting in the Sandwich Town Hall, concerned local citizens opposing the US Forest Service timber sale in the historical Sandwich Notch area (adjacent to a designated Wilderness area) were joined by members of the NH Greens, the Sierra Club of NH, and the Wilderness Society. The only person that appeared to be in favor of this 200 acre cut (which includes clearing of 75 acres and "improving" 2.5 miles of the Notch Road, was a representative of the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests.

Caroline Snyder
Sandwich
The Adirondack Park is a model for people living amidst wild areas in a way beneficial to both. At six million acres in size—bigger than the State of Vermont—the Adirondack Park contains a checkerboard of publicly owned Forest Preserve lands (2.5 million acres), private lands, 2.5 million of which is commercially managed forests.

The Forest Preserve lands are "to be forever kept as wild forest." This constitutional provision is the tightest wilderness protection in the U.S.; no timber harvesting, strictly limited use of motor vehicles. Created in 1885, lands in the Forest Preserve represent 85 percent of the total wilderness east of the Mississippi River. 130,000 people spread throughout more than 100 communities make their home and livelihood in the Adirondacks. The Adirondack Park is not only a place where people and wilderness systems coexist, but represents a successful model for large-scale landscape protection. Each issue of the "Adirondack Park Report" details the most pressing recent issues facing the Adirondack Park.

Marylou (Whitney) Hendrickson Backs Out of Easement Agreement

The big news in the Adirondacks is that Marylou (Whitney) Hendrickson has backed out of the $3 million "Preservation Agreement" with the Nature Conservancy on the southern 36,000 acres of her estate.

No reason was given. Last December Mrs. Hendrickson, besides selling 14,780 acres surrounding Little Tupper Lake to the state, had agreed to a 10-year Preservation Agreement" on the remaining 36,000 acres of her estate with the Adirondack Nature Conservancy and Land Trust. In essence this Agreement was a lease for $8.33 per acre for 10 years.

The hope was to build a positive relationship with Mrs. Hendrickson so that eventually more land could be protected either through state purchase for the Forest Preserve or by purchase of a conservation easement.

The main deal for additional Forest Preserve wilderness is still on and will be final around Memorial Day. Mrs. Hendrickson has already stated that she will be watching closely to monitor how the state manages the Little Tupper Lake property. She maintains public lands do not receive the stewardship that private lands do not receive the stewardship that private lands receive; quite a statement from a woman who admits there will not be a tree worth harvesting on her property for another 30 years.

Active preparations are underway for management of Little Tupper Lake. One big obstacle facing the planning team at the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) is that there are no facilities to accommodate the throngs of users expected, given the high profile of this purchase. It's likely that on opening day no canoes will be in place, no trails, no picnic areas, no camping areas, no pit privies either. The former Whitney Industries headquarters is located on the eastern end of Little Tupper Lake. It has an asphalt road off the county highway and contains some 20 buildings. DEC is working to have a parking area, interpretive signing, and a canoe launching area in place by the time the deal is final.

The idea of designation of the area for day-use only through 1997 has been floated. Trails and carries from Rock Lake to Lake Lila will also be cut during the summer of 1997, but probably will not be ready by the time the property is opened for public use.

The Town of Long Lake, where the property is located, has called upon Governor George Pataki to classify the new Forest Preserve land as Wild Forest, a classification under the Adirondack Park Agency (APA) Land Use and Development Plan. Under this classification the roads on the property would remain open to motorized use and the lakes could be open for motor boats. When a new piece of Forest Preserve is acquired, the DEC studies the property, may convene a public advisory committee for assistance, and develop a management plan and classification recommendation for the APA. The APA then votes to approve the classification or sends it back for more work.

Many others have called for the property to be classified as Wilderness, including Governor Pataki and DEC Commissioner John Cahill. Under the Wilderness classification the roads on the property would be closed and all motorized watercraft prohibited (electric trolling engines are allowed). Those opposed to the Wilderness classification complain that this classification "closes" the property. I fail to understand how a property being closed to one's truck or jet ski or snowmobile or all terrain vehicle makes a property closed. The Forest Preserve is open 24 hours per day, 365 days a year. It's free admission to any woman, man, bird, fish or quadruped who can walk (slither, fly, swim, run) paddle a canoe, row or ride in a boat. The Forest Preserve is the best deal New York State offers.

Deed covenants specified by Mrs. Hendrickson prohibit either the use of motor boats, jet skis, or float planes on any of the ten lakes and ponds that are part of the state purchase. To protect her property to the south, Mrs. Hendrickson has included language in her contract with the state that the Little Tupper Lake property be managed consistently with Wilderness, Canoe, or Primitive areas all official Forest Preserve land use classifications that prohibit motorized use. This effectively mandates that the main road on the property be closed once the existing contract with International Paper Company, for use as a haul road, expires.

Pataki Comes Up Big

In his 1998-99 budget, Governor Pataki has proposed $72 million for land acquisition statewide. These funds come from annual allocations from the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF), some $82 million for land in this budget, and an additional $40 million as the second installment from the $150 million for land acquisition approved by public referendum in the 1996 Environmental Quality Bond Act. (With this allocation, a total of $60 million of the $150 million has been allocated to date.)

Governor Pataki budgeted this amount for land protection primarily because he is committed to further land protection in the Adirondack Park. Right now 350,000 acres are for sale across the Adirondacks, including 144,000 acres by Champion International Corporation and 105,000 acres by Domtar Specialty Fine Papers. The State of New York is looking to buy a mixture of Forest Preserve and conservation easements on the Champion lands and a large conservation easement from Domtar. A number of other projects are also being looked at (see back issues of the Forum for a listing).

These are opportune times for land protection in the Adirondacks. A number of positive factors have converged. The funding is in place. There's plenty of willing sellers. The Governor has demonstrated the political will to buy and protect land in the Adirondacks. While many local communities are supportive of increased land protection, some local political leaders and allies in the local press who once opposed environmental camps will steadfastly oppose further land protection, regardless of how beneficial it will be to the local community.

Taxing Times

In the Adirondacks the State of New York is a big taxpayer, paying over $45 million annually in county, town, school and other local taxes on Forest Preserve lands. Each parcel of Forest Preserve is assessed locally. Forest Preserve averages over $15 per acre in tax revenues. In Long Lake, where the 14,780-acre Little Tupper Lake tract was just purchased, new tax revenues of $110,000 to $190,000 are estimated. The State of New York is a very generous taxpayer and this helps move local governments to be supportive of more Forest Preserve or conservation easements.

The great majority of corporate lands and large private land holdings in the Adirondacks are enrolled in one of two New York State Real Property Tax Law (RPTL) programs, sections 480 or 480a. These programs provide 80 percent tax reductions for landowners who keep their lands in forest production. This loss of local tax revenues is not made up anywhere. Consequently, most private commercial managed forest

The Northern Forest Forum
lands generate an average of about $4 per acre, far less than the state’s average of $15. The State of New York cannot grant itself its own exemption, so it pays taxes on the full local assessed value.

**Pataki Proposes Relief from Forest Land Subsidies**

At the end of 1997 Governor Pataki started hearing negative comments from some Adirondack and North Country local political leaders that he was too “green.” After purchasing Little Tupper Lake, prohibiting the importation of garbage, booting anti-environmental APA Chairman Gregory Campbell, and moving a proposed prison out of the Adirondacks, some local leaders sharply criticized him. To soften these blows Governor Pataki has been taking a lot about economic development for the Park. He has proposed a new $3.5 million program to reimburse some taxes lost with lands enrolled in the RPTL 480/480a programs.

Under the proposed formula a town is eligible if enrollment in these programs causes a shift of one percent or more in total tax revenues. About twenty Adirondack towns will benefit. Long Lake, where the state just purchased Little Tupper Lake, should see new revenues of about $350,000 in school, town and county taxes.

**The “Local Veto” Exercised**

Under the 1993 Environmental Protection Act, which created the Environmental Protection Fund, monies from the fund can be used for state purchase of land in a given town if it has enacted an opposition ordinance. The so-called “local veto” has been used sparingly to date. Often towns take no position. Over the past five years better than 25 state purchases have been approved by local governments.

In Moriah to the Town of Moriah exercised the “local veto” to deny state purchase of 340 acres of forest lands around Ensign Pond. This land is bordering on three sides by the Hammond Pond Wild Forest (Forest Preserve) and controls the right-of-way to Trout Pond, a popular place for fishing. The Town Board vetoed the sale because it felt the state already owned enough land in the Adirondacks. It owns about ten percent of Moriah.

This is an ironic situation. Some on the Town Board are awoke property rights adherents and one of their core principles is that one should be able to do with their land as they please. But here they’re denying the free exercise of this principle for an 80-year old widow who simply wants to sell the land to the state, something her late husband, a noted sportsman and conservation writer in the area, had always planned to do. Further, she and her husband had never posted the property and it has been widely used by local people for years. The land is enrolled in RPTL 480a so state purchase would generate an estimated $2,000 in new local tax revenues for the Town.

The Town Board is now reconsidering its position. Many local conservationists and sportsmen have called for state purchase; they want the road access to Trout Pond, a popular place for fishing. The Town Board vetoed the sale because it felt the state already owned enough land in the Adirondacks. It owns about ten percent of Moriah.

**Vermont Mercury Bill Addresses Contamination, Prevention**

The Vermont State Senate passed S. 181 this February, a piece of legislation aimed at addressing the increasing threats of mercury contamination in the state’s air, land, and aquatic environments. The Senate Natural Resources and Energy Committee was considering the mercury bill at the same time that a special environmental conference was held in Portland, Maine to address mercury and acid rain contamination in the Northeast. The conference and the Vermont Senate bill, seek to address concerns for the health of the region’s inland fisheries, bird populations, and human populations. Mercury contamination has been compounded over the last century through human use and is released into the environment through combustion, solid waste, and other non-point pollution sources. Mercury bio-magnifies in the food chain and has begun to affect loons, eagles, and fish populations and threatens the human central nervous system, particularly in pregnant women and children.

The Vermont legislature is an attempt to promote public education and awareness on the mercury issue and hopes to accomplish this through a number of initiatives. The Mercury Bill mandates that manufacturers of mercury-added products label them so that consumers will know and be able to choose which products they want to buy. It also establishes a list of mercury-added products that must be labeled and it requires the consumers to source separate these products so that they may be recycled or properly disposed of.

The bill contains language that requires solid waste management districts to implement collection programs no later than June 1, 1999. The legislation provides support for municipalities and consumers by designing and disseminating a public information program to be adopted and implemented through the ANR and the Department of Health and establishes an advisory committee on mercury pollution to assess the risks of mercury contamination and how best to address these issues in Vermont and the Northeast. The list of mercury-added products includes 1) thermostats and thermostaters 2) switches 3) medical and scientific instruments 4) electric relays and other electrical device 5) lamps 6) batteries. The bill now goes to the House of Representatives for approval.
Herbicide Free Rail Lines

Vermont is on the Right Track
by Barbara Alexander

Vermont is poised to eliminate another non-essential use of industrial toxins from our environment and from the way we do business in our state. On February 27th, the Vermont Pesticide Advisory Council (VPAC) held a hearing on the use of herbicides along railroad rights-of-way in response to a request by a coalition organized by the Vermont Citizens' Forest Roundtable (VCFR).

The coalition, consisting of VCFR, Brigitte and Elizabeth Graham, and the Vermont Public Interest Research Group (VPIRG), has been working with legislators since January to develop policy (House Bill 729) which would place an indefinite moratorium on the use of herbicides for weed control along railroads and would give a citizen's right to know through policy mandates including “the identification of and usage dates regarding each individual application of a herbicide permitted by the commissioner [of agriculture] since July 1, 1960.”

The Grahams, who for thirteen years have been battling the ill effects of multiple herbicide sprays along a railroad right-of-way which bisects their small farm in Norton, Vermont, are no longer fighting alone. During the recent VPAC hearing, the council listened for six hours to a number of experts and over two dozen concerned citizens, most of whom called for a state-wide adoption of alternatives to the use of herbicides by railroad companies in Vermont.

Toxic Soup

In 1984, an illegal herbicide application of atrazine, diuron and bromacil by the former owners of the railway, Canadian National, left the Graham’s’ farm severely contaminated. (The spray was conducted in violation of state regulations and statutes without the requisite permit from the VT. Dept. of Agriculture.) Residues of these herbicides were detected in well water and in vegetation samples located more than 1,000 feet from the track. Atrazine, which is persistent and mobile in soil, is one of the most common pesticidal contaminants of water, including rivers, groundwater, and even rain and fog. It is highly toxic to both aquatic and terrestrial animal species and has been linked to two forms of cancer in humans.

Diuron is also highly mobile and can migrate to surface waters where it has been shown to bioaccumulate in fish, especially in the livers. A recent study conducted by the VT Dept. of Health showed that diuron has a propensity to leach into ground water. Long-term exposure to bromacil may cause mutations and may lead to miscarriage, birth defects, and cancer.

The 1984 application of atrazine, diuron and bromacil represents only part of a chemical legacy which has been left along the 1,440 foot track crossing the Graham property.

Bromacil is also dangerous to wildlife; animal tests have shown evidence of thyroid abnormalities after chronic exposure to this compound.

Dead Animals

In her statement before VPAC, Elizabeth Graham described some of the realities of life on the farm after the chemical exposure in 1984: “In the months and years that followed the spraying, we and our animals were plagued with a seemingly endless array of illnesses: skin rashes, respiratory and digestive problems, chronic headaches and general debilitating weakness. Many of our smaller animals died; sheep, ducks, geese, and cats. By the following spring, our livestock began to develop severe birth defects in their offspring. Cattle, sheep, ducks and geese born blind or with heart, lung and limb defects, many of which resulted in death. We saw many of the same effects in the local wildlife. Following the spraying, dead bees littered the ground along the railway, birds and squirrels literally fell out of the sky or trees. There were bodies scattered all over the property, mice, moles, weasels, rabbits and foxes. Dead fish floated in the river.”

The 1984 application of atrazine, diuron and bromacil was only part of a chemical legacy which has been left along the 1,440 foot track crossing the Graham property. Other harmful chemicals sprayed include the known carcinogens 2,4 D, nitrofen and amitrole as well as triclopyr, imazapyr, hexazinone, picloram and glyphosate.

Cooperative Effort

VCFR has been working with St. Lawrence and Atlantic Railway (SL&A), the current owners of the thirty-mile Sherbrooke Spur which includes the line that runs through Norton, to develop a pilot project for a vegetative management plan that would replace herbicide use for weed control along the rail line.

Matt Jacobson, vice president of SL&A, has formed a partnership with VCFR to investigate alternatives which would protect Vermont residents like the Grahams from the chemical trespass which has devastated their quality of life. Mr. Jacobson, whose company has taken a leadership role in this initiative, has agreed to investigate new technologies in alternatives so that other railway companies that do business in Vermont will learn from this project and will also adopt a zero herbicide management policy.

Vermont’s entire Congressional delegation is supporting the cooperative effort by VCFR and SL&A by asking for federal appropriations to fund the pilot project. Congressman Bernie Sanders stated in a letter presented to VPAC at the February 27th hearing, “I think Vermont, once again, is leading the nation in the area of environmental health, by looking at the very serious health implications of the deployment of chemicals into our environment. On the topic of railroads and the appropriate cooperative approach that has been taken thus far by the Vermont Citizens’ Forest Roundtable. I think that a real cooperative effort between railroads, environmental groups and communities is the approach that is going to lead to the quickest, safest, most cost-effective solution.” Senators Leahy and Jaffords have also backed the initiative.

Herbicide Alternatives

At their last regular meeting on March 9th, VPAC established two subcommittees to research the impacts of herbicide use along railroad rights-of-way. One committee will address environmental issues, with a focus on wetlands, and the other will address human health issues.

A third committee, consisting of two VPAC members, representatives from VCFR, representatives from the railroads, and an expert on Integrated Pest Management strategies, will explore in detail the state-wide adoption of alternatives to herbicides along rail lines in Vermont. The establishment of these committees marks a dramatic and positive, shift from the way VPAC has functioned in the past.

VCFR is working with the House Natural Resources and Energy Committee to write a joint resolution which would commend SL&A for their efforts and would encourage other rail ways companies which operate in Vermont to become herbicide free.

For more information about VCFR’s Railroad Herbicide Project or a copy of a 32-minute video depicting the Graham’s moving story, please contact VCFR’s Barbara Alexander at (802) 586-2288.
The Society for the Protection of New Hampshire’s Forests testified before the New Hampshire legislature this winter in opposition to House Bill 1431, an act to establish a moratorium on spraying of herbicides in forestry.

Appearing before the House Committee on the Environment and Agriculture on January 21, Charles Niebling of SPHNF—the state’s preeminent forest conservation organization—stated that the Society believes that herbicide release and high yield softwood management has a place in New Hampshire forestry.

Limited to brief testimony, up against the reputation that the Society enjoys in Concord, and appearing before members of a committee pre-disposed to the wishes of industry, spray opponents were unable to make the case that herbicides have no place in forestry. HB 1431 never made it out of committee.

Industry Rationale
Mr. Niebling excused intensive management with the premise that “high yield softwood management is integral to a land management strategy where comparable land area is dedicated to less intensive forest management or areas where little or no management occurs and where non-manageable forest values are given high priority.”

Mr. Niebling and industry colleagues imply that only intensive management can produce high yields that will allow lighter management elsewhere. Fallacies in this argument are that:

1) only minor areas of overall landholdings are sprayed, 2) spraying in fact leads to a more productive forest, and 3) reserved, non-managed or wilderness lands are contingent on industry achieving high yields elsewhere. (Mr. Niebling however implied only that intensive management would allow lighter management—not unmanaged reserves.)

While the last argument may involve simple math of values rather than fact—a debate in which the Society is advocating values contrary to forest conservation—the first is directly refutable by industry’s own arithmetic. Although claims are made that spraying occurs but once in the intended forty year rotation, industry practice in Maine—by admission of no less an expert than Monicaso lobbyist Max McCormick—indicates a high rate of re-spraying. Mitch Lansky found a re-spray rate of one-third of treated acreage.

Champion, who has retained Mr. Niebling as a lobbyist for its spray program in the past, indicated in Vermont that the company intends to spray “only” one percent of its land in a given year. With the forty year rotation paper companies desire, the Forest Society therefore is endorsing a spray policy subjecting 76,000 acres of Champion’s 190,000 and 44,800 of Mead’s 112,000 acres or over 120,000 acres of Coos County to intensive management. (These members promise the suitability of acreage for industrial management and the sustainability of forty years rotation in the Northern Forest—and ignore whether industrial management is suitable for the forest or the region.)

Tree Farming the Forest
While industry will argue that the overall acreages will be far less, part of their reasoning is based on the assumption of higher productivity from sprayed acreages (“if we practice forty year rotations productivity will be so high we won’t have to practice forty year rotations”).

Such reasoning is a corruption of classic silvicultural approach as well as biological common sense. Industry proposes to capitalize on faster growth rates of young softwood with a forty year rotation geared to maximum annual growth rates of softwood, rather than overall volume accretion.

Softwood grows most rapidly in its initial decades but adds more volume when trees get larger. Rather than sacrifice and wait the necessary decades for the forest to recoup from over-cutting, however, the paper industry has shifted the basis of silviculture from the building up of growing stock to the maximization of growth rates. Herbicides are a buttsire to this illusion.

Herbicide may however lower site productivity. These include lowered plant resistance to disease, reduced leaf litter and other contributions to soil organic matter, and microclimatic effects on soil temperature and moisture.

Consequences are not limited to timber productivity but also involve impacts to wildlife habitat and species survival—matters that neither SPHNF, industry, nor the state of New Hampshire itself have taken into full consideration. Conservation biology, meanwhile, increasingly cautions against the introduction of novel stresses with which forests have not evolved and to which they may not be able to adapt. Even if herbicides were good for

Maine’s Pesticide Reduction Policy
by Jean English

Maine now has an official policy requiring that reliance on pesticides be minimized in the state.

The BPC (Board of Pesticide Control) is to report October 1, 1998, and annually thereafter, on the amounts of products sold in the prior year, with the data sorted by sector of use when possible. A Camden activist and member of Maine Organic Farming Association member Beesty Parker argued (during hearings on the bill) that pesticides should be called “biocides” because of the widespread damage to nontarget organisms that many can inflict and because of the increasing evidence that tiny amounts of many pesticides can harm the endocrine systems of nontarget animals—including humans.

She argued that EPA labels and tolerances are inadequate, as is funding for alternatives for pesticides. She told of her discomfort after watching representatives from the chemical industry, applicators, users and sympathetic members of the Maine agricultural establishment argue for the use of more pesticides during a decade or more while she observed and reported on BPC meetings. “Less is safer,” she concluded. “Much less is adequate. We can do it and still grow food and fiber.”

MOFGA executive director Russ Libby explained that LD 1726 originated because of a BPC hearing in which “it became clear that the Board didn’t consider pesticide reduction to be part of their mission. . . We believe that a clear expression of that goal by the Legislature, the representatives of the citizens of the State of Maine, will help to focus attention towards how we can achieve that goal, not just in agriculture, but with homeowners, forestry and other sectors that use pesticides.”

The above article also mentions that the pesticide reduction legislation gained support when it was re-drafted to eliminate specific reduction targets. Supporters referred to Nancy Olsen and CLEAN’s proposed referendum on pesticides (banning the aerial spraying of pesticides and making illegal their entry into state waters) as further incentive to implement a reduction policy.

Hardwick Debates Telecommunications Tower

A tower hearing in Hardwick, VT this March featured a line-up of federal representatives and a full house of concerned citizens gathered to discuss the future of telecommunications tower regulation in Vermont. Federal Communication Commission (FCC) Chair, William Kennard, was present to both listen to the citizens concerns and to present his own thoughts on the matter. The meeting was sponsored by U.S. Senator Patrick Leahy and U.S. Representative Bernard Sanders and several local representatives. During the meeting, citizens spoke out in favor of the services technology spoke out in favor of the services cellular corporations who want to get a quick hold on regional market shares. Many of these communities, with either little or no zoning authority, have been caught totally unaware by the corporate cellular providers who are hiding behind the federal preemption rule.

Many participants argued that towns have little or no resources to fight the recent rash of cell tower applications and feel as if the environment and their communities are suffering as a result. Several people noted that no long term health studies have been conducted and others, including Senator Leahy, felt the tower technology would be obsolete in the near future anyway. Furthermore residents emphasized the need to invest in local, state, and federal planning so that the issue can be resolved with as little risk and intrusion as necessary. Some proponents of cellular technology spoke out in favor of the services saying that cellular phones and pagers were often found essential in emergency situations where remote communication is critical. However, most people attending the hearing recognized that some consensus must be reached and that local power needs to be preserved.

The meeting gave a clear indication that Vermonters want the right to determine their future but also don’t want to be left behind in the information age. The representatives showed a clear interest in exploring alternative technologies and regional planning while recognizing the need to preserve local power and minimize the threats to the State’s viewsheds, mountain ecosystems, and human health. In addition to the federal legislation several bills are being proposed in the Vermont legislature that will help check mountain development, protect viewsheds, and support local planning efforts. —Luke O’Brien

Vermont Factory Farm Bill Weakened

A bill in the Vermont State House designed to bring large non-traditional farming operations under closer regulatory review has been substantially weakened recently and faces failure as the legislative session comes to a close. The bill, drafted by Senate Natural Resources and Energy Committee and accompanied by similar draft bill in the House, is an attempt to prevent large scale factory farms from developing in Vermont. The high density housing and waste operations can lead to water and air pollution and pose health and safety problems if not properly designed and sited. Currently all agricultural operations are exempt from Vermont’s development regulation law, Act 250, and any local zoning authority as well.

The Senate Natural Resources and Energy Committee originally drafted a bill which evaluated pollution concerns, nuisances, traffic impacts, and noise. It also recommended an administrative working group composed of top officials within the Department of Agriculture, Agency of Natural Resources, the Environmental Board, and the Water Resources Board. The Committee narrowed the bill, however and removed several of the review criteria, the independent appeals panel, and party status for anyone other than the applicant and the Commissioner.

The House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committees are working on a bill closer to the stronger original Senate draft while the senate bill sits in the Senate Appropriations Committee.

Vermont May Pass Downtown Bill

The Vermont State Legislature has been working on a bill that will attempt to put the brakes on urban sprawl, a phenomenon that has been eating away at the countryside and drawing business out of Vermont's once thriving downtowns. The bill is a step toward curbing the recent proliferation of big box retailers and the steady decline of many of Vermont's once thriving downtowns. The bill provides incentives in the form of tax and technical assistance to communities and businesses that want to reinvest in historic downtown districts, buildings, and village centers. Some restrictions on rehabilitation of historic buildings will be eased and funding for infrastructure improvements such as parking, signs, and pedestrian facilities provided.

The push to focus development in existing downtowns and village centers comes in response to the recent movement of large retailers into formerly rural areas such as Taft Corners, Williston. These "big box" developments have hit communities twice as hard by developing once productive farmland and leaving business away from established retail centers. The Downtown Bill was introduced last year in the House of Representatives and is currently in the Senate awaiting approval; it has a very strong chance of passing into law by the end of this legislative session.

Namaste ECovillage


Democracy Alive & Well in Tamworth, NH

The sludge industry has formed yet another well-financed lobbying group (the New England Biosolids and Residuals Association—NEBRA) which is run in Tamworth by long-time sludge enthusiast Ned Beecher of RMI.

After a lively debate at town meeting (over Ned Beecher’s objections) Tamworth citizens voted 130 to 39 for for a moratorium on land application of municipal sewage sludge and industrial paper mill sludge.

The sludge industry has joined forty other NH towns which have voted for bans, moratorium, or strict ordinances, because they believe that current federal and state rules on land application are not protective enough.

Towns that would like help in organizing on this issue should contact with Citizens for a Future NH at 603-225-2252 or 284-6998.

—Caroline Snyder

Sludging NH Forests

The NH House Environment & Ag Committee is considering rules that would allow the spreading of paper mill and sewage sludge on forest lands. Citizens for a Future NH have called for a moratorium on such applications until further study of ecological impact.

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The plastic bags have been found essential in emergency situations where remote communication is critical. However, most people attending the hearing recognized that some consensus must be reached and that local power needs to be preserved.

The meeting gave a clear indication that Vermonters want the right to determine their future but also don’t want to be left behind in the information age. The representatives showed a clear interest in exploring alternative technologies and regional planning while recognizing the need to preserve local power and minimize the threats to the State’s viewsheds, mountain ecosystems, and human health. In addition to the federal legislation several bills are being proposed in the Vermont legislature that will help check mountain development, protect viewsheds, and support local planning efforts. —Luke O’Brien

Page 8
Majority bill

With two contentious referendum debates finally in the past, the Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry Committee of the Maine Legislature has been taking its turn at creating forest policy. A majority bill (written by the Maine Forest Service and in the Senate at press time) will:

- tinker with the Forest Practices Act (FPA), changing the definition of clearcuts and separation zones;
- add more staff and funding to the Maine Forest Service to enforce the FPA, and do more frequent inventory assessments and remote sensing;
- have the MFS and the State Planning Office do computer generated supply/demand models of the forest;
- create technical advisory committees to set benchmarks with which to assess changes in the forest (by 2005);
- require the MFS to report annually on the clearcutting activities of large landowners; and
- report biennially to the legislature on the state of the forest.

Alternative bills

In recommending this bill, the committee rejected 11 bills that had been tabled last year to await the outcome of the Compact vote. Key committee members had no intention of considering these bills, but instead planned to create a committee bill. The hearing on the bills was more of a diverting pep rally than an exercise in democracy. The participants had five minutes to converge on all 11 bills. There was no order in which the bills were discussed, and thus no debate. Instead there were sound bites, bumper stickers, banners, and slogan buttons.

The hearing on the bills was more of a diverting pep rally than an exercise in democracy.

The Coalition Bill

The committee also voted down (3-10) a bill created by a new environmental coalition. This coalition combines enviros who supported the Compact with greensies who supported the Ban Clearcut referendum. [See related article on page 24.]

Despite past rhetoric about liquidation, the coalition bill did not address the subject, except as it might occur on industry land. MFS data indicates that although 80% of clearcuts are on industry land, two-thirds of heavy highgrade cuts are on contractor-owned and other private woodlands. Apparently the "timing" isn't right for such legislation, even though the coalition's slogan buttons read, "the woods can't wait."

To promote their plan, the coalition used full-page newspaper ads, radio ads, telephone campaigns, and a paid lobbyist.

Of course, industry had dozens of lobbyists promoting their agenda. To add a little spice to this stew, Mary Adams, representing the property rights movement, has vowed that if the committee bill passes, she will initiate a citizen's veto, saying, "The influence of the radicals needs to stop."

Don't Worry, Mrs. Adams

Although Mrs. Adams fears that the majority bill is "a road map to more regulations," we have some recent history of similar initiatives that may cheer her up. The bills' tinkering with the FPA, for example, will still allow landowners to mismanage their holdings with little restriction.

The FPA only addresses the size and distribution of clearcuts. It does not address sustainable cut, highgrading, understocking or other silvicultural issues. More money and more enforcement will not affect what the FPA does not address. The MFS did a random survey of cutting practices 1991-1993 that showed seriously substandard cutting happening on tens of thousands of acres every year—all legal within the FPA. The ACF committee chose not to review such findings, however.

So, You Want an Audit?

For those environmentalists eager to see an audit of sustainable forest practices, Bill Vial, head of the Maine Forest Products Council, has a legislative solution—the "Sustainable Forestry Resolve." This Resolve asks the Maine legislature to challenge the implementation committee of industry's Sustainable Forestry Initiative to develop and implement a third-party process that verifies compliance with industry-generated performance standards.

The Resolve tells us that a five-member advisory committee (with one public member) will "provide input and advice" on the performance indicators. A second five-member panel will "monitor and observe" the development of the verification process. The implementation committee will report its progress to the legislature's Joint Standing Committee having jurisdiction over forestry by March 31, 1999.

There, don't you feel better already?

—ML

A major forest inventory assessment of the Maine woods was recently released by the US Forest Service. The committee did have a presentation from a researcher from the US Forest Service, but chose not to spend more time discussing the policy implications of the findings. This should please Mrs. Adams because it indicates that more such inventories may not be a serious threat, given how few people pay attention to all those numbers.

Over ten years ago, in reaction to public clamoring over clearcutting and herbicides, the legislature created the Forest for the Future Program. This "balanced" committee was mandated to project supply and demand, to determine if there was potential for shortfalls, and if so to recommend policy to address the shortfalls. The FFP did its work, the studies are on file, and who besides me can remember what they said? Oh, by the way, the projections did identify the possibility of spruce-fir shortfalls, and one of the solutions is more "intensive management"—which means clearcuts, plantations, and herbicides.

Mary Adams . . . has vowed: "The influence of the radicals needs to stop."

The Forgotten Benchmarks

For those of you who have short-term memory problems, we just had a government-appointed committee, the Maine Council on Sustainable Forest Management, that set criteria and benchmarks for sustainable forestry. Continued on page 25
by Ron Huber

ONE IF BY LAND, TWO IF BY SEA... There's product a'pienty out there at Sable Island off Nova Scotia, so much that one pipeline isn't enough to reap the gassy harvest, say publicists for Tatham Offshore Corp, a formerly Texas-based natural gas drilling operation.

Their solution to this crisis of underexploitation: an undersea pipeline that would stretch from Sable Island through Nova Scotia, Maine, New Hampshire and Massachusetts was chosen over Tatham's plans a few months ago. But, following the money, energy stock analysts are waxing thrilled over the Texans recent sell-off of all its holdings in the Alamo State, and their decision to literally sink TOFF's assets in the North Atlantic, to the great joy of Nova Scotian gas lords and the great ire of Gloucester fisherman Joe Sinagra (email: sinagra@shore.net) who is waging a lonely campaign to arouse the public and fishing industry to meet this latest threat off the Gulf's seafloor.

NO BONES ABOUT IT... Witness the disappearance of finny marketables, commercial fishers along the Gulf of Maine coast have discovered markets for all sorts of underutilized invertebrates. Sea slugs, whelks, even zooplankton are now profitable commodities for those with the wherewithall to capture, process and market these ecological holdouts of the well-swept seas.

Happy news: Japan has just announced a new national craze for canny fisherfolk to exploit: pet jellyfish! "Jellyfish never disturb you," a Tokyo pet shop employee agreed. Or was that Angus describing the Maine legislature? Jokes aside, that the Gulf's surviving invertebrates might be important foundations for the restoration of its vertebrates, seems to have been lost in the scuffle for ways of keeping mortgaged boats from the repo-man.

"Look out, Moon Jellies, Lion's Manes, Angled Hydromedusae and other Gulf of Maine megaplankton, your days of bobbing around lobster buoys may be numbered..."

DULCE ET DECORUM EST, PRO PATRIA MORI... The best defense is often a good offense; hence the Navy's awarding Bath Iron Works a contract to build a dozen of the world's most powerful offensive weapons—the Aegis Missile Cruiser—at a planned speed of up to 50 miles per hour, capable of toting 900 passengers at a time, the ferries will reduce traffic on congested Route 1, MDOT believes.

The company has assured the public and the press that the engine noise of their craft would warm marine mammals out of the way, and that in any event, the catamaran design would safely slide over the backs of whales jaywalking across the shipping lanes, but critics noted that noisy moving ships are accompanied by a sphere of white noise up to twenty miles around that effectively scrambles cetacean's sonar, rendering them blind, incommunicado, and unable to figure out which way to go to avoid getting spiked on the new ferries' harpoonlike double prongs, especially on those (frequent) days when fog blankets the coastal waters. Ferry owners take note: Lawrence may have written: "the sea contains the Hottest blood of all! And the wildest and most urgent" but he was referring to ol' Moby, not your ferry skippers....

LETS WAIT 'TIL THERE'S A DISASTER, THEN WE'LL... So what if exotic fish, germs and parasites dumped into port waters by in-loading foreign woodchip ships and other bulkers has cost other coastal areas hundreds of millions of dollars in lost fisheries and constipated municipal water pipes? So what if Maine, New Hampshire and Nova Scotia are poised to massively increase log and woodchip exports? So what if the feds are practically begging the New England States to send them info on future wood export shipping and on resources at risk so that Uncle Sam can open his wallet and give them lots of bucks to implement infestation prevention? Let's do nothing! We do things different here, after all. Maybe the exotics that have put a permanent dent in coastal prosperity elsewhere will act differently as well! That seems to be the hope that the Gulf of Maine Council and the New England states are following as they hem and haw about adopting a resolution calling on the Gulf states and provinces to avail themselves of the Federal largesse. Maybe there's more money in disaster aid than in disaster prevention....
We Need to Think Big to Stem the Tide of Species Loss

Michael Souël, current president and co-founder of The Wildlands Project, visited Vermont and Maine recently from the University of California at Santa Cruz where he is a professor of conservation biology.

Several hundred people packed a hall at the University of Vermont to hear Souël address the causes and Wildlands solutions to the current system of extinctions, the third major extinction event in earth history and the first caused by an animal species—us.

Souël did not belabor his biocentric point of view: "There are too many people destroying Nature rapidly, wiping out creatures."

The Wildlands Project arose from a similar recognition of the bare facts. North American conservation biologists asked themselves what could be done here and now to prevent and reverse species loss.

Chain of Causes

Souël emphasized the complexity of causes driving humanity's destruction of other species. Habitat destruction and fragmentation, global climate change, invading exotic species contribute as do the globalization of commerce, the population explosion and technology. With human numbers expected to double by 2050, and technology "multiplying the impact of every individual," the outlook for large mammals in particular is bleak.

"We are all rich [in North America]," said Souël, "and contribute to over-exploitation and cause exotic invasions.

The appetite for coffee, for instance, is causing rain forest destruction; so too the demand for fresh produce through the northern hemisphere's winter.

"Half of rain forest destruction is by logging; half is

destruction, that such decline affects larger species first, and that loss of top predators has a cascading impact on species numbers, balance, and the surrounding ecosystem.

Perhaps the central insight of conservation biology is that dynamics of island populations apply as well to species within islands of terrestrial habitat, fragmented by development. The key to species conservation is enlarging and linking these islands.

Cascading Effects

The insights of island biogeography have informed conservation biology. Islands since the 1600s have lost 25% of their bird species. What biologists have learned and are able to demonstrate is that species numbers "relax" over time in response to habitat destruction, that such decline affects larger species first, and that loss of top predators has a cascading impact on species numbers, balance, and the surrounding ecosystem.

Perhaps the central insight of conservation biology is that dynamics of island populations apply as well to species within islands of terrestrial habitat, fragmented by development. The key to species conservation is enlarging and linking these islands.

"Restoring nature in all its living glory is an idea whose time has come."

—A.W.
Finding More GMNF Roadless Areas

By Jim Northup

On our National Forests the greatest conflicts among land uses occur between timber production—roadbuilding and logging—and backcountry wilderness. When public land is dedicated to intensive timber production it cannot provide backcountry or wildland conditions, and vice versa.

In developing the official management plan for the Green Mountain National Forest, the USFS decided that National Forests in New England should emphasize providing backcountry and wildland conditions over timber production.

Balancing Wildlands and Timberlands

The Clinton administration has proposed a temporary moratorium on building new National Forest timber roads in "inventoried" roadless areas larger than 5,000 acres. To qualify as an inventoried roadless area, lands must have met the criteria established during the Forest Service's nationwide Roadless Area Review and Evaluation (RARE), Phases I and II. There are no inventoried areas in Vermont's Green Mountain National Forest, but recent computerized analyses indicate there are several areas—small and large—that are or could be roadless. These areas deserve protection from roadbuilding until their wildland potential can be studied further.

Relatively few large, roadless areas exist in Vermont and the rest of New England, and they are becoming more and more scarce as the number of people, houses and roads increase each year. Public lands represent the best, and perhaps the only, opportunity to provide large roadless areas over the long-term.

Roadless Areas in the Green

Within the Proclamation Boundary of the GMNF there is an average of 8.1 miles of road per square mile of private land and 2.9 miles of road per square mile of public land. This means that private land in this relatively rural part of Vermont has nearly three times the road density of public land.

Private land in the more urbanized regions of Vermont is likely to have even higher road densities. Clearly, GMNF land presents one of the best opportunities in Vermont for providing areas with few or no roads, and it should be managed accordingly.

Given the present system of permanent roads, the GMNF has nineteen roadless areas of 5,000 acres or more in size. These areas cover about 164,000 acres—nearly half the total GMNF. Permanent closure of infrequently used, seasonal logging roads could expand the size, sometimes significantly, of most of these NF roadless areas.

85,000 Unprotected Acres

Seven of the nineteen roadless areas are permanently protected from future roadbuilding. Six are federally designated Wildernesses and total about 60,000 acres. The seventh is the Wild Ricks National Recreation Area, containing another 19,000 roadless acres. The act creating the NRA prohibits additional roadbuilding, but allows for some logging.

The remaining twelve areas do not have any long-term protection of their roadless conditions. They range in size from 3,000 acres to 23,000 acres, and cover a total of 85,000 acres—25 percent of the GMNF. The GMNF Plan designates large portions of three of these roadless tracts as "primitive" areas—no logging or roadbuilding allowed. However, the USFS could decide to change this designation and allow logging in the future.

Glastenbury and Lamb Brook Wildlands

The 23,000 acres of NF surrounding remote, rugged Glastenbury Mountain comprise the largest unprotected roadless area on the GMNF. The USFS has not yet made decisions about the best long-term management of this area since most of the land was acquired a short time before the adoption of the current management plan. All existing evidence indicates that Glastenbury Mountain would make an outstanding addition to the federal Wilderness system. Until studies are done, the USFS should avoid any actions that would reduce the potential size of this roadless area or impair its capacity as a wilderness.

The 5,500 acres in the vicinity of Lamb Brook present another outstanding opportunity to create a roadless wildland on the GMNF. A coalition of environmental organizations—Audubon, Sierra Club, Conservation Law Foundation, RESTORE: The Northern Forest Forum, Audubon, Green Mountain Forest Watch and a few individual citizens—brought a lawsuit against the USFS to keep the agency from building a logging road deep into the heart of the area. Fortunately, the federal courts upheld the plaintiffs' claims and prohibited the agency from roadbuilding or logging unless additional environmental and economic analyses indicate it is wise to do so.

Let's be sure to keep our future options open by not building timber roads into the remaining large roadless areas on the Green Mountain National Forest. The US forest Service's 5,000 acre minimum may be appropriate for large, western National Forests, but it is not appropriate in the densely settled Northeast. Vermont's 5,200 acre Bristol Cliffs Wilderness is living proof that smaller wildland areas work here.

Jim Northup is director of the Vermont Natural Resources Council's forest program.
Opportunity Lost?

Debsconeag Lakes Region

by Elderberry Youngman

This image of the Debsconeag Lakes Region is derived from satellite imagery dated 1997. It shows the southern portion of Baxter State Park and the state’s 40,000 acre Nahmakanta Tract. Water is black, mature forest dark gray, and open areas (roads and recent clearcuts) white and light gray.

The protected corridors along the Appalachian Trail and the West Branch of the Penobscot River are outlined. The Golden Road (to Unlimited Devotion) runs from the top center southwest to the lower right. Millinocket is just off the lower right corner of the image.

The Debsconeag Lakes region lies between Baxter Nahmakanta, from north of Rainbow Lake to Pemadumcook Lake. Five of the many remote ponds and lakes which dot the area were listed in the State Planning Office list of “Maine’s Finest Lakes.”

The area escaped the extensive clearcutting that occurred nearby in the 70s and 80s and has remained relatively remote and inaccessible since the last round of harvesting decades ago.

It has been one of the largest privately owned, essentially roadless areas in the state, and was long managed as a “Remote Recreational Area” of about 50,000 acres by Great Northern (now Bowater).

The 1997 image indicates that significant changes have taken place even in the recent past. Extensive new road construction has occurred in the eastern portion of the region, and numerous clearcuts now surround Pemadumcook Lake. It is likely that these trends will continue.

Ten years from now Debsconeag may be like the rest of the Maine Woods—lakes, rivers and trails isolated in a sea of heavily roaded clearcuts.

Mt. Sunapee Old Growth

New Hampshire forest ecologist Chris Kane reports re-discovery of old growth forest on state owned Mt. Sunapee within a 150 acre tract near the summit.

He describes the stand as a mix of red spuce (ranging to near 30” in diameter and at least one specimen having 249 growth rings) and yellow birch.

Kane’s research found that the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests purchased 656 acres of Mt. Sunapee in 1911 following a local fund-raising effort to save the forest from logging. Since then, “awareness of these old-growth forests faded from memory.”

Sunapee State Park land managers now oversee the forest land and have agreed that the old growth stand merits special protection. The New Hampshire Natural Heritage program will be conducting research and developing recommendations, presumably in advance of state plans to lease the Sunapee ski area to a private outfit.

From Vol. 2/No. 1 of Eastern Old Growth Notes, a quarterly publication of the Eastern Old Growth Clearinghouse; POB 131, Georgetown, KY 40324; available for $30 annually. Edited by Mary Byrd Davis, Kane’s research found that the areas of concern. Earthworks Forest Coordinator Frank Shea cited inadequate study and protection of the Kearsage Project timber sale lodged by Earthworks, a Massachusetts based environmental group. The US Forest Service has agreed to refrain from logging in the Kearsage Brook watershed, where commercial thinning had been planned in management units adjacent to a 100 acre area of old growth and other communities exhibiting old growth characteristics.

The New Hampshire Natural Heritage inventory identified some of the areas of concern. Earthworks would continue to find evidence of more old growth than was initially recognized.

A RESTORE: the North Woods Roundup

The White Mountain National Forest has resolved an appeal of the Kearsage Project timber sale lodged by Earthworks, a Massachusetts based environmental group. The US Forest Service has agreed to refrain from logging in the Kearsage Brook watershed, where commercial thinning had been planned in management units adjacent to a 100 acre area of old growth and other communities exhibiting old growth characteristics.

The New Hampshire Natural Heritage inventory identified some of the areas of concern. Earthworks would continue to find evidence of more old growth than was initially recognized.

Forest Coordinator Frank Shea cited inadequate study and protection of the Kearsage old growth as grounds of the appeal. He pointed to the example of Mt. Wachusett in central Massachusetts where researchers continue to find evidence of more old growth than was initially recognized.

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WILDLANDS: A CONSERVATION STRATEGY FOR THE NORTHERN FOREST

By Andrea Colmes

In January 1997, the Northern Forest Alliance proposed creating a series of Wildlands as the cornerstone of a conservation strategy for the Northern Forest. We view Wildlands as part of a trilogy—along with sustainable forest management and robust local economies and communities—that are essential for protecting the Northern Forest.

Stresses within the forest-based economy of our region and ever growing population pressures have brought the Northern Forest to a point of great risk, and of great opportunity. High grading has reduced timber quality; profit taking has superseded concern for long-term stewardship; and forest liquidators and developers threaten to turn the forest into house lots.

Large land sales, such as Champion International's plan to sell 325,000 acres in three states, remind us that distant corporate executives owe their allegiance to shareholders, not to the people of the Northern Forest.

But with the risk comes opportunity. As we enter the 21st century, the people of the region have the chance to act, to leave a whole, healthy, productive forest to future generations and ensure that our way of life is not reduced to exhibits in a theme park of "the way things used to be."

The Wildlands Proposal

The Wildlands concept that the Alliance proposes will protect important lands within the Northern Forest for environmental, recreational and economic values. Our goal is to conserve and restore the wild character, ecological integrity and productive value of these areas so they can continue to support our economy and way of life. Identifying a system of Wildlands is critical to maintaining the forest's ecology while ensuring that it continues to provide high quality recreation and timber products.

We believe that the Wildlands should:

• Continue to provide open public access for traditional recreation activities;
• Support sustainable timber harvesting;
• Include permanent protection for ecologically and recreationally important areas; and
• Remain largely free from new development.

Within each Wildland, the most ecologically and recreationally important areas should be permanently protected. We believe these areas should be treated as wilderness. Visitors would continue to enjoy hunting, fishing, camping and other traditional, non-motorized recreation. These sanctuaries would help maintain biodiversity and satisfy the human urge to explore untamed, beautiful places. The wilderness here will give refuge to wildlife, and leave nature with the space it needs to thrive.

Each Wildland also should support sustainable timber harvesting that meets clear ecological guidelines and contributes to the forest-products economy. In time, larger, higher grade trees will provide increased opportunities for value-added manufacturing, strengthening the overall local and regional forest-based economy.

The Wildlands' managed forests also will provide opportunities for the region's forest-based recreation industry to expand. Unparalleled hunting, fishing, hiking, snowmobiling and camping will draw residents, tourists and sportmen, contributing to this growing part of the economy. To preserve these qualities, timber harvesting in Wildlands should support the forest's overall ecological integrity, and new road building should be minimized.

Managed wisely, the Wildlands will enrich and perpetuate the wild character of the Northern Forest.

The vision we present in the Wildlands proposal calls for creating a mosaic of wild and working forestlands. Based on the best available scientific information, we have identified those areas that we believe have the highest concentration of outstanding ecological and recreational resources and the least fragmentation and development (see map). We offer the Wildlands proposal to stimulate public discussion and encourage constructive action by everyone concerned about the future of these places.

In the year since we first proposed the Wildlands concept, important portions of several of these high priority areas have been offered for sale, including the Nulhegan Basin in Vermont, the 15,000-acre Whitney estate property in New York, and 144,000 acres of Champion lands in New York's Oswegatchie Great Forest. Beyond these lands, hundreds of thousands of acres for sale across the region offer an exciting opportunity to shape the future of the Northern Forest. As land sales continue—7 million acres, or more than 25% of the Northern Forest since 1988—we need a thoughtful, real-world approach to conserve the forest and the region's character.

Our proposal recognizes that there is no single way to protect the Wildlands, and that a mix of public and private conservation strategies, ranging from private landowner initiatives to conservation easements to public purchase, should be used to protect important values and meet local needs.

The Wildlands proposal is not a neat, tidy answer—we do not suggest who should own what and how it should be managed. It is not a call to lock up lands and shut people out; it is just the opposite. Our vision is that these Wildlands will help restore and enhance the ecological health of the forest, provide open public access, quality wildlife habitat, and a flow of high quality sustainably produced timber. Above all, the Wildlands proposal is not an end point, but a call for thoughtful, open public discussion about how to conserve the Northern Forest.

Andrea Colmes is the executive director of the Northern Forest Alliance.

Naturalist's Field Work & The Nulhegan Reserve

Naturalist Frank Oatman of Craftsbury, Vermont undertook an inventory of 2,000 acre parcel in the Nulhegan Basin in 1977. The work he and others did there helped lay the basis for eventual state and Nature Conservancy acquisition of the land which contained unique bog and boreal habitat.

Oatman wrote a "Proposal for an Island Pond Nature Preserve" in which he stated that the entire property deserved protection "not only as a buffer zone to protect the wildness and the watershed of Moose Bog, but also because all of it represents a prime sample of a scarce and fragile ecosystem harboring many rare or endangered species." Breeding bird species included the Spruce Grouse and Gray or Canada Jay, rare warblers and the Black-backed Three Toed Woodpecker, the rare Goshawk among numerous other raptors and waterfowl; plant species of boreal-bog associations including Rhodora, Labrador Tea and a rare sedge. Oatman found ample signs as well of deer, black bear and moose (Moose Bog may be the epicenter of Vermont's moose population).

Such species richness in the middle of the current Champion land sale argues for purchasing, protecting and reserving this truly wild land.

Lady Slipper. Photo © Gustavo W. Verderber.
Big Wilderness for a Strong Economy

Excerpts from an open ten million acres of
I know you are especially interested in the plight of rural Maine. So, I want to focus on the economic reasons we need big, permanently protected wilderness.

Decline of Manufacturing & Rise of Tourism
The natural areas in the North Woods are the basis of future jobs there. Study after study has found that forest industry jobs have been declining, but increased logging, and that more forestry jobs will be lost in the coming years whether our mills are modernized or not.

In the Katahdin-Moosehead region, for instance, over 3,500 forestry industry jobs were lost from 1984-94, a 44 percent drop. Logging jobs alone fell even farther, down 54 percent.

Northern Maine is where tourism is growing most rapidly. Tourism is the fastest growing industry in the world, and tourists, whether domestic or foreign, want to visit big, beautiful, natural places.

We need to be clear about our choice of paths. We can have a few people profit in the short-term by chopping up and overbuilding our unspoiled lakeshores while absentee paper companies turn the Maine Woods into fiber farms. Or we can preserve the famous Maine Woods as the basis of a sustainable economy for northern Maine.

The Vision of Thoreau
A century and a half ago, after visiting the Maine Woods, Henry David Thoreau proposed the creation of national preserves to safeguard the wilderness qualities of the region. An idea worthy of Thoreau would be the creating the Maine Woods, Henry David Thoreau proposed the creation of national preserves to safeguard the wilderness qualities of the region. An idea worthy of Thoreau would be the appearing at least 20 percent of the land in northern Maine to public conservation by the year 2020.

We need public ownership, acquired on a willing seller basis, of big backcountry areas.

I know you have heard about the 3.2-million acre Maine Woods National Park & Preserve proposed for the Katahdin-Moosehead region. An economic study of this park idea shows that it could help generate between $110 million and $435 million in annual retail sales, and it could support 5,000 to 20,000 jobs in Maine.

Such a vision is no pipe dream. There is federal money available through the Land and Water Conservation Fund for purchase of public lands. There is also public support. Recent polls show that a substantial majority of Mainers support large protected areas in the North Woods. A simple, but crucial, first step would be a full public study of all the benefits and costs of a new park.

In the tradition of Governor Percival Baxter, who preserved the lands around Katahdin in a wilderness park for the people, I hope you will consider how to preserve the public interest in the lands around Baxter Park before it is too late. That could truly get Maine on the move.

Sincerely,
Jym St. Pierre, Maine Director
RESTORE: The North Woods

Jym St. Pierre holds a master's degree in natural resource economics from the University of Maine. For more information about RESTORE: the North Woods National Park proposal, contact Jym St. Pierre, 7 North Chestnut St., Augusta, ME 04330.

Bob Marshall Great Wilderness Would Be East's Largest

Bob Marshall Great Wilderness

Map and Text adapted from the Adirondack Council's "51 Gift of Wildness" by Michael G. DiNenno 1992

History: As a younger and later as a forestry student, Robert Marshall summered in the Adirondacks where he spent free time hiking and exploring remote and wild forest.

In his later career with the U.S. Forest Service and as a founder with Aldo Leopold and Robert Sterling Yard) of the Wilderness Society, Marshall was a great advocate for wilderness.

Before his life was cut short at the age of 36, Marshall undertook a survey of roadless forest areas greater than 300,000 acres in the United States. The 380,000 acre Cranberry Lake-Beaver River tract in the western Adirondacks was the largest such area east of the Mississippi River.

In 1935 Marshall wrote: "It is almost the rarest thing a human being can do today to evade the signs of mechanization. It is of inestimable value to make it possible for people to get where they know they must be competent to cope with nature without any possible help from the machine. The values which exist in such wilderness areas are very delicate. The mere knowledge that mechanization lies over the top of the hill is enough to destroy some of the forest inspirational values of the wilderness."

Present Status and Future Possibilities: The Adirondack Council has designed an expansion and consolidation of the existing Five Ponds, Pigeon Lake and Pepperbox Wilderness areas into a Bob Marshall Great Wilderness that would total over 400,000 acres—a truly world class reserve possibly capable of sustaining populations of wolf and catamount.

Recently the state of New York reached agreement to buy 15,000 acres of the Whitney Tract, including the eight mile long Little Tupper Lake in the heart of the "Bob."

Additionally, Champion International is offering 144,000 acres for sale in the Adirondacks including 30 square miles on the western boundary of the Bob Marshall Wilderness—an opportunity for New York to secure through management easements a buffer around this core wilderness.

To complete the Bob Marshall will require a commitment from the State to purchasing about 160,000 acres from willing sellers as lands become available.

We will soon be observing the 100th anniversary of Bob Marshall's birth in 1901. What better way to commemorate it than to re-commit to a big Adirondack wilderness in his name?
"Room for the Wild"

Several years ago, Brad Meiklejohn, a field biologist, wrote a letter home to the Northern Forest Forum (v. 4 #5) from Alaska. He lamented the "ecological amnesia" that plagues New Englanders who must travel to a place teeming with wildlife to experience what their own home was once like.

Meiklejohn points out that "because of its temperate climate, New England was at one time biologically richer than Alaska. Now, after 200 years of degradation, it is but a shadow of its former self." He concludes: "New England should have several wildlands each greater than a million acres. We can close some roads, remove dams, leave more areas alone. Anything less condemns New England to a greatly diminished future."

As the trees have proven, New England is resilient. Abundant wildlife will return. If we give it room.

The Future Promise of Recovering Wilderness

Bill McKibben in his afterward to Eastern Old Growth Forests (edited by Mary Byrd Davis, Island Press, 1996) reflects on the recovery of forest in the East, and sees the promise of landscape renewal in "future old growth." What McKibben observes of the Adirondacks could apply to the Headwaters if we established Wilderness here:

"[But]history no longer outshouts the other noises of these woods; they hum along again on some deeper tune. They are not old growth forests—there is lots of paper birch, and the trees are not yet enormous, and the land is a little flatter than perhaps it should be. And surely the soils lack certain invisible life, and the woods no longer echo wolf-cry. But it will be old growth again, barring new human intrusion."

"The concept of recovery, of renewal, of future old growth, can revitalize conservation campaigns in this part of the world. . . . Old growth is not simply a marker of past glory, an elegy for that once was. It is a promise of the future, a glimpse of the systemic soundness we will see completed in our lifetimes but that can fire our hopes for the timeless to come."

A Carbon Reserve for an Aggrading Ecosystem

Consider the 8,000,000 acres of the Headwaters Reserve in the context of the central fact of their biology: they are young, recovering forest. According to F.H. Bornmann and G.E. Likens in their Pattern and Process in a Forested Ecosystem (Springer-Verlag 1979), the heavy, periodic disturbance associated with clearcutting keeps knocking these woods back toward less ecologically organized states.

Older, more organized forests are rare and atypical in northern New England. Such forests represent higher phases of ecosystem development about which we know little. What we do know is that, in terms of simple accumulation of biomass, our forested ecosystem has unfulfilled potential—at least one century of net carbon sequestration.

Forest protected within the Headwaters could be the Nation’s first gesture toward reducing the threat of global warming; the Nation’s first Carbon Reserve.

Headwaters to a Region’s Rivers

The Northern Forest Headwaters Reserve contains within it the headwaters to the wildest rivers of New England: the Connecticut, the Androscoggin, the Kennebec, Penobscot, the St. John and Allagash.

Lands for Sale

Paper company lands are routinely for sale within the Headwaters. More than half of the lands in the proposed Headwaters Reserve have been sold at least once since 1980. Presently these include Champion International holdings in Vermont and New Hampshire.

Given industry intransigence to regulatory reform in Maine, the conservation community should focus its collective efforts on uniting the citizenry behind declaring a Northern Forest purchase boundary. We need to collectively lobby our Congressional representatives for their support of willing-seller acquisitions across the Region.

Headwaters Proposal Available

The Headwaters Reserve proposal was first published in 1995 (volume 3 #5). To procure a copy of the full proposal, contact: Northern Appalachian Restoration Project, POB 6, Lancaster, NH 03584.
1. Nulhegan Reserve (100,000 acres)
   - Major watersheds: Nulhegan River, Connecticut River
2. Paul Stream Reserve (70,000 acres)
   - Major watersheds: Paul Stream, Connecticut River
3. Victory Bog (25,000 acres)
   - Major watersheds: Lakeville Stream, Connecticut River
4. Hurricane Brook Reserve (25,000 acres)
   - Major watersheds: Colebrook River
5. Indian Stream Reserve (100,000 acres)
   - Major watersheds: Hall Stream, Indian Stream, Perry Stream, Connecticut River
6. Nash Stream Reserve (110,000 acres)
   - Major watersheds: Upper Ammonoosuc, Connecticut River, Androscoggin River
7. Kilkenny Mountains Reserve (65,000 acres)
   - Major watersheds: Upper Ammonoosuc, Connecticut, Androscoggin
8. White Mountain National Forest (600,000 acres)
   - Major watersheds: Pemigewasset River, Saco River, Swift River, Gale River, Androscoggin River, Baker River
9. Boundary Mountains Reserve (1,200,000 acres)
   - Major watersheds: Connecticut, Magalloway, Dead River, Moose River, Upper Kennebec
10. Umbagog, Richardson, Moosehead Lakes Reserve (220,000 acres)
    - Major watershed: Androscoggin
11. Mahoosuc Reserve (100,000 acres)
    - Major watershed: Androscoggin
12. Tumbledown Mountain Reserve (80,000 acres)
    - Major watershed: Androscoggin, Kennebec
13. Sugarloaf/Mt. Abraham Reserve (170,000 acres)
    - Major watershed: Androscoggin, Kennebec
14. Moose Pond Reserve (140,000 acres)
    - Major watershed: Kennebec, Androscoggin
15. Kennebec-Headwaters-Misery Ridge Reserve (200,000 acres)
    - Major watershed: Kennebec, W. Branch Penobscot
16. Thoreau Reserve (4,900,000 acres)
    - Major watershed: Upper Kennebec, Moose River, West Branch Pleasant River, Allagash, Upper Aroostook, St. John, West Branch Penobscot, East Branch Penobscot
Atlantic cod and its wild cousins inhabiting the half of our Gulf of Maine watershed that lies under saltwater—a Maine state proposal to close Maine’s public annual gatherings atop the great ledges and banks dotting the Gulf. 

Once the lovefest is past, the theory goes, and the great congregation disperses, the fish catchers may fill their trawl passing through their midst surely spoils the life on the bottom. There, amid the Gulf’s “short for-est” of sponges, sea anemones, shells, worm tubes and other “live bottom” they live a wary infancy, safe from dogfish and even their hungry parents. Feeding on smaller inhabitants of this patchy wilderness, young cod and other ground fish soon grow big enough to live safely in the vast open spaces of the Gulf. 

This critical early time in their lives isn’t protected at all by Maine’s 90 day closure plan. Come day 91, as otter trawlers return to sweep the sea floor, the juvenile dogfish and even their hungry parents. Feeding on smaller inhabitants of this patchy wilderness, young cod and other ground fish soon grow big enough to live safely in the vast open spaces of the Gulf. 

“Dragging along with force over considerable areas of marine bottom, it tears away, preciously, hosts of the inferior beings there resident, bringing destruction on the multitudes of smaller fishes; the wholes of which, he observed, are the appointed diet of those edible species sought as human food.”—James Bellamy, 1842

“There is virtually no underwater spot on the North American continental shelf that is not trawled far fish at least once a year”—Richard Malatesta, Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute, 1994.

More About Mercury

In 1971, Maine granted a chlo­ralkali plant on the Penobscot River, three miles below Brewer, an exemption from the new federal law forbidding the dumping of mercury into state waters. Three owners later, the Penobscot River sports the mercury- laden mud in North America directly off­shore the plant. Following yet another accidental donation of thousands of gallons of mercury broth to the river, the present owners, midwestern US­ based Holtra-Chem took swift action: firing the careless employees who ignored the plant’s warning klaxon for several months, and hiring noted mercury non-expert Richard Barringer from his Muskie Institute lodgings as Hol­tra Chem’s “Environmental Overseer”. Dick may know little about the chlo­ralkali process, but at $100 per hour, he’s sure to produce some impressive rhetoric as he wields his overseer’s knout among the merc-workers. Not to be outdone in the appearance-of-action department, Maine Governor Angus King has sent LD 232 “An Act to Reduce Mercury Use and Emissions” to the Maine legisla­ture. While the bill would end Holtra-Chem’s 27 year exemption, and even threaten to jerk the company’s operating license if another mercury spill happens, it also mandates across the board reductions in mercury air emissions by waste incinerators, and in usage of mercury as an industrial chemical. Unsurprisingly, phalanxes of black-suited waste industry lobbyists charged the podium at the legisla­ture’s hearing room, clashing their powerful weapons of uncertainty and dilatory amendments with great effect. At press time, no information was available on how the Natural Resources Committee’s members fared under the assault.

REWILDING ATLANTIS

Students at College of the Atlantic in Bar Harbor, Maine, have just completed a study of the feasibility and long-term potential for designating a non-extractive marine reserve straddling the US-Canada oceanic border. The report reviews the somewhat inadequate legal underpinnings for such a reserve, and notes that the proposed area fulfills the eight criteria agreed upon by the Gulf of Maine Marine Protected Areas Project: representativeness, diversity, ecological importance, ecological sensitivity, uniqueness, naturalness, integrity and biological productivity.

An excerpt from the portion of the report written by Traci Hickson appears on the following page. Readers accustomed to following the complex set of laws and regulations governing forest protection will see many parallels in those laws designating marine wilderness—with the additional wrinkle that the Gulf spans three states, two provinces and two nations. The key to restoring the great wild Atlantic that so delighted our region’s early colonists lies in gaining this understanding.

Meanwhile, marine conservation heavyweight Center for Marine Conservation has set its sights on creating the other vital element needed for marine reserve designation in the Gulf—public support. Instrumental in marshaling the public support that initiated most of our nation’s (multi­ple use) national marine sanctuaries, including Stellwagen Bank NMS off Cape Cod, CMC’s new focus on the Gulf of Maine bodes well for raising public enthusiasm for genuinely protected marine wilderness here.
Marine Reserves for the Gulf of Maine

A Legal Primer for Restoring Marine Ecology

By Traci Hickson

Despite current efforts to regulate fisheries and protect marine habitat, the world’s oceans and coastal waters are increasingly threatened. The Marine Conservation Biology Institute cites as significant threats: 1) overexploitation of species; 2) physical alterations of ecosystems; 3) pollution; 4) introduction of alien species; and 5) global atmospheric change. Many in the scientific community support the creation of a system of marine protected areas (MPAs) to protect, restore, and manage marine resources. MPAs are areas of marine ecosystems that have legal status and protections. They can include permanent bans on extraction or restriction of specific activities.

Approximately thirty countries, including New Zealand, Australia, the United States, Great Britain, South Africa, France and Belize have established 1300 MPAs over the past 60 years. Since the passage of the National Marine Protection, Research and Sanctuaries Act of 1972, the United States has established twelve National Marine Sanctuaries, which represent barely half of one percent of the ocean territory under US jurisdiction. In Canada, one-tenth of one percent of the oceans are designated as MPAs.

An International Peace Park

A 1995 Dalhousie University symposium on MPAs and sustainable fisheries issued a declaration endorsing MPAs and calling for the establishment of an MPA along the Hague Line between Canada and the United States. Martin Willison, one of the idea’s original advocates, has suggested that the MPA be designated an International Peace Park (see Northern Forest Forum v5 #6 p20). The United States and Canada established the first such park in 1932 to recognize the ecological connection between Glacier National Park in the United States and Waterton Park in Canada and as a gesture of international goodwill.

For a joint MPA to be created along the Hague Line, the Canadian and US governments need to first designate separate no-take MPAs. What federal statutes would enable the creation of such areas along the Hague Line?

The Canadian Oceans Act

Canada’s Oceans Act creates a viable means of establishing a no-take MPA along the Canadian side of the Hague Line so long as promoters can organize widespread support.

The Canadian Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) will identify candidate sites, create collaborative arrangements with local user groups, governmental and non-governmental interests, and establish and manage individual MPAs. Candidate sites may be nominated by interest-groups or through DFO regional overviews.

Site nomination (and involvement in subsequent management) by stakeholders will help build constituency in support of a particular MPA.

Regional overviews, conducted by an interdisciplinary scientific team, have the goal of identifying a network of MPAs that would fulfill the purpose of the Oceans Act. This overview process would complement the interest-group nominations, identify knowledge gaps, involve stakeholders, and culminate into a database of MPA-related information.

However nominated, the MPA proposal must be prepared through a cooperative process involving coastal communities, organizations and government agencies. Nominations of an MPA are thus required to organize diverse community support, especially from stakeholders who may regard the MPA as a potential threat.

An Area Identification List (AIL) lists potential MPA candidates for further evaluation. The DFO has compiled a preliminary AIL, but has not released the information.

Currently, the DFO has not officially conducted regional overviews. They will offer advice and facilitate the interest-group nomination process at the community’s request. The DFO is aware of the Hague Line MPA proposal, but depends on its promoters to organize support among stakeholders and submit a preliminary proposal for review.

A final advantage of the Oceans Act is its precautionary approach. When considering MPA proposals, the DFO should err on the side of caution. “…the lack of scientific certainty about where to put MPAs, or how big they should be, or how many are needed, should not be used as a reason not to establish MPAs” (DFO 1997).

US Statutes Inadequate

Unfortunately, the United States does not have an Oceans Act that identifies the need for a system of MPAs in US waters. Two statutes do have limited potential for establishing no-take reserves.

Marine Protection, Research and Sanctuaries Act (MPRSA): The Secretary of Commerce may establish National Marine Sanctuaries under the purview of the federal Marine Protection, Research and Sanctuaries Act of 1972. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) manages the sanctuaries, which must be of national cultural and ecological significance.

Although the legislation stresses the need to “maintain, restore, and enhance living resources…” it also encourages multiple use (MPRSA 1972 Section 1431). As researcher Douglas Chadwick recently acknowledged, “…marine sanctuaries are by no means underwater parks. They are multiple use areas, not surprising given that NOAA is a branch of the Department of Commerce.” NOAA “regulates fishing in only about one percent of the area” protected in the two National Marine Sanctuaries according to Martin Willison. Given the multiple use precedent and that Stellwagen Bank in the Gulf of Maine was the most recent area to be established as such and the likelihood of NOAA establishing a no-take area in the Gulf of Maine is remote.

Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSFCMA): The Sustainable Fisheries Act of 1996, amending the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act of 1976, seeks to establish a system of protecting habitat to sustain fisheries. These amendments require the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) to “identify and describe the essential habitat for fish species managed by the council.”

Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) is broadly defined as “those waters and substrate necessary to fish for spawning, breeding, feeding or growth to maturity.” After identifying EFH, NMFS must then “describe adverse impacts to that habitat from non-fishing activities; and recommend conservation and enhancement measures necessary to help minimize impacts and protect and restore that habitat.”

The NMFS’s primary charge under this legislation is to prevent proposed federal projects, such as drilling, from adversely affecting EFH.

The New England Fisheries Management Council, which is responsible for fisheries management in the Gulf of Maine, must identify EFH and recommend conservation measures for Atlantic herring, sea scallops, Atlantic salmon, and fifteen species of ground fish. Although preliminary EFH designation was tentatively scheduled for February 1998, NEFMC is still in the process of collecting information.

If EFH were designated within the proposed MPA along the Hague Line, NEFMC must recommend conservation measures for these areas, which could include no-take designation during spawning, migration, foraging and nursery activities. There is a possibility that part of the proposed MPA could be established through the legislation.

The other major issue of concern is that “fishery management plans must include fishery impact statements which assess the likely effects of measures on fishing communities.” Community support would increase the likelihood of establishing a no-take MPA despite the present insufficiencies of U.S. law.

Public Support is Key

Bill Ballantine, Goldman Environmental Prize winner and longtime proponent of no-take MPAs in New Zealand, has been most successful when working directly with people. “I don’t spend much time talking with politicians or government departments. In a democracy, if you want to change something, you have to change people. They will tell government. Government officials and politicians just do what we tell them, and we would not want any different.”

Traci Hickson is a student at the College of the Atlantic in Bar Harbor.
Birth & Death of a Movement: The Story of SM3

Hydro-Quebec's plans for expansion did not die with the cancellation of Great Whale; the utility hydra sits atop a wilderness that it intends to fully exploit.

by Alexis Latbem

"Soon, there will be no great and beautiful wild rivers left in Quebec, the entire territory will be corporated with a network of powerlines, which like spider webs will spoil the beauty of our mountains and valleys."

—Innu traditionalist

In December 1998, the St. Marguerite River valley will begin to flood. The river that for thousands of years cascaded through a series of wild rivers before emptying into the St. Lawrence will be back up behind a 160 meter high embankment, damming a deep, stagnant lake. It will take three years for the waters to fill the once majestic Great Whale. The water in the reservoir will gush out in the name of electric power generation. "It is not pristine (there are two existing dams on the Moisie river)" commented Montreal landscape architect "the largest construction project in the western world" which was at least temporarily defeated.

As of this writing, the Aux Pekans and Carheil River diversions are still pending.

The SM3 project is approximately the size of the Hoover dam, one of the largest in the American West, and many times the size of the largest hydro dam in New England.

The SM3 project is approximately the size of the Hoover dam, one of the largest in the American West, and many times the size of the largest hydro dam in New England.

In 1994 the Premier of Quebec announced that the well-publicized Great Whale project would be put "on ice," activists viewed HQ as a slant giant. What the Natural Resources Department and Quebec's largest conservation organization considered a "cumulative study of all the environmental impacts, social tensions between native and non-native communities in the region."

In other words, the project presently under construction-so far without the river diversions-is proceeding essentially without environmental assessment. Concerns raised by native people testing to grave impacts of deforestation, mercury contamination, loss of wildlife and the complete erasure of their history, were ignored.

The idea that, the Grand Portage, will be drained, but, according to HQ, "not serious. It will produce an audio-visual document so that our children can see what was there when the place was alive, it would be a 'collective and archival memory.' Only the disappearance of sites with an archaeological potential and the disturbance of the Grand Portage site are considered heritage areas. The Montagnais [Innu] heritage, apparently, can be reduced to archeology. What a great anthropological, economic, or cultural benefit!" [Testimony recorded in the BAPE report]

The rapids are gone. Where the roar of white water, as it rushed through the deep gorge, echoed for miles around, the voice of a great spirit—a mound of dry earth upon which earth-moving machinery crawled. The great pulse of the river that determined the rhythm of life here since time immemorial has been stopped.

Moisie to Feed SM3

Although the project is well underway, HQ has still not acquired all the necessary permits. The SM3 project, as originally proposed, required the diversions of the Carheil and aux Pekans rivers—tributaries of the renowned Atlantic salmon spawning river, the Moisie—into the St. Marguerite. Following a Quebec Environmental Review Board's recommendations, the proposal to divert the Moisie headwaters, reducing the river's flow by up to 47 percent, was not authorized.

Determined to proceed, HQ divided the project into two phases and redesigned the project so that the diversions would not be required, but could be accommodated later. While the Moisie river defenders cheered—after a long and weary battle—HQ quietly proceeded with its studies of the Moisie salmon, confident they could prove the

diversions posed no risk to the salmon.

In April 1997 the public was caught off-guard when a federal-provincial committee assessing the potential impacts on the salmon ignored the objections of salmon biologists and concluded that the risk was minimal. The required 60-day period for public comment was initiated, although the public was not informed "leading to suspensions" commented Montreal activist Tom Holdinger, "that the government wanted to skip the process and its criticism."

Fortunately the government did not succeed. Hundreds of faxes were sent to the environment Minister, David Cliche (before he was mysteriously removed from his post last July); as of this writing, the Aux Pekans and Carheil River diversions are still pending.

1993 BAPE Review Ignored

In authorizing the project, the first ever that they ever reviewed, the Quebec government acted against the Board's recommendation that SM3 not be approved. In the Panel's (the BAPE) report submitted in 1993, the potential impacts of the largest and most serious damping of Atlantic salmon was not the only criticism of the project. The report stated that HQ's EIS focused exclusively on the salmon with no attention to other ecological and wildlife impacts, and was therefore inadequate.

The Panel recognized the need for a cumulative study of all the existing dams on the St. Lawrence River, but HQ, all of them built without environmental review—and that HQ needed to review its blasted energy demand forecasts. The Panel decided that the project would exacerbate already high social tensions between native and non-native communities in the region.

Moisie River near Mani Ulumam. Photo © Friends of Nitisunan.

Vermont Utilities Funding SM3?

In 1995, a recently retired power engineer for HQ wrote to negotiators at Green Mountain Power and Central Vermont Power Service. Two of his comments about the contract were eye opening: The first was that Vermont should not expect to recoup the price of the contract because HQ needed Vermont's $3 billion to pay the construction costs of the $3 billion SM3 project. The second was that, the most viable option for Vermont utilities for price re-negotiation was to trade transmission access to HQ—that is, what HQ requires for its expansion plans.

This is only the beginning. HQ, GMP, and CVPS have done extensive studies of possible increases in Vermont's transmission capacity. This study includes both upgrades of the existing infrastructure, as well as construction of new transmission lines. The total possible increase could be from 500 MW to 6200 MW!! (Vermont's total electric consumption is between 750 and 1000 MW.)

John Cliche

From the March 1998 Nitisunan News

 Searching for the Best of All Worlds: Vermont.

Among the most serious concerns was the anticipated deforestation as new access roads punched deep into vast virgin forests. Forestry impacts, however, were considered a benefit by the "yes" (the St. Lawrence) and headed up river to their winter hunting grounds. Some traveled to Lake Kaniapsico, some to Lake Michilimackinac, and some as far as Ungava Bay.

About 70 kilometers from its mouth, the St. Marguerite river plummeted tumultuously through a steep gorge. The Innu had to portage around 13 kilometers of rapids, ascending the rugged terrain with all their gear on their backs. This was the Uemashtan, the Great Portage. Paths are visible in the rocks, worn down by the passage of mocassined feet over the millennia. Above the rapids, the river meandered gently, shaded by magnificent mountains cloaked in lush conifer forests, rising on either side like great giants.

...into this landscape, which even today, "admits of magnificence," HQ has carved a 100 km access road, through which water will flow from the reservoir to the powerhouse.

In 1991. Nitassinan Alexis Lathem
it's been parceled out to a Montreal timber pulp. The newly accessible areas have company, Uniforet, in the largest pulp mill has re-opened, and has been churning the St. Marguerite valley into mental violation of their human rights problems were said to be "mitigated."

From what we hear, we will have to learn to eat less contaminated fish and to be examined from every aspect. We will become subjects of observation at the service of advancing technology for controlling methyl mercury effects and of experimenting in the medical monitoring of human beings. It will be our pleasure to follow the little nutritional guide that will be made available to us. [BAPE report, 1993]

The project's detractors—which included sports-fishing and wilderness outfitters as well as natives—were a minority in a region that was enthusiastically, even aggressively in support of it. The Quebec Manufacturers Association stated openly that "the people of Sept Isles are more important than the salmon."

At the entrance to the city, the Sept Isles Chamber of Commerce erected a billboard which said "Oui SMIII. Pour les travailleurs. Pour les familles. For the businesses.)

In 1990 Eli Jacques Jourdain, from Uashat, was subjected to a curfew and surrounded by barbed wire, today it is nearly indistinguishable from the Euro-Canadian industrial city of Sept Isles. Mani Utém, in contrast, built on the towering cliffs above the St. Lawrence, is a lonely village facing a magnificent seascape; it is a maze of government built housing with a church steeple rising from its center as a reminder of the long and tragic history of missionary and colonial domination. In 1990 Eli Jacques Jourdain, from Uashat, was elected Band Council chief with only 26 percent of the vote. Mr. Jourdain, according to community activists, began a policy of secret negotiations with HQ while publicly opposing the project.

Suppressing Opposition to SM3

When HQ announced its proposal for the "management" of the St. Marguerite and Moisie rivers, a series of surveys and community consultations showed there was significant opposition to the project. However, there was also support, and the controversy largely became a conflict between the two communities, Uashat against Mani Utém. In 1990 Eli Jacques Jourdain, from Uashat, was elected Band Council chief with only 26 percent of the vote. Mr. Jourdain, according to community activists, began a policy of secret negotiations with HQ while publicly opposing the project.

The City has experienced the boom and bust cycle characteristic of resource-extraction economies, and in the early 1990s was in a deep economic depression. With its promise of hundreds of (temporary) jobs, the controversy that surrounded it was volatile and often violent.

When the BAPE released its report, trade unions stomped on the report and buried it under the path of bulldozers. The Mayor of Sept Isles, M. Dion, expressed shock that a government-appointed panel could come out with a project that had "nealy unanimous" support in the region.

In a 1974 interview, Barnabé Vachon, an Innu hunter, described what the construction of the Manic 5 project (the largest dam of its kind in the world) meant to his hunting way of life:

"It is the forest that gave me life, the animals that my father hunted. He said to me: "This is the way that you will live, you also, you will live in the forest." And that is what I did. And now I can no longer live like this, the area where I hunted is destroyed and they have even ruined the hunting on the coast, it's completely desert, there are no trees. How are we supposed to find animals?"

The way it is (when the Indiand goes out to hunt today, there is nothing left. We can't go there (where we used to hunt), there is no more forest. At the other end of the lake, the canoe cannot pass, because the drowned trees prevent the canoe from passing. Even if we can get to the forest somehow, we try to hunt but there is nothing. The animals have gone away. How would you like to stay here, where there is nothing left?"


A Tale of Two Villages

The communities associated with the St. Marguerite and Moisie rivers, Uashat and Mani Utém, although governed by a single Band council, are separated by a 15 km distance and by deep political differences. Uashat is located in the heart of the city of Sept Isles, while Mani Utém, set apart from the urban center, has maintained a rural character and its residents a more traditional relationship to the land.

In 1991 when the Euro-Canadians moved in to industrialize the region, Uashat Innus refused to move their village, and Sept Isles was simply built over it. The Moisie village, however, located on the grassy point where the river flows into the great St. Lawrence, was forcibly removed to what is now Mani Utém. Although for many years Uashat was subjected to a curfew and surrounded by barbed wire, today it is nearly indistinguishable from the Euro-Canadian industrial city of Sept Isles.

...
Over a two year period, an opposition movement to HQ and toward cultural and spiritual renewal was born.

Citing the Band Council's failure to oppose SM3, opponents turned to civil disobedience and public demonstrations.

In January, 1992 some 200 demonstrators formed a human dam across the frozen St. Marguerite river. In May of the same year, a group of traditionalists marched 700 miles from Sept Iles to Montreal. Rallys and fund raisers were organized by their supporters in Montreal and in Ottawa. Numerous protests were held within the reserve directed at corruption within the Band Council and its abuse of democratic process.

"Out with the Buddhists"

Civil disobedience actions and public demonstrations in some cases provoked not-so-civil reactions. The most notable incident occurred on Martin Luther King Day, Jan. 16 1993—the U.N. Year of Indigenous Peoples. Led by the Buddhist nun, Jun-Sun from the Peace Pagoda in Massachusetts, a group of Japanese and American Buddhists marched 500 miles from New York to Quebec City in support of native peoples opposed to hydro development projects on their lands.

When they arrived at Betisimite, where they intended to spend the night, the police IQ. by police combatants with tear gas and water cannon to turn them away. They continued on to Mani Utenam, and the next day, a radio broadcast over a Sept Iles station invited SM3 supporters to join a counter-protest to "expel" the Buddhists leaving the reserve. "Non SM3" signs were plastered in the morning to make arrests. Activists, however, were untrumpeted and continued to speak out in defiance of the injunction. Despite the bitter conflict taking place in the two communities, HQ began construction of the SM3 project in April, 1994—although a referendum on the agreement between HQ and the Band council, scheduled for July 16, had not yet taken place.

Peace Camp

By the end of May, HQ road construction crews had almost reached Kilometer 24 of the SM3 access road. On the evening of May 29, a group of Innu activists and their supporters arrived by float plane on a small lake only a short trek from Kilometer 24. When work crews arrived the next morning, a large forest of felled trees and other road construction debris, piled up on a little bridge, under which the glacial waters of Lac Brule tumbled over a short rapid. Although the workers could easily have cleared away the brush, they were instructed to turn back; HQ, no doubt, quickly understood the political morale that pile of twigs and branches represented.

Over the next two days, under cover of clouds, tent were erected in the pouring rain and a Peace Camp established that was to last for nearly three weeks. Messages of support came in from all over the world, including a letter from Nobel Peace Laureate Rigoberta Menchu. The Innu protesters had their protest through major newspapers and TV media throughout Quebec and Canada.

On July 17 the Peace Camp was dismantled by HQ and SM3 provinicial police: more than 60 officers arrived early, rolling in with the morning mist in a caravan of vans, skidders, payloaders, and paddy wagons, and hours later, were driven through a sea of clearcuts to the city jail.

A Disputed Vote

The day before the Peace Camp was dismantled, the referendum on HQ's agreement with the Mani Utenam/Uashat Band Council took place in the two communities. News arrived late that night at the camp that opponents of the agreement had lost, by a margin of two percent. The Peace Camp had been divided between the two reserves, with Mani Utenam voting against it and Uashat in favor. The police were expected to arrive first thing in the morning to make arrests.

Dissenters contested the referendum results: two percent it was argued, did not need the approval of the native communities to proceed, as HQ had already started the road construction before the referendum was held.

On the day that Eli Jacques announced the results, the two reserves emerged to a march of mourning through the reserve. Only one more demonstration was made to take place in the community; after the band council, in return for assistance with the $2 billion undersea project, claimed the project could lead to the "entire region being flooded by dams."

"With clenched fists in the air, shouting "SM3" and "Out with the Buddhists!" the mob headed towards the church where the Buddhists had gone to pray."

With clenched fists in the air, shouting "SM3" and "Out with the Buddhists!" the mob headed towards the church where the Buddhists had gone to pray. What was implied was that, with or without their consent, the project would proceed.

Prior to the vote, HQ-sponsored consultations were held on the contents of the agreement, but any similar consultations held by opponents of the agreement were prohibited under the injunction. Moreover, it was argued that there were no absentee ballots for residents of towns or reserves individually. This was allowed to vote who were not residents. Those who left the Peace Camp in order to vote in the referendum, were promptly arrested. After the vote, representatives of the two communities denounced the agreement, arguing that Band Council chiefs do not have the mandate to negotiate away the aboriginal lands of the native communities through "a democratically held referendum."

To be clear, the referendum did not pose the question, "Do you agree to the project?" but rather, "Do you agree to accept a compensation package of $2 billion million over the next 50 years, in exchange for agreeing new projects in your territory?" What was implied was that, with or without their consent, the project would proceed.

Churchill Falls Project Protested

On Monday March 9, premiers Brian Tobin and Lucien Bouchard of Newfoundland and Quebec were met with angry protests in Churchill Falls, Labrador, as they attempted to release details of a new power generating agreement.

The $12 billion deal, involving 1200 MW of additional generating capacity and 17000 construction jobs, would result in Quebec receiving 1200 MW and an undersea transmission line extending 800 MW to mainland Newfoundland. The province is attempting to barter greenhouse gas emission credits to the Canadian government in return for assistance with the $2 billion undersea project, arguing that the new power could account for a fifth of Canada's allotted reduction of greenhouse gas.

Newfoundland also is interested in selling its own power to eastern U.S. markets, a nickel smelter at Voisey's Bay, home to the largest remaining population of eastern Harlequin duck.

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Michel, chosen to represent them as a spokesperson, toured New England with the Friends of Nitassinan, denouncing the downward spiral of corruption and demoralization that was eviscerating the spirit of her community. "The circle is the demoralization that was eviscerating the community’s spirit of resistance. Michel believed that a strong show of community’s spirit of resistance.

Meanwhile dissenters also decided to dedicate their limited resources toward obtaining political independence from the Ushatik Band Council. If it could be argued before the courts that the Moisie band was culturally unique, and that the present regime did not represent them, they could establish their own government—the Innu Council of Mani Utenam—that would culturally and politically recognize. The case however, failed, leaving them deeper in debt and further demoralized. The injunction remains in force.

The Quebec courts used this anti-democratic injunction to punish demonstrators merely exercising their constitutionally guaranteed rights to assembly, to free speech and to religious expression.

Moisie River: Keep it Wild

Only 15 km from the city of Sept Isle with its Walmart, jail cells and fast food chain, the Moisie river flows gently into the St. Lawrence. The river’s glassy surface mirrors the night sky, the aurora borealis, and carries bright fleecy dancing ice in its current, and the pastel colors of twilight. Along its banks the Innu have erected their cabins. The cabins are not much, mostly scrap plywood with canvas tarps for roofs. But their presence is testimony to a hard-fought battle that has been ongoing for centuries, since the arrival of the whites and the threats of the salmon that have claimed the incomparable salmon stocks for their own.

Over a hundred years ago, the chief of the Moisie band appealed to the colonial government: "Our rivers are taken from us, and only used by strangers. Through your will, we can only now look on the waters of the river’s fishing, without permission to catch a fish, we poor Indians..." It was a protest that the Moisie salmon, described by the International Salmon Resources and Rights Organization as "one of the most prestigious populations in the world," would be legally and politically recognized. The case however, failed, leaving them deeper in debt and further demoralized. The injunction remains in force.

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The NH Way

NH Liquidation Report Ignores Evidence, Recommends No Meaningful Action

by Jamie Sayen

"The Committee believes that this problem is serious enough to warrant action at some level." - Report From New Hampshire Forest Liquidation Study Committee to Forest Advisory Board, December 12, 1997 Draft

A faction of non-separatists will love the NH Forest Liquidation Committee's (FLC) report to the NH Forest Advisory Board, submitted in February 1998. The FLC, heavily dominated by individuals who had publicly opposed creation of the Committee, has issued a report that clearly shows there is a problem with liquidation forestry in NH.

In its final draft form, the first sentence in the "Recommendations" section was the statement quoted above that "...the problem is serious enough to warrant action at some level." This language was still in the report at the conclusion of the FLC's final public meeting on December 19. However, by February, the sentence had mysteriously disappeared. Instead, we read: "The majority of the committee members do not believe that further action is necessary at this time, though some Committee members do believe that stronger action is necessary."

That this change occurred out of sight of the public, after the Committee's final public meeting, should be cause for alarm for anyone who still believes that forest policy-making in NH is fair, open and honest. It should also alarm anyone who cares about the health of NH forests and the NH forest products industry.

Committee Ignores Data

To arrive at the conclusion that no meaningful action on liquidation forestry is warranted, the Committee had to ignore, belittle, or misinterpret a wealth of information gathered by a few of the more responsible members of the FLC, provided by county extension foresters, and suggested by members of the public whose communities have been victimized by unregulated forestry. Here is just some of the information that failed to persuade the FLC that there's a problem:

- "Large harvests constitute a relatively small proportion of the total number of harvests but have the greatest impact on the forest." Seven percent of the harvests removed more than 1000 cords; this represented 40 percent of the total NH harvest.
- "...the size of clearcuts appears to be significantly under-reported..."
- "Fourteen clearcuts over 100 acres were identified in the northern three counties over the period 1993-1996, though this estimate is probably conservative... . The increase is even more significant for clearcuts over 200 acres; between 1980-90 and 1993-96 the number of clearcuts over 200 acres tripled (from 1.1 to 3.3 cuts/year) and the annual acreage involved increased six-fold (from 277 to 1634 acres/year)."
- "Twelve of the 14 clearcuts over 100 acres identified as occurring between 1993 and 1996 were on private non-industrial forest land and 2 were on industrial land."
- "Half of the clearcuts over 100 acres were classified as liquidation harvests by county extension foresters; several others were classified as possible liquidation foresters." (from FLC Report pages 4-5)

County Forestors Identify Liquidation Cuts

County Foresters were asked to determine if clearcuts identified by the 1995 Complex Systems NH Timber Clear Cut Inventory were indeed liquidation cuts. The Complex Systems inventory only assessed clearcuts that leave behind less than 20 square feet basal area per acre — a definition of clearcutting that is much more lax even than the definition used in Maine. Careful perusal of these findings certainly leads one to conclude that something undesirable is occurring, that it is occurring throughout much of the state, that it is not just one bad apple, and that it is on the rise.

County Forestors reported significant liquidation cutting occurring in Belknap, Carroll, Coos, Grafton, Merrimack, and Rockingham Counties. Between 40-80% of all cuts in Belknap, Carroll, Grafton, and Rockingham Counties were liquidation cuts. They noted: "There is agreement that this kind of cutting is accelerating in most counties."

Unfortunately, the County Foresters concluded that, despite the evidence, "there is a lack of support for new regulation."

Public Testimony Ignored

Approximately 50 people attended four public sessions in November and December 1997. They identified 50 different liquidation cuts in 44 different towns, covering over 15,000 acres, nearly all of which had been cut in the last four years. Other highlights of the public testimony include:

- Only six of the 50 said there is no problem with liquidation logging in New Hampshire.
- Only three of the 50 recommended that the state take no action to address the issue.
- Many raised serious concerns about the economic consequences of liquidation logging, especially: that it produces low quality stands that jeopardize the steady flow of quality logs, and that towns will lose tax revenues for a long time to come. These concerns ought to worry industry boosters who have always alleged that regulations would have disastrous economic impacts.

Findings Refute 'Conventional Wisdom'

Opponents of taking action on liquidation and clearcutting (and other unsustainable forestry practices) have wrapped themselves in a comforting blanket of myths. The following five myths are debunked:

1. "It is just one person." Wrong. Many liquidations were named.
2. "It is just one high-profile cut in Whitefield." Wrong, the public identified 50 such cuts.
3. "It is just a problem in Coos County." Wrong. Many liquidation cuts from the Lakes Region and other parts of the state were identified.
4. "Complaints about liquidation are coming only from people who don't know what they are talking about." The 50 people who attended the public sessions were from NH. One who supported taking action to stop the liquidation was an industrial forester from Coos County.
5. "The only problem is aesthetics." Wrong, again. While many people acknowledged that liquidation cuts are ugly, they had much deeper concerns, especially the ecological and economic impacts of continued unregulated liquidation cutting.

Committee Admits Recommendations Won't Stop Liquidators

So what did the FLC recommend be done about the problem of liquidation? Clearly some original thinking went into answering this question. They recommended: education (mostly of the public to appreciate forest forestry better); information gathering (a recommendation as old as the Old Man of the Mountain, and still not addressed); and enforcement of existing regulations that failed to persuade the FLC that there's a problem:

- "The Committee also recognizes that there are limitations to any educational efforts, and that there will always be some people whose behavior will not be swayed by any amount or type of education." (p. 14)

You mean like the folks who are currently doing liquidation cuts? Does this include Champion and Mead?

"The Committee does recognize that many of the concerns arising from liquidation harvesting are not addressed by existing regulations. While increased enforcement of existing regulations is perhaps the most important step the state can take, this step alone may not be sufficient to address the full range of concerns associated with liquidation harvesting." (p. 16)

Inaction Assures Further Decline of Industry

What are we to make of this? Well, if you are familiar with the workings of the Division of Pesticide Control's Aerial Spray Review Committee's work, you'll understand that "the New Hampshire Way" is to exclude critics of current practices, load up a "study committee" with people with a conflict of interest and then merely stated hostility to the problem, and then ask them to address the problem, narrowly defined, of course. If you set up the committee properly, they won't have any trouble ignoring reality.

The FLC also assured that it would fail to address the technical issues regarding liquidation cutting, clearcutting, and other forms of overcutting when it developed an economic, rather than an ecological definition of liquidation. "Liquidation harvests are harvests that remove most of all merchantable timber without regard to future forest values, which include both timber values... and non timber values..." By this reasoning, clearcuts of any size designed by foresters are not liquidation because the forester had a plan that allowed them to take some future forest value. Thus, a 100-500-acre clearcut by notorious woods butcher Ted Ingerson of Whitefield is a liquidation cut; a 100-500-acre clearcut by Champion and Mead that gets sprayed by herbicides is a responsible and valid silvicultural operation. I'm sure the critics of the forest will be mightily relieved to learn that Champion and Mead clearcuts/herbicide operations are valid. Ignored by the FLC was the strong insistence by the public that these sorts of cuts be ended also.

What next? Will Hancock and other high profile supporters of the industry's sustainable Forests Initiative (SFI) continue to sell liquidators? Will the SFI continue to try to scapegoat Ingerston while promoting industrial clearcutting and herbicide spraying?

Just a reminder: The Forest Advisory Board was created to meet recommendations of the Northern Forest Lands Council and the NH Forest Resources Plan to address public concerns on forestry policy and to involve the public in a meaningful way. Unfortunately, most of the public is unaware the FAB exists, and members of the public who have attempted to participate in the so-called "roundtable" process have been insulted.

The New Hampshire Way of ignoring the evidence and rubber stamping the status quo can only accelerate the steady decline in the state's timber industry.

The Northern Forest Forum

Mud Season 1998.

Page 24
Regulatory Reform Rubble

Maine's legislature—pressured by the forest industry, enabled by the King Administration, haunted by anti-environmental extremists—once more fails to bite the bullet

by Jim St. Pierre

Following two years of hearing animal rights in the environmental community, conservationists had united behind a 4-point plan that improved upon key provisions of the Forest Compact and the reports of the Council on Sustainable Forest Management and the Northern Forest Lands Council.

The plan would have vastly improved management by the 15 largest landowners. It called for strict limits on the amount and size of clearcuts; stocking standards; and mandatory audits to ensure accountability.

The broad provisions of the plan were introduced to the legislature's forestry committee at a hearing in December. The specifics were provided to committee members and legislative leaders in one-on-one meetings early in 1998.

39 Votes for Reform

The climax of the campaign was a boisterous rally at the State House on March 24 at which conservation activists called for the legislature to "act now" on progressive forestry reform. That night the House voted 100-39 to kill the conservationists' bill. During the next few days they voted in favor of the forestry committee's majority bill and overwhelmingly to defeat each of the conservationists' four points when they were offered as separate amendments.

The committee majority bill was based predominately on advice from Chuck Gadzik, director of the Maine Forest Service, and lobbyists for the forest industry. Even the Gadzik-industry bill ran into trouble when the Senate tinkered with it, angering House members. At press time, it was uncertain whether any bill would pass the legislature and endorsed by many other parties, would have had a better chance.

Tall Trees, Small Lawmakers

Finally, it is legislators who must shoulder most of the blame. The leadership of the forestry committee and the leaders of the House and Senate especially failed to recognize this was the political moment to act decisively. They underestimated the environmental, economic and political consequences of wasting this historic opportunity to improve protection of the public interest in our forests. With the legislature determined to make itself irrelevant to the raging forestry debate, it should come as no surprise if we end up with another citizens' initiative.

Incremental Progress?

Continued from page 9

Some of these benchmarks have dates attached to them. For example:

- **C2.B1** Starting in 1996, there will be bigger buffers around small streams and more residual stocking in all riparian buffers.
- **C2.B2** By 1998 there will be uniform riparian standards statewide.
- **C2.B3** Starting in 1996, harvests will be at sustainable levels.
- **C2.B4** By 1998, the state will assess public forestry policies, including the Tree Growth Tax, to see what effect they have on forest productivity.

and professional focus on each of the key pressure points in the process at the appropriate time. Despite all this, meaningful legislation failed. Why?

- First, the pressure was off. Without a referendum facing lawmakers, they felt little incentive to pass a strong bill. Their fear of another referendum was not enough to overcome the inertia of the status quo.

- Second, the King Administration refused to provide the kind of leadership needed. Governor King, still in a snit about losing two votes on his Forest Compact, would not bless the conservationists' proposal even though it was based heavily on the Compact. Rather he allowed Chuck Gadzik, his Forest Service director, to tell legislators what most of them were already eager to hear. That is, don't do anything drastic.

- Third, the forest industry broke their recent promise that they would support legislation to ensure sustainable forestry and accountability. With the Maine Forest Service doing most of their dirty work, the industry was able to play victim and get away with it. The few progressives within its ranks were routed by the do-nothing hard liners.

- Fourth, the private property extremists exploited the ambiguity about the meaning of the two votes on the Forest Compact, using it as an opportunity to sow confusion in an already chaotic legislature. Their vocal advocates, both inside and outside the legislature, used the power of doubt and suspicion to demonize reasonable proposals. It is always easier to stop than to pass a bill.

- Fifth, organized labor chocked. Their state leaders understood the value of endorsing the conservationists' bill, but many of their local leaders are in cahoots with the anti-environmental crowd. At best they sent a mixed message to the legislature.

- The conservationists relied too much on the insider game. Conservationists alone are not enough of a force. They need other political allies such as labor, sportsmen and business. The same bill the enviros couldn't get past the legislature, used the power of doubt and suspicion to demonize reasonable proposals.

Analysis of Defeat

Conservationists fashioned the most thoughtful solution targeted at the worst aspects of the problem offered to date. They conducted a nearly textbook perfect campaign, combining grassroots

[King] allowed Chuck Gadzik, his Forest Service director, to tell legislators what most of them were already eager to hear. That is, don't do anything drastic.

The Hamlets of Augusta

Now don't get me wrong. I am not opposed to the better data that will come from passage of the majority bill. Good data are a foundation to good policy. But someone has to analyze and understand the data, put it in the context of clear goals, and have the will to act—if the good data are to be turned into good policy. If the past is the guide to the future, Mrs. Adams has little to fear. After all, we already have enough information with which to act, but the legislature has chosen not to.
Irving. If this goes well, Irving intends to get all of its holdings certified.

Here is a riddle I have recently posed to people aware that there is a country to the east of Maine: "What paper company in New Brunswick is being certified for its ecologically- and socially-responsible forest practices?"

They invariably laugh and say, "Irving, of course." "Right," I say. And their jaws drop in disbelief.

Irving is a family-owned Canadian conglomerate that manages five million acres of forest (a half-million in Maine) and owns pulp mills, lumber mills, potato farms, oil refineries, gas station-convenience stores, as well as TV and radio stations and newspapers. The Ivings like to take control. For them, "competition" means four Irving gas stations in the same town. To say they have political clout in New Brunswick is an understatement.

SCS Strikes Again

Irving's past silvicultural style has been to clearcut, plant spruce, and spray herbicides. They call them themselves the "tree-planting company." In several Aroostook County towns in Maine, such as New Sweden and Westmanland, townspeople passed ordinances to restrict Irving's simplification and poisoning of the landscape. Just recently, residents of New Brunswick's Kingston Peninsula have called for a cessation of Irving's clearcutting, an end to 24-hour mechanized harvesting, and a ban on spraying of any herbicides or insecticides over Irving's monocultures.

Green Certification

If Irving is the Answer What was the Question?

by Mitch Lansky

Scientific Certification Systems, the same outfit that certified Seven Islands a few years ago, is in the process of certifying less than half a million acres of Irving holdings in the Black Brook region of New Brunswick (northeast of St. Leonard)—the most intensively managed holdings of Irving. If this goes well, Irving intends to get all of its holdings certified.

I contacted retired USFS forester, Gordon Mott, who spent decades of his life in the Black Brook region. He said the region is outside of the red spruce range. Back in the 1950s, 85% or more of the softwoods consisted of balsam fir with some white spruce and even less black spruce. There had been a large white birch component that was impacted by a birch dieback. Though the softwood lowlands could be classified as boreal, the uplands are northern hardwood, with a strong beech-sugar maple-yellow birch component.

I told him that many of Irving's spruce plantations (some were red-black hybrids not found in the region) have been established in the hardwood uplands. This, he said, was definitely a conversion of natural type and involved much herbicide spraying. The fir lowlands, he said, were naturally even-aged, due to budworm outbreaks. The trees in the 1950s, however, were quite large—with some of the fir over 90 feet high. Irving sprayed this highly vulnerable region quite heavily during the budworm outbreaks from the 1950s until the outbreak ended a decade ago.

Much of the surrounding forest, Mott commented, had been severely highgraded by other landowners. Irving's forests reflect much more thought and investment towards the future. Others who have been to the Black Brook region have also commented on some of the positives. The cutting, for example, is very careful, with minimum stand damage. Logs are intensively sorted for highest value products. The milling makes use of every possible sawlog, even to the extent of saving small logs on the curve and straightening them out during the drying process. Workers are given direct incentives for quality performance. Company personnel constantly encounter the community of harvesting and use to ensure quality and efficiency.

The case for certifying Irving

Irving refuses to purchase wood cut by Native Americans from New Brunswick's Crown Lands, despite court decisions that declare such cutting to be legal.

Yet SCS (Scientific Certification Systems, the same outfit that certified Seven Islands a few years ago) is proceeding to certify less than half a million acres of Irving's holdings in the Black Brook region of New Brunswick (northeast of St. Leonard)—the most intensively managed holdings of Irving. If this goes well, Irving intends to get all of its holdings certified. I read about Irving's certification in the March issue of the Atlantic Forestry Review and my jaw dropped. After many phone calls to New Brunswick, however, I learned that the certification is not yet official.

The Case for Certifying Irving

SCS has not yet released a summary document. I was instead able to reach two of the three certifiers, Dr. Robert Seymour, a silviculture professor at the University of Maine, and Dr. Lloyd Irland, head of the Island Group, a forestry consulting firm. They confirmed that Irving is, indeed, meeting their guidelines. They told me that Irving would not have been certified five years ago, but that the company has been making big changes in its practices and its long-term planning.

They stressed a number of points:

- Nearly 30% of the holding is now in plantations. This will eventually rise to 50%.
- The biologist on the team, Dan Kempie, of the Northern Appalachian Restoration Project's REAP and the Bates College Program in Environmental Studies will eventually rise to 50%.
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The international standards are rather vague about clearcutting, herbicides and plantations, and thus open to interpretation. The Acadian Forest regional committee could not reach consensus on these issues, and, so far, has come up with two "tracks" where there are disagreements. One track would simply ban all use of chemical herbicides and chemical fertilizers. Another track would not allow such products unless they are "needed"—a concept open to a wide range of interpretation. The bulk of the document, however, shows a clear preference for more "natural" forms of management that leave more of forest diversity and structure functional. Since environmental activists and Irving are represented on the committee, it is understandable why there is no consensus on the issues concerning intensive practices. This lack of consensus may persist, since some of the disagreement is philosophical, rather than scientific.

Lacking regional FSC standards, the SCS certifiers developed their own standards, as they did with Seven Islands. Since the certifiers have such latitude to set standards, it makes a difference who the certifiers are. There is a wide range of tolerance of certain practices amongst foresters and scientists.

According to an article in the May, 1995 issue of the Journal of Forestry, two of the three certifiers for Seven Islands came from a list supplied by Seven Islands. The company had veto power over any SCS selection to the team. I did not learn if the same procedure applied to Irving. Robert Seymour and Lloyd Island, however, though ardent advocates for ecological reserves and wilderness, are also tolerant of practices connected with "management," but they certainly would not endorse indiscriminate use.

Robert Seymour, has been a "cooperating professor" with the Cooperative Forestry Research Unit, which is funded, in part, by paper and other forest products actively advertise to help stimulate demand for their products. One can, therefore justify planting more and more unnatural stands. There is no concept of limits. Demand is not a constant. It has been rising. Indeed, companies that manufacture paper and other forest products actively advertise to help stimulate demand for their products. One can, therefore justify planting more and more unnatural stands. There is no concept of limits.

The fifty (let alone thirty or forty) year rotations of plantations veer considerably from the centuries between stand-replacing disturbances in natural Acadian forests.

The National Forest Forum

Certification Credibility

Certification is supposed to be a market-based inspiration towards exemplary forestry. The Northern Forest Lands Council admitted that certification programs, "have potential, if not done well, to harm markets." The certification of Irving, though the company may be exemplary by industrial standards, may send confusing signals to the marketplace. Not everyone shares industrial forestry values.

I was curious if Seven Islands was concerned about the impact of Irving's certification on others certified by SCS. John McNulty, a vice president of Seven Islands, is not concerned. "We have faith in the process. If Irving successfully goes through the process, then its certification is valid."

This confidence in the process, however, is not universally shared. David Coon, policy director of the New Brunswick Conservation Council, informed me that many New Brunswick are concerned. "We have faith in the process. If Irving successfully goes through the process, then its certification is valid."
Acid Rain Unravelling Adirondack Ecosystems

Success in Cutting Sulfur Emissions Has Not Solved the Northeast’s Number One Air Pollution Problem

from the Adirondack Park Council

A new study completed by Environment Canada confirms the Adirondack Council’s findings that Midwestern utility plants must cut their smokestack emissions far beyond what is called for in the current federal acid rain program before the ecosystems of the northeastern U. S. and southeastern Canada can hope to recover.

At the same time, new evidence has been discovered showing that loons and other waterfowl are being contaminated by mercury due to acid rain. Adding insult to injury, pesky black flies seem to thrive in acidic waters. Guy Fenech, a Senior Science Advisor at Environment Canada told a group of more than 100 scientists, policymakers and advocates gathered in Saratoga Springs in November that 95,000 lakes in southern Ontario and Quebec are being damaged by acid rain today. Without substantial reductions in both sulfur-dioxide and nitrogen-oxides, the condition of those lakes will only get worse, he noted.

An International Problem

Most people thought the acid rain problem in North America was solved when the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990 were approved by Congress and when the Canadian and U. S. governments signed a treaty on acid rain emissions, Fenech said. But the emissions reductions called for at coal-burning power plants in both the U. S. and Canada were too modest and must be adjusted, he said.

Canadian officials are currently discussing the nation’s options, including whether the treaty with the U. S. should be renegotiated. The current U. S. acid rain program is expected to reduce nationwide sulfur-dioxide emissions from utility plants by 50 percent below 1990 levels by 2005. It does not address nitrogen-oxides. So much of the coal-fired utility emissions harming the Adirondacks comes from the Midwest, the Park is only expecting a 39 percent reduction in the deposition of sulfur-dioxide in its forests and waters.

As a result, the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency predicts that 43 percent of all 2,800 lakes and ponds in the Adirondack Park will be too acidic to support their natural ecosystems within 50 years. Forestry and co-sponsored by the Adirondack Council and several other organizations. Fenech expressed his support for the acid rain control bill sponsored by Senators Daniel Patrick Moynihan and Alfonse D’Amato and Congressmen Gerald Solomon, R-Glens Falls, and Sherwood Boehlert, R-Utica. The bill (S.1097/H.R.2365) would require 70 to 75 percent reductions in both major components of acid rain, based on 1990 levels.

In an effort to move the bill forward, the Adirondack Council and its member organizations gathered with other interested advocates at the Saratoga conference to create a new coalition to fight acid rain throughout the Northeast. Roughly 20 representatives from various New York-based organizations were on hand for the initial meeting and expressed interest in working together to pass the bill. The group will continue to meet and work out a collective strategy for bringing in new support from the rest of the affected areas of the East Coast and Mid-Atlantic region.

Meanwhile, Congressional sponsors from New York are seeking the support of the rest of the state’s delegation, as well as representatives from Georgia to Maine. Most of the Eastern Seaboard is harmed by acid rain or one of its components, such as nitrogen-oxide pollution. In an effort to encourage New York’s delegation to fight for new acid rain control laws, Adirondack Council member organization Citizens Campaign for the Environment presented the four sponsors with a petition carrying more than 100,000 signatures of New Yorkers who want Congress to finish the job of halting acid rain’s destruction.

Increased mercury levels threaten loons. Photo © Gustav W. Verderber

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency predicts that 43 percent of all 2,800 lakes and ponds in the Adirondack Park will be too acidic to support their natural ecosystems within 50 years.

Funding Mercury Monitoring

In Albany, the Council has asked the NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation to support creation of a mercury monitoring network across the state. The program proposed to the Adirondack Council by the National Atmospheric Deposition Program would establish five mercury testing sites at strategic locations, downwind of major emissions sources. The entire five-year study envisioned by NADP would cost less than $330,000. Adirondack Council members may recall that the Council worked with members of Congress to reintroduce the funding for NADP’s acid rain monitoring program last year.

Mercury poisoning has become a far-too-common occurrence in the Adirondacks in the past decade. In the 1980s, there were less than a handful of lakes in the Adirondack Park with significant mercury levels. At the Saratoga conference, state officials noted that more than 100 Adirondack lakes now have mercury concentrations greater than one part-per-million. More than a dozen of those have been flagged by the state Health Department in the 1990s as having fish that are too contaminated for human consumption.

Elevated Mercury Levels

Mercury is a trace element in many coal-fired smokestack emissions. It can also be leached out of decaying organic matter by acidic water. Consequently, the Adirondack Park suffers from both methods of contamination. Aside from causing nerve and brain damage in humans, mercury has dire health consequences for nearly every form of life within the Park’s lakes and ponds, as well as for the birds and other wildlife that eat fish and other aquatic animals.

DEC officials report finding elevated mercury levels in dead loons brought to DEC’s pathology lab from the Adirondacks.

Black Flies Love Acid Rain

Ironically, as acid rain is wiping out fish populations and harming other species the people of the state are trying to protect, it appears to be helping the black fly population survive. Environment Canada reports that a long-term study of conditions at Algonquin Park in Ontario showed that black fly emergence has increased 100 times or more over the past 50 years due to acidification of the breeding streams. Black flies swarm in huge numbers and create a springtime annoyance that can spoil a trip outdoors in May or June. Many tourists avoid the Adirondacks altogether during black fly season. Black flies lay their eggs in fast-moving streams, where they cling to rocks and filter the passing water for food until emerging from the streams as adults.

According to the report, black fly larvae are far more resistant to acidic conditions and heavy metal contamination caused by acid rain than fish and other aquatic organisms that eat them and compete for habitat.

ENERGY QUIZ NO. 2

Question 1: How many kilowatt hours does it take to lift a 60 pound backpack from sea level to the top of Mount Everest?

Question 2: How many kilowatt hours does a VCR use annually while it is plugged in and in the "off" position?

Question 3: How many kilowatt hours did your household use last month?

Answers to the Energy Quiz

1. One (1) kilowatt hour. The highest peak in the world is 29,028 feet. To obtain kilowatt hours, multiply foot-pounds by 3.76616 x 10^-7.

2. Six (6) kilowatt hours. Phantom loads in electronic equipment are huge energy losers, consuming the energy of six power plants nationwide. Put another way, of the $3.5 billion Americans spend each year to run electronic devices, $1 billion is spent to power them when they are shut off.

3. If you knew this answer, congratulate yourself for your energy awareness. While most consumers know the total dollar amount of their electric bill, most don't know how many kilowatt hours they are using or what they are using them for.
COUNTY FORESTER PURSUES COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS

Green Certification, Networking and Landowner Education in VT's Addision County

by Alexander Lee

David Bryan and I were walking around his own land one late autumn afternoon. He was smiling and striding along in the fresh snow. Pointing to a beech that had snapped in half he declared, "I think this storm will provide great habitat." He paused to show me a sugar maple which was leaning thirty degrees to the south.

"That used to be straight like an arrow. It won't probably regain its stature, but I think it will live. They say that you can lose most of the crown and salvage deals. This is going to be left... This is going to make great habitat!"

Vermont Family Forests

In the most recent issue of Vermont Woodlands (Winter 1997), Eleanor Kohlstat wrote, "One of Vermont's best kept secrets might be its county foresters." David Bryan is just the person to whom I imagine she was referring. Addison County's forester has played an instrumental role in numerous conservation initiatives, not least the Advent of Vermont Family Forests.

Vermont Family Forests is a forestry outreach and education program which takes a socially responsible approach to cultivating local family forests—those forests which are privately owned and non-industrial. It has, for three waterfleets in Vermont, provided an alternative to the nasty divisions between the logging industry and environmentalists by bringing them all together at the table.

While there has been success in, in large part, to the empowerment of land owners. David Brynn, with help from the Watershed Center, the Lewis Creek Association, the Otter Creek Audubon Society, and other conservation groups, has reshaped the debate around stewardship of forested lands in his region.

Vermont Family Forests

Voluntary Timber Management Guidelines

Excerpts

* Single tree and small group selection (up to one acre) methods should be used for shade tolerant species; irregular shelterwood for shade intolerant. Avoid clearcutting.
* Retain a minimum of 6 cavity or snag trees per acre with one exceeding 18" DBH & three exceeding 16" DBH.
* Retain a minimum of two large down trees per acre.
* Grow the largest trees on the longest rotations possible within site and log quality limitation. (VFF uses culmination of mean annual board foot growth as the definition of rotation length.)
* Only those pesticides accepted by the Northeast Organic Farming Association should be used, if necessary.

"If someone chooses to use a professional that is good, but society will be better when we don't need to call the specialists to know how to care for our land. Education—which is how our workshops are accomplishing—is empowerment."

"Most of the landowners in Vermont do not own their forests just for the sawlogs they can remove. They list other reasons for ownership first like recreation, conservation, and appreciation," says Bryan. "They used to define this group of people by what they are not. They called them NIPFs, or non-industrial private forest owners. That is horrible! Vermont Family Forests and this whole Green Certification Program of the National Wildlife Federation are giving these folks the tools they need to organize around sustainable forestry practices so that they can be known for who they are."

David Brynn explains lumber quality and yield at VFF workshop.

Smart Wood

There are now people chomping at the bit to be included in the pilot intensive field assessments of the "Green" Certification Project. Thirty-one parcels participated in the first round of assessment. The goals of that project, which is being carried out in conjunction with the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation and the NWF's Northeast Natural Resource Center, are to promote the use of sustainable forestry practices in family forests, to increase the availability of certified wood products, and to develop an affordable model for independent "green" certification.

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Alan Calfee speaks excitedly of Vermont Family Forests initiatives. He is a forester and the coordinator for the Northeast Smart Wood Project, which covers New England and upstate New York. Smart Wood is the international organization which is leading the campaign to certify wood products. While the chains of custody are complex and involve too much paperwork, Calfee is glad that so many groups are committed.

"Our goal is a high standard and good credibility. I am excited about this project because it provides an opportunity to demonstrate what sustainable forestry is. This is a great non-regulatory approach to improved forest practices. Right now there are distinctives for being a careful logger. Adding value to a log because it was harvested properly will create the incentive that is needed."

Local Networks

At a November meeting of Builders for Social Responsibility, I learned from furniture maker Bruce Beeken that some entrepreneurs in the Pacific Northwest are making a killing by marketing "organic wood." Currently, there is no way of knowing if that outfit is a farce. Vermont Family Forests is creating the awareness that is needed to make such an endeavor sustainable and successful.

Beeken and his partner, Jeff Parsons, run their small business from a woods shop at Shuebrune Farms in Shelburne, Vermont. In the last couple of years they have invested in a wood-drying kiln and started to cater to the green consumer. "Even though we have done this as much for the feeling as anything else, we want to be certified so that we are in a position to capitalize on the market advantages which Green Certification offers," said Jeff Parsons.

"The question has always been how do consumers know that they're buying certified wood? There will be a whole paper trail that follows every piece of certified wood from forest to furniture," Parsons said.

"Local value-adding networks are part of the solution. We need to make sure that the Bruce Beekens of the world know about the Paul Baughmans," said Bryan, referring to a retired businessman who sold Beeken Parsons' some beech logs from his 160 acre lot. "We need a newsletter. That is our next step—to connect landowners with craftspeople and local mills."

Community Solutions

Observes forester Bryan, "I think by now, we should have learned that regulation is not always the best answer. By working together as a community, solutions can be found to nearly every problem that arises."

The Forum

Next Issue of the Forum

The next issue of the Northern Forest Forum will have a feature focus on silviculture, low impact forestry and opportunities for its wider implementation.

Included will be:

* Update on VT's cutting bill & rulemaking process
* Low Impact Standards & Guidelines
* Zero Cut on National Forests?
* Regional sustainable forestry initiatives
Amish Ruminations
by Michael Phillips

Our culture embraces technology for the most part without question. If it’s faster or allows us to cut costs or makes life more convenient, well, it’s gotta be good, right?

The Amish have a different way of looking at these matters than we “English” do. This religious-centered society of Germanic origin weighs the pros and cons of all aspects of living through a much different pair of spectacles. Not that the Amish don’t have their own human challenges and shortcomings, for they do. But the Amish ask some fundamental questions we might all consider in the context of our own lives. “Does this technology bring me into a closer relationship to God? Or does it come at a cost to my spiritual nature?”

The divine injunction, “to till the ground and have dominion over it,” has assumed a spiritual meaning; it is our duty to take care of our own, in our own way, through alms and brotherly love as has always been our custom and has been sufficient to this day.”

The perception of rushing seems to intrude into the privacy of one’s home and spending less time together. “There is less ‘rushing around’ when insect resistance developed feeding bale followed by an open trailer can gather acres of hay by himself. But the Amish hitch teams of horses to sickle bar mowers and hay rakes. The same horses either pull wagons where loose hay is carefully forked by hand and mounded, or gas-powered balers that leave the hay on the ground to be picked up by community members. The next day the whole process repeats, but now in the neighbors’ field. Dinners are shared as are sunsets and laughter. The hard work is rewarded by knowing each farm has a winter supply of hay.

Amish parents never go into a nursing home in their elder years. There is no separation of generations in the daily ritual of living. Grandparents might live in a smaller house or a room off the kitchen. Modest medical costs are shared jointly by the community-at-large, with no insurance intermediary skimming the cream from the pot. Life is a joint effort from beginning to end.

We would do well by such circumspection. Certainly any debate about the worth of wilderness reaches a clearer consensus when we remember that God did not fashion us solely ‘in his image likeness’. The margins of our ruminations need to be much broader.

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Simple Living Quotes

“... the Amish think that phone use separates family apart because it results in family members attending meetings and spending less time together. Phones allow unwanted visitors to intrude into the privacy of one’s home at any moment. ... The phone deal that the Amish negotiated is an ingenuous solution to their dilemma. They have agreed to exclude it from homes, while allowing its use in community shanties [wooden phone booths] and in or near shops and barns [for business use].”

“The Amish plea for exemption from Social Security was voiced by an Amish spokesman in hearings before the Ways and Means Committee of the U.S. House of Representatives in 1983. ‘The Amish are only human and not as perfect as our non-Amish neighbors would take us to be, and not near as perfect as we would like to be, and we would not wish to be a burden to our government or men in authority or to be a hindrance to anyone. We desire no financial assistance from our state or federal government in any way. But again, we would humbly plea that we be allowed to take care of our own, in our own way, through alms and brotherly love as has always been our custom and has been sufficient to this day.”

The Amish believe they are to cultivate it carefully, for it is their sustenance.”

“... The Amish ruminations need to be much broader.”

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4-3 Vote Denies Registration to Genetically-Altered Corn

by Sharon Tisher

The Maine Board of Pesticides Control (BPC) stunned international chemical and seed conglomerates Novartis Seeds and DEKALB on December 12 by denying their applications to market genetically engineered field corn in Maine. This was the first time these products—which incorporate Bacillus thuringiensis (Bt) genes designed to produce endotoxins lethal to the European corn borer—have been denied registration in any state.

The denials came in the face of substantial opposition from organic growers and environmentalists citing unanswered questions about the role of the genetically engineered plants in promoting insect resistance to Bt pesticides.

The Maine Farm Bureau submitted a letter to the Board in support of the applications. In that letter, Jon Olson likened opponents of biotechnology to those in the 1880s who opposed hatching "artificial" chickens in incubators, and predicted that within five years "nearly 100 percent of all U.S. farm acreage could be planted in genetically engineered crops."

This writer presented MOFGAs (Maine Organic Farming and Gardening Association) testimony, the fastest growing sector in Maine agriculture, would be the first to suffer when insect resistance developed with the Bt pesticide. As Bt is derived from natural soil bacteria, it is one of the few pesticides available to organic growers. The impact of the loss of Bt would eventually be felt by all growers and the environment generally: "Because of its effectiveness and safety compared to the pesticides it displaces, Bt is probably the single most important insecticide ever discovered and the loss of such a pesticide would cause growers to switch to more harmful pest control agents" (quoting from the EPA rulemaking petition filed September 16, 1997, by an international coalition of organic growers and environmental groups seeking cancellation of registration of all transgenic Bt crops).

MOFGAs’s opposition was soundly supported by other Maine environmentalists. Nancy Allen, co-chair of the Maine Green Party, argued that it was time for the states to “step into the breach” left by a lax EPA registration process that “relies too heavily on industry information.” Allen cited recent studies from Europe indicating susceptibility of non-target ladybugs to toxins produced by genetically engineered potato plants, and transfer of genetically engineered herbicide resistance to wild species.

The Land That Feeds Us
“The keystone of local economy is agriculture”

Agriculture and the Diversity of the Wild

The land we leave alone can be just as important to farming success as the cultivated acres beneath our feet. This relationship of agriculture to the diversity of the wild is underscored daily in my work as a vegetable grower and an organic orchardist.

The bumblebees that pollinate my crops are not here solely for human purposes. The Michælmas daisies and red clover in the hedgerow rate just as a squash blossom in the eye of a bumble bee intent on a summer long existence. The beneficial insects I revere in the orchard—lacewings, spiders, syrphid flies, and trichogramma wasps among them—find adult habitat in the groundcover beneath the apple trees.

Equally key is the interbreeding of orchard moths with wild populations to keep the gene pool susceptible to selective organic sprays like Bacillus thuringiensis . . . otherwise a handful of larvae resistant to this disease vector might soon breed an entirely resistant population.

Birds lend a beneficial assist as well. Bluebirds and swallows swoop hundreds of orchard and garden pests from the air by day (with mammalian bats doing the night shift). Woodpeckers rat-tat out moth larvae lurking beneath the bark of the apple trees. Hummingbirds dart in and out of blossoms, all the while transferring the varietal pollen on which fruit set depends. These allies exist in a much broader environment than just my plantings. All life is an interconnected web.

Similarly, forest agriculture is much more than a logger’s final toil to harvest the trees we humans all too smugly regard as “our resource.” All species have a role to play, from mycorrhizal fungi in the soil to the bear distributing berry seeds en masse in his scat. The shade of the trees provides a sheltered home for many species of understory plants. Medicinal herbs like goldenseal, black cohosh, and ginseng no longer grow where humans overharvest or the ground is torn asunder by huge machines removing every life—providing tree. We radically alter the connectedness of forest ecology to our own detriment when we take and take and take. Clearcutting is perhaps the ultimate blasphemy to this concept of stewardship. Agriculture—be it in the forest or the field—is about stewardship first and foremost.

Life is based on the recycling of nutrients of the bodies of past generations, be it mine or the fallen leaves of autumn or wind-topped tree trunks. Undisturbed forest soils have a complete compost cycle that my gardens and orchards can only envy. Forestry training too often overlooks the vital link of soil health to a sustainable forest agriculture.

All life depends on the trees above. The economic value of the forest is much greater than our myopic focus on short-term dollars. The trees are the very lungs of the planet on which we live. Their respiration cleanses the air that we breathe. Tree roots reaching deep into the substrata are able to call upon mineral reserves as yet untouched by the organic cycling at the surface of the planet. The dissolving power of soil water makes the rock minerals available to be absorbed by roots. These minerals are then passed into all parts of the tree, including the foliage. Autumn leaves bring the minerals, now in an organic form, back to the ground to be incorporated into humus. The trees themselves renew the land.

The destruction of forests around the globe is coming back to us in many ways. The greenhouse effect, the encroachment of deserts, mineral impoverished soils relate directly to our disrespect for trees. First and foremost, we need to realize our existence on this humble planet hinges directly on holistic stewardship of all we have been given. Hugging trees starts to make sense when we wake up from consuming everything in sight.

Wilderness has just as much value to us agriculturally as it does spiritually. There are areas of the earth we simply need to leave untouched, if only to defend ourselves from our ignorance of diverse connections we cannot yet comprehend. Wilderness areas may be as small as a garden corner left to the “wildflower fairies” or as vast as the Alaskan tundra. Corridors of Northern Forest intelligently managed by of Nature herself will help us regain ecosystem balance in this neck of the woods. We need wilderness locally and globally.

But First Let’s Do The Numbers

At last count America is losing about 500 farms per week. Average farm income in 1995 was $5000, farmers are twice as likely to live in poverty as the general population, for every farmer under the age of 35 in the US there are two over the age of 65, and the farmer’s share of the food dollar slipped from 37 cents in 1980 to 21 cents in 1994 (Source: In Good Tilth, August 1997).

So tell me, will anyone be left to feed the rest of us come the turn of the next century? When the global economy takes a nose dive, and all the good local farming ground is planted to shopping malls and housing tracts, just what will be left to eat? My advice is to start making the effort to grow your own food and support whatever local farmers are left in your valley. Truly safe and nutritious food only comes from the soil upon which we stand.

Comment on Organic Standards Before April 30

You have until the 30th of April to comment on the proposed USDA’s National Organic Standards. Send comments to Eileen Stommes, Deputy Administrator, USDA, AMS Room 4007-S, Agr Stopp 0275, POB 94645, Wash., DC 20090-6456. FAX: (202)-690-4632. Express your thoughts on food irradiation, municipal sludge, drugs, anti-biotics and animal by-products in animal feed and keeping certification within the financial reach of small farmers.

The Two-Year-Old Ecologist
by Grace Elena Phillips

There were big tire tracks on the lane leading back behind our woods. Mommy and I walked down on Sunday to see what all the noise we had heard for weeks was about. We found branches but no trees, machines but no men. Mommy explained to me about skidders, how they’re used to pull and drag the trees out of the woods. These were what had been making all the noise we could hear from our farm. It was then we saw the remaining trees, neatly piled to await the next logging truck. Still standing nearby was the big hollow maple where the baby raccoon had been last summer.

a “You are the mommy raccoon and me are the baby raccoon. Where will we go if the skidders come and get our tree, Mommy?”

b “Little love, we will have to move deeper into the woods. People cut down the trees for things they need, like timber to build their houses, paper for writing, and wood to burn for heat.”

c “But what about us, Mommy, don’t we need the woods too?”

d “Little love, we all need to share what our Earth has to offer and take good care of what we have been given. There aren’t always easy answers to your questions.”

e “Me a baby raccoon, Mommy. Let’s find a place far, far away where people won’t need to come and take our house.”

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Dwarf Dogberry
Photo © Gustavo W. Verderber

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