



# Woodlands *for* Wildlife

Volume 21 June 2009

A newsletter of Vermont Coverts: Woodlands for Wildlife, Inc.

## Timber Industry Feels Impact of Slow Economy

by John Evans, Class of 2002

As a landowner with a recently updated Use Value plan, I find myself with more than a passing interest in future markets for saw logs and firewood cut as part of forest thinnings to improve stand productivity and increase habitat diversity for wildlife.

What I learned was a sobering lesson in 21st century economics. Not only is the U.S. housing market the primary driver for timber and lumber sales in Vermont, but the prices we get for the wood we grow on our land is very dependent on global conditions.

“We’re affected as much by the stock market in Japan and banking reserves in China as we are by people visiting a Vermont furniture maker to buy a nice table,” observes Bill Sayre, an adviser to and part owner of the A. J. Johnson Co., a saw mill in Bristol, Vermont.

It is widely acknowledged the downturn in the economy is having a significant impact on all segments of the timber industry in Vermont, from logging to mill production to the sale of finished wood products.

Hardwood production, the core of the business in the region, is down sharply. About one-half of the major saw mills in Vermont and New Hampshire are either closed or will close after processing timber on log decks, according to an estimate by Dan Harrison, Vice President and General Manager of Cersosimo Lumber in Brattleboro, one of the

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## Vermont Coverts Launches New Web Site — [www.vtcoverts.org](http://www.vtcoverts.org)

by Trevor Evans, Class of 1998

In April, the new Vermont Coverts web site became a reality after a year of planning, design and hard work.

The web site provides up-to-date information on a wide range of Vermont Coverts activities. Online articles and links to other sources of information will help woodland owners to become better informed about practical approaches to forest management to enhance wildlife habitat and diversity and to promote healthy forest ecosystems.

The Coverts Council initiated the project to expand and improve the web site about a year ago. The general Council consensus was that although our training programs and follow-up workshops were receiving good reviews, there was more that could be done to help educate Cooperators and other Vermont landowners.

The answer ... a new one-stop information web site with the main emphasis on a comprehensive and up-to-date calendar system for events and workshops for Coverts and other related organizations. A priority was also given to links and resource pages for information related to wildlife habitat, healthy forest ecosystems, and forest management.

### Many New Features

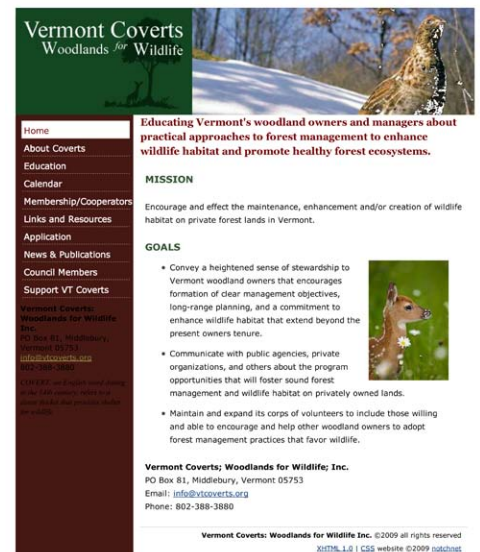
Other new key features are a current news page, an archive of past newsletters, a sponsor and donation page utilizing PayPal, and an overview page as well as an application page for the three-day Cooperator training programs held in the spring and fall.

The web site project was directed by a committee of Fred Pond, Lisa Sausville, Solon Rhodes, and Trevor Evans. To enable timely updates, and reduce the need for and costs of outside programmers to add and manage information, the new web site has a built-in editor and calendar program.

This will enable our Executive Director and others to make changes as needed without calling on the services of Notchnet, Inc. in Littleton, New Hampshire, the firm that created the web site for Coverts.

Our thanks to Veronica Francis of Notchnet for implementing these capabilities into the new web site. When we put the web site out for bid, Notchnet

Vermont Coverts: Woodlands for Wildlife



*New Home Page organizes a greatly expanded menu of information choices into an easy to use format.*

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New Web Site  
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September 2009			
W	T	F	S
2.	3.	4.	5.
9.	10.	11. <a href="#">1. Cooperator Training</a> (8:30 AM - Whole day)	12. <a href="#">1. Cooperator Training</a> (8:30 AM - Whole day) <a href="#">2. Vermont Coverts Annual Meeting</a> (1:00 PM - Whole day)

*A new annual and monthly calendar shows day-by-day information on workshops, programs and other events of interest to woodland owners.*

won the project and we're very pleased with the results.

Statistics for April visits to the website are impressive: 312 unique visitors, and many of these individuals came back for additional visits. Once the word gets out we expect the number of people using our site will expand significantly. Check out the news or browse through past newsletters for helpful information. Want to know more about cost sharing for habitat improvements under the WHIP program?

Go to the links and resource page. You will find access to information about

**Resources - Forestry**

- [Asian Longhorned Beetle](#)
- [Backyard Woods Guide by Arbor Day Foundation](#)
- [Call Before You Cut](#)
- [Emerald Ash Borer](#)
- [Forest Stewardship Council](#)
- [Information about subjects in Forestry](#)
- [NAASF Forest Landowners Guide to Internet Resources](#)
- [National Timber Tax Website](#)
- [Northern Woodlands Magazine](#)
- [Pest Resources for New England](#)
- [Society of American Foresters](#)
- [US Forest Service - Silvics Manuals Conifers and Hardwoods](#)
- [USDA - Vermont Forest Inventory & Analysis](#)

*Sample of a links page section*

federal and state government agencies and programs, other non-profit organizations, and sections on forestry and wildlife. There also is a suggested reading list.

See what workshops or events might be of interest. Maybe it's information on releasing and pruning apple trees, or managing a sugar bush, controlling invasive plants or identifying destructive insect pests. It's all there.

We encourage you to become a part of our online community. If you have any related news or have discovered a helpful site on the internet or are hosting or know about an upcoming event or workshop email Lisa Sausville, our Executive Director, at [info@vtcoverts.org](mailto:info@vtcoverts.org) or call 802-388-3880.

Remember this website was designed for you and is kept up-to-date for you, Cooperators and friends of Coverts. We're always interested in improving our efforts. Let us know what you like or what we can do better.

## 25th Anniversary

Vermont Coverts will celebrate its 25th Anniversary in 2010. We're reaching out to Cooperators and Friends to ask for volunteers to join us in planning the program and activities which will help this organization to continue its forward progress. For more information contact Lisa Sausville.

## Attention Writers

We're always looking out for ideas and news articles for this newsletter and our web site. If you have a story to tell about activities on your land which helped to improve the forest for wildlife habitat and diversity, ecosystem health or timber productivity, we'd like to hear from you. Keep story length under 500 words. Photographs are welcome. Reviews of books you find especially interesting also are helpful additions to our new web site..

## Peer to Peer: A Key to Coverts Success

*by Lisa Sausville, Executive Director*

Cooperators know the unique and special organization we have in Vermont Coverts:Woodlands for Wildlife. It is a gem for forest landowners.

Our Spring training workshop is filled to capacity with 22 participants. Already, eight people are signed up for September classes. That means a lot more people will be out there to spread the word about how we can create, enhance and maintain forest ecosystems for wildlife and other benefits.

People who make decisions about their land are more likely to turn to a friend, neighbor or family member. These Peer-to-Peer interactions are a key to our success, and work best when we share our knowledge and experience.

Recently, I was invited to a Woodland Owner Network Symposium for organizations involved in peer-to-peer learning. It was an opportunity to learn what other organizations are doing to reach out to landowners and to effect changes on the land.

A lot of things were reaffirmed. One is that demonstration works well. We see this principle in action in our many workshops and local forest walks. People want to see what you are doing. How did your last thinning go? How are you controlling invasives? What are your goals for your woodlot?

Another important factor is what we are doing to find "local champions" throughout Vermont. These individuals are the Local Contact Cooperators who serve as a connecting point in each county. The goal is for Cooperators to be active beyond their training. LCCs are the people to contact with your ideas or for their ideas on how you can get involved. Check out our new web site for the name of the LCC in your area.

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## **Economic Slow Down**

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largest hardwood and softwood producers in New England

A 50 percent reduction in current mill output is consistent with other projections for hardwoods and white pine, key Vermont markets. While some mills have stopped production, others have reduced the number of shifts and hours of operation.

With lumber inventories in wholesaler warehouses at or nearing capacity, and lumber prices sharply reduced, there is uncertainty and turmoil in timber markets.

Variable pricing is another issue. Many mills have established price points below which they will not sell. However, prices can vary from mill to mill and this variability translates back into how much a mill may be willing to pay for saw logs.

Sayre said prices for saw logs are down by 30 percent to 60 percent from a peak in early 2006. "In the past several weeks the rate of decline slowed or stopped and it's possible we may be nearing or have reached the bottom of the cycle," he added.

Cliff Allard, of Allard Lumber Company in Brattleboro, said he had "never seen anything like the current conditions."

"When sellers hear the prices we are paying for logs I have to remind them that we're dealing with the same situation that caused a serious decline in the value of their 401(k)," Allard said.

While he calls the situation "grim," Allard is confident of a rebound. However, he believes there will be a "thinning" in the number of saw mills in the region.

### ***Diminishing Mill Capacity***

Beyond getting loggers back out into the woods to cut timber, truckers to haul it, and mills to process it, future mill capacity is a concern.

"While there is a lot of resilience in our

industry, and mills are accustomed to shutting down and starting up again because of economic cycles, we may be losing mill capacity at an alarming rate," observed Harrison.

"If the downturn lasts too long, some of these mills will not be coming back," he added.

Entering the summer months, the vulnerability to staining of some species of green wood, such as sugar and red maple and white pine, is another factor that will curtail production. Green mills that do not have kiln drying capacity may be reluctant to produce wood under prevailing market conditions.

### ***A Long Down Cycle***

The current severe downturn gained momentum about two years ago, and accelerated sharply in the past 12 months, according to Harrison.

This was on top of several years of difficult logging conditions with freezes occurring later into the winter and heavy summer rains. In addition, high diesel fuel prices impacted loggers and truckers, reducing cash and savings normally available to help weather a business contraction.

Forecasting the timing of a turnaround in log pricing and mill production is very dependent on U. S. home construction. A return to more normal conditions requires selling homes in inventory before demand is created for new housing. Unknown factors include the desire by homeowners to continue building large houses and the impact of tighter restrictions on mortgage lending.

### ***Landowner Questions***

An obvious question for landowners is What affect does all of this have on me? What do I do if I have an interest in selling timber or meeting requirements in a Use Value forest plan?

Ginger Anderson, chief of Forest Management for the Department of Forest, Parks and Recreation, recommends: "This is a time to sit down and talk with

your consulting forester to work out a plan of action." Among the options Anderson noted is to focus more attention on improving forest health or to undertake a forest thinning to improve the productivity of future harvests.

Anderson suggested landowners desiring to improve wildlife habitat or control invasive plants gaining a foothold in the understory look into participation in federally funded cost-sharing programs. Two programs with significant cost sharing are the Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP) and the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).

For WHIP information contact Vermont Fish & Wildlife. For EQIP information contact your local U.S. Department of Agriculture service center.

Anderson also pointed out that in Vermont "we do have some very positive things going for us." "With the exception of the ice storm last winter in the south, Vermont has not had to deal with major insect infestations or extreme weather conditions for a number of years."

### ***Higher Prices for Firewood***

Another positive factor is the emergence of a stronger local market for firewood, with prices peaking last fall.

One mill experimenting with developing a market for kiln dried firewood is the A. Johnson Co. Sayre said at the peak of the market the mill was paying more than \$200 per 1,000 board feet for low grade hardwood logs, This is the equivalent of \$100 per cord of firewood.

Without the firewood market, the mill would have to reject these logs as not meeting saw log standards. The firewood is split and kiln dried to a 20% moisture content. It is ready-to-burn, avoiding the need for customers to carry an inventory of drying wood. The mill delivers firewood or customers can pick it up in quantities of one-quarter cord and larger.



Woodlands  
for Wildlife

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Associate Editor: Lisa Sausville

**Calendar of Upcoming Events**

**Woods Walk at Gib Parrish's**

**June 20 9 a.m. – noon**

Join Parrish and his County Forester to learn about recent changes to the Current Use program. This is a great chance to see how a landowner and forester work together to develop a management plan. For information or directions contact LCC Barry Lawson at Lawson384@charter.net or (802) 592-3632.

**Woodland Invasive Plant Management**

**June 30, 8:45 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. at Hildene, Manchester.**

Intensive 6 hour workshop: including identification, treatment methods, and how to prioritize sites and species. Co-sponsored by The Nature Conservancy, Bennington County Sustainable Forest Consortium, Vt. Forests, Parks and Recreation, and Vt. Coverts, and Polatin Ecological Services. Contact Shelly Stiles for more information at [www.bccdvt.org/](http://www.bccdvt.org/).

**Coverts Fall Cooperator Training, Sept 11-13**

**Coverts Annual Meeting, September 12**

**Dead Creek Wildlife Day**

**October 3, Addison, Vermont.**

Come celebrate wildlife in the Champlain Valley. Many presentations and nature walks. Fun for the whole family. For more information visit [www.vtfishandwildlife.com](http://www.vtfishandwildlife.com)

**Peer-to-Peer**

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What can we do better? One is selling and promoting ourselves, informing the press about our workshops, Cooperator graduates, and the awards we present to Cooperators at our annual meeting.

Another area where we can do better is identifying the tools and resources our

Cooperators need to be more effective.

It is exciting to see and evaluate where we are and envision where we need to go. Your feedback on all these questions is important to us. You are the foot soldiers of peer-to-peer learning. How best can we support your efforts?