

Northwest Regional Planning Commission

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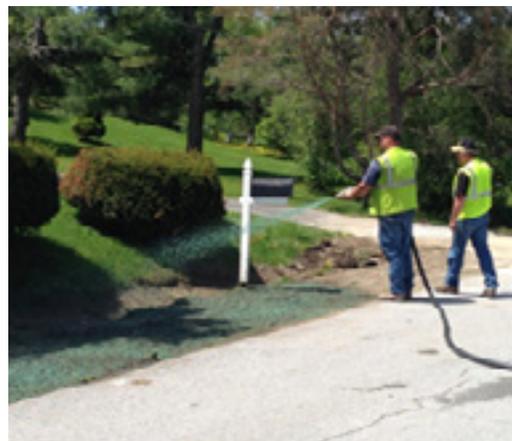


The Regional Hydroseeder Has Arrived!

In 2013, the NRPC received a grant from the Vermont Ecosystem Restoration Program (ERP) to create a regional hydroseeder program for Franklin County municipalities. The program promotes and accelerates the use of vegetation stabilization for roadside ditches and steep side slopes through the use of a hydroseeder shared by at least five communities. The Regional Hydroseeder Program will be modeled after the successful Lamoille County hydroseeder project, established in 2000.

WHAT IS HYDROSEEDING?

Hydroseeding is a planting process which utilizes a slurry of seed and mulch. The slurry is transported in a truck or trailer-mounted tank and sprayed over prepared ground. Hydroseeding has many advantages over using traditional seeding methods for roadside erosion control.



Capture & reuse of rainfall from rooftop.

Five towns are currently participating in the program: Fairfield, Georgia, Montgomery, Saint Albans Town and Swanton. Each participating municipality will contribute \$500 to the hydroseeder fund in the first year to buy in to the program and \$50 each year after for on-going fees and maintenance. The NRPC is responsible for managing the hydroseeder program including coordinating with the participating municipalities, managing the hydroseeder operations account, scheduling maintenance and establishing the online hydroseeder sign-out calendar. At the end of the

2014 season, participating towns will decide whether to bring additional towns into the program and/or rent out the machine to non-participating municipalities in the future.

On May 21st, staff from all the participating towns met for a training on the hydroseeder, a Bowie 700 with a Kohler diesel engine. The training included an overview of the basic operations of the machine, daily/yearly maintenance activities and hands on demonstration. For more information contact Bethany at 524-5958 or at bethany@nrpcvt.com.



Town highway staff follow the hydroseeder downhill on Red Barn Road in Georgia.

Rolling Out the Shoreland Protection Act

SHORELAND PROTECTION ACT OUTREACH EVENT - NORTHWEST VERMONT

Co-hosted by NRPC and the Vermont Lakes and Ponds Program

Date: Thursday, June 19th, 2014

Time: 6:30PM to 8:30PM

Location: Swanton Village Municipal Complex

Please join us for a review of the Shoreland Protection Act and to answer any questions you may have.



Effective July 1st, 2014, the Vermont General Assembly has passed shoreland protection legislation that applies to activities within 250 feet of the mean water level of all lakes greater than 10 acres in size. The Shoreland Protection Act (Chapter 49A of Title 10 §1441 et seq.) establishes a new state regulation for guiding shoreland development.

The intent of the Act is to prevent degradation of water quality in lakes, preserve habitat and natural stability of shorelines, and maintain the economic benefits of lakes and their shorelands by defining standards for the creation of buildings, driveways, and cleared areas in shorelands. The Act seeks to balance good shoreland management and shoreland development.

The Shoreland Protection Act recognizes that many shoreland properties in Vermont are already developed or are small lots that cannot meet the new standards. Developed properties are “grandfathered” until the owner proposes redevelopment. In the case of small lots, staff of the Agency of Natural Resources will work with homeowners so that standards are met to the extent possible. The table below summarizes the standards in the Act.

<i>What the Act Regulates</i>	<i>Why</i>
Naturally vegetated areas within 100 feet of the mean water level must be maintained according to Vegetation Protection Standards defined in the Act.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A wooded shoreland is essential for a healthy lake ecosystem. Most animal and plant life in a lake spend all or some of their life cycle in the shallow water, along a lake’s shore. • A buffer of natural vegetation and duff absorbs and filters runoff from uphill land uses much more effectively than lawn. • Tree roots, trunks, and branches hold the bank together, protecting against erosion as well as shade the shallow waters.
The Act establishes a maximum of 20% impervious surface coverage unless best management practices are used to mitigate impact.	Hard surfaces (roofs, driveways, decks, etc.) result in increased runoff during rain storms. Increased runoff can result in erosion, and lessen absorption and filtration functions of the natural vegetation.
The Act establishes a maximum of 40% cleared area coverage unless best management practices are used to mitigate impact.	Clearing the shoreland of its natural vegetation increases stormwater runoff and reduces the lake’s natural defense in protecting itself from pollution, eroding banks, and creating degraded habitat.
Building on slopes greater than 20% requires demonstrating the development will not compromise stability.	Steeper slopes are more prone to erosion and instability, and therefore a naturally vegetated area wider than 100 feet, and/or other Best Management Practices may be required to help reduce these impacts.

The Lakes and Ponds Program within the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation will be administering the Shoreland Protection Act come July 1st and is currently working to implement the program. As part of their implementation plan, they are preparing guidance materials, creating a website (http://www.watershedmanagement.vt.gov/permits/htm/pm_shoreland.htm), and reaching out to interested parties. The Lakes and Ponds Program will work with Regional Planning Commission’s across the state to continue outreach efforts. NRPC is co-hosting a Shoreland Protection Act outreach event with the Lakes and Ponds Program on Thursday June 19th, 2014 at the Swanton Village Municipal Complex. Municipal offices should also receive guidance documents from the Lakes and Ponds Program the first week of June.

The Importance of Forests to the Northwest Region

Forests, in one form or another can be seen throughout the Northwest Region, whether as a town forest, timber stand, undeveloped mountain side, buffer along a stream, or a private sugarbush. They are a part of the Region's working landscape, provide essential resources, and are a critical asset in the development of a prosperous and sustainable future. In spite of this role, forests are often looked at as separate components of the landscape and not as a connected resource to forestland as a whole.

Importance of Landscape-Based Planning for the "Forest Landscape"

Vermont has a working forest landscape; one that provides goods and services through stewardship, management and conservation. One prevalent aspect of the forested landscape is that the majority of this resource is privately owned. According to the Vermont Forest Resource Fact Sheet, more than 70% of Vermont's 4.6 million acres of forest can be characterized as nonindustrial private forest land. This land is divided among an estimated 88,000 landowners, independently managing their properties with unique private interests. The fragmented nature of Vermont's forest ownership means that forest resource planning occurs parcel by parcel and to date no efforts have taken a focus on these individual forested parcels on a larger scale.

NRPC Embarks on Strategies to Identify Regional Forest Stewardship

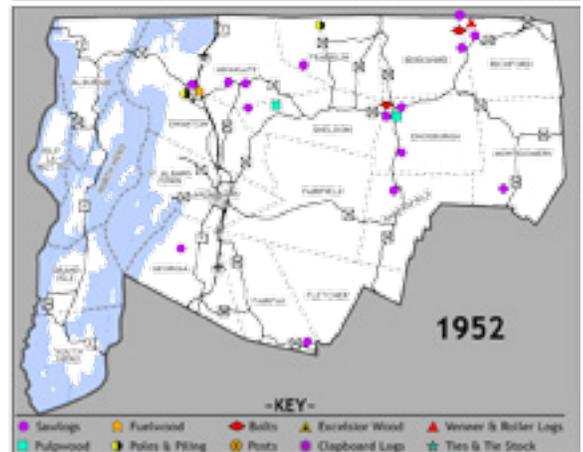
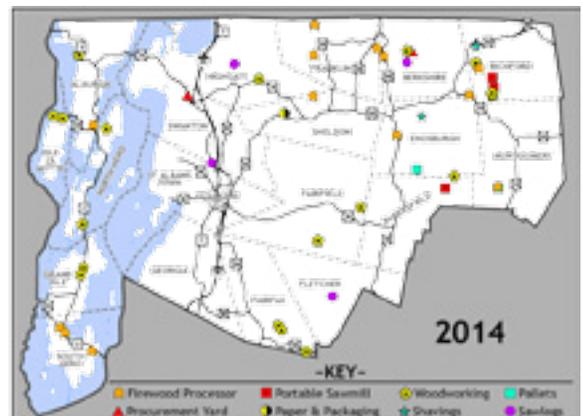
As part of a grant through the U.S. Forest Service, NRPC was tasked with outlining a landscape-level planning process that identifies how the forests are valued in the Region and what measures can be taken to ensure that the forests will be maintained in a healthy state in order to "keep forests as forest."

NRPC has convened a **Forest Stewardship Committee** to examine threats to forests in the Northwest region and to brainstorm strategies to maintain or enhance regional forests. This committee was comprised of individuals from across the Region and represent different aspects of the forest such as forest landowners, municipal board representatives, forest industries, conservation interests and wildlife habitat organizations. Based on the input from the Committee, NRPC has developed a **Landscape-Based Forest Stewardship Report: the Northwest Region** that summarizes the current conditions and future goals for the region. This report outlines forest stewardship strategies and actions into the following six categories:

- Conservation Planning to identify existing resources and how they should be managed;
- Investment in forestland, by a public entity or private conservation organization;
- Regulatory tools to address land use, transportation and environmental issues;
- Economic development assistance that supports continued forest resource uses of a property;
- Outreach and education on forest management as well as awareness of local resources; and
- Partnerships with existing forestry related organizations.

An **Action Plan** identifies the next steps that should be taken in the region by a variety of stakeholders ranging from individual landowners, the forestry sector, municipalities and regional organizations to achieve good stewardship of our forest resources.

To review a draft of this plan, go to NRPC's website at <http://www.nrpcvt.com/ForestStewardship.html>. NRPC will be taking public comment on the plan until June 30th, 2014. If you have any comments or questions, please contact Amanda at aholland@nrpcvt.com.



CHANGING MARKET FOR FOREST PRODUCTS

The forest products created in the region and industry as a whole serves a different market today that it did historically. A 1952 publication from the University of Vermont Agricultural Extension Service titled "Markets for Vermont Woodland Product: Franklin and Grand Isle Counties" was utilized to develop a snapshot of the woodland product buyers in the region and surrounding area. In order to supplement the available data for the region on employment and to compare the change in forest products produced, the Forest Stewardship Committee identified and mapped forestry sector entities and resources as of 2014 based on local knowledge. The maps show the regional distribution of woodland producers in 1952 and 2014. In the 1950s, woodland product producers were largely distributed along transportation networks. However, in 2014 producers are more dispersed in the Region. This trend of locating further from the main transportation corridors is likely tied to the differences in the types of industry currently present with more self-employed and smaller employers versus more centralized facilities.



Healthy People, Strong Communities Projects Update

The Healthy People Strong Communities implementation grants are moving forward and showing great success and accomplishments! NRPC awarded grants to communities and organizations to implement goals in economic development, community health, complete streets and resilience.

The overall goal of the Healthy People Strong Communities project is to support job growth and inspire a happy, healthy and prosperous lifestyle for this generation and the next. The implementation grants are a crucial component of the success of this project. Healthy People, Strong Communities is funded by a Sustainable Communities grant from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Community Walking and Running Path: St. Albans City Elementary School has begun developing environmental, health and agricultural programs which incorporate the 30 acres of athletic fields, gardens, orchards and forests for the benefit of students and the public.

Food Pantry Van: The Champlain Valley Office Economic Opportunity has purchased a new van this spring to support Northwest Family Foods food pantry program.

Mountain Biking Program: Franklin Northwest Supervisory Union (Partnering with Franklin Northeast Supervisory Union) has purchased mountain bikes and associated equipment which will be made available to students and residents within the region. The equipment will be used for after school and summer programs involving mountain biking.

Highgate Arena: Highgate Town has issued an RFP was released to upgrade the dehumidification system of the Highgate Arena, which is critical component to the overall health of the facility.

Fairfield Farmers Market: A cold storage site has been identified and secured in Fairfield which will serve as a centrally located site for the storage of local food products in the area. This site will help increase access to year round, local foods.

Healthy Roots Coordinator: Franklin County Industrial Development and Northwestern Medical Center have partnered and hired a part-time Healthy Roots Coordinator to address the needs of the local diversified agriculture sector. Coordinator's focus will include education, marketing, distribution and developing transportation opportunities.

Islands in the Sun Senior Center Renovations: Plans for renovating and reopening the now closed Senior Citizen Center in Alburgh have begun. The Center will be used as a space where all members of the community can enjoy many of the opportunities available in larger towns for healthy activities and community building.

Parents and Substance Abuse: Franklin County Caring Communities has begun implementing two courses aimed at addressing substance abuse and addiction: "Guiding Good Choices," an evidence-based program for parents of youth ages 9-14 and "Rocking Horse Circle of Support" group for pregnant and parenting women affected by substance abuse or addiction.

St. Albans Recreation Reserve for Hard'ack and Aldis Hill: Friends of Northern Lake Champlain have begun creating a sustainability plan for Hard'ack and Aldis Hill Recreation Reserve by partnering with area students and Google in inventorying existing trail conditions.

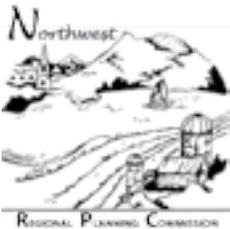
Regional Workforce Development through Franklin County Internships: Franklin County Workforce Investment Board has held computer software classes and supported secondary and post-secondary students through internships and/or direct job placement.

Lake Champlain Islands Economic Development Corporation: LCIEDC has held meetings with guest speakers to focus on business growth and sustainability and has held computer software training sessions at the WIB to support local job force training.

Island Line Planning: Local Motion has begun updating base maps and identifying priority trail segments for the Island Line Trail based on recommendations from the 2004 Champlain Islands Trail Report and the 2009 Lake Champlain Bikeway/Island Line Improvement Plan.

Cornerstone Bridges Sustainability and Growth: Richford Cornerstone Bridges to Life Community Center has been identifying and developing new types of wellness and educational programs to offer the area.

Deer Brook Trail: The Town Georgia has partnered with the Vermont Youth Conservation Corps to improve trail conditions in the Town Park. Plans are underway for a community trail building and planning workshop.



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