

March 29, 2016 Forest*Care

Greetings.

My name is Lynn Levine (802-254-4717). I have been a consulting forester for 37 years, and have needed to turn to New Hampshire and Massachusetts for licensing, since Vermont does not have any statutory standards for forester licensure. Currently, in Vermont anyone can put up a shingle and claim to be a forester. I was a founding member of CVAV (the Consulting Foresters' Association of Vermont) which is now under the auspices of the Vermont Woodlands Association. This has been an attempt to formalize basic standards for forestry practice and on-going continuing education, but membership is strictly voluntary, and it is an organization without any enforcement powers. I am unequivocally in favor of and have long advocated for Vermont to have a formal system for the licensing of foresters.

The following is my response to several questions which have been raised as to the necessity of forestry licensing in Vermont:

What harm or danger to the health, safety, or welfare of the public can be demonstrated if foresters continue to practice without some form of licensure?

Foresters should play a critical role in protecting Vermont forests for the future but, currently, anyone can call himself/herself a forester. Licensing is a way of making clear to the public who is a professional and who is not. Without the kind of care that a trained forester can offer, the forests will be seriously degraded. Vermont's forests have so many problems, including the dramatic increase of invasive plant species, the threat posed by new insects and diseases, and the overgrazing of new tree regeneration by deer, all which can seem insurmountable. Highly qualified and skilled foresters are the professionals who are most able to consider such issues and to adjust forest practices as appropriate. We need trained practitioners who have the skill and commitment to consider and balance the value of Vermont's forests within the context of the needs of the forest products industry, of our tourist economy, and of the overall environmental health of our State.

What benefit can the public reasonably expect if foresters are licensed, and how would it be measured?

A too familiar story in Vermont finds a landowner who answers the door or phone and is told by someone that they will pay him or her particular sum of money in exchange for “selectively” cutting some trees in their forest. **Often** they had no idea that their timber had any particular value, so are pleased to be able to make some money. The next thing you know, the forest is cut, with the only consideration being the immediate profits for the harvester. Protecting resources such as endangered species, water quality and wildlife values are not considered - just short-term profit. A properly licensed forester can make a difference in protecting these valuable resources.

Is there a need to assure that foresters have a certain amount of education, training, or experience?

Not only should there be a basic educational requirement, but every professional field needs ongoing training to assure that practitioners stay current with the ever-changing field of knowledge. That is one critical reason to have licensing. At present, the only the states in New England which require such on-going professional development are those that also require foresters to be licensed. There will always be “a few bad eggs” in every profession, even if there is licensing, but education and accountability raises the bar to provide greater quality and integrity.

Is the public protected from harm caused by foresters by means other than regulation? (For example, criminal penalties, consumer protection laws, national organizations, employment relationships, small claims court, civil litigation, etc.)

I have been a witness in several court cases, where the laws of the state of Vermont were violated. It was apparent that the primary reason that my testimony was considered credible was that I was licensed in New Hampshire and Massachusetts. It was embarrassing and absurd to not have similar accreditation from my own state of Vermont.

There are two organization which provide certification to Vermont foresters—Vermont Woodlands Association, and Society of American Foresters, but these are **voluntary certifications**. Unfortunately, most landowners are not even aware that these organizations exist. Therefore, there is no reason to learn whether the forester has such certification.

Failure to use best forestry practices is difficult to prove in court, unless the circumstances are extreme. Even County Foresters have a difficult time expelling landowners from the Use Value Appraisal (Land Use) program because they have to provide in-depth and hard to come by statistics for the case to hold up in court. It is much more effective to prevent problems before they happen, and this is most likely when woodland management is overseen by properly trained and up-to-date foresters. Licensing and holding foresters accountable is the best path to preserving and protecting Vermont’s extraordinary forest resources.

Have foresters caused harm to Vermonters or the environment? (Please give specific examples.)

The issue is not whether foresters have caused harm, but the fact that anyone in Vermont can call himself/herself a forester. Specifically, I have walked on thousands of acres where there has been no care for the forest. Vermont landowners would be much more likely to properly manage their properties if there was a universally accepted set of standards for the licensing of qualified professional foresters for them to turn to. They wouldn't purchase their land without a licensed attorney. They wouldn't depend upon a surveyor without a Vermont license. They would, likewise, be protected by having a choice of Vermont certified professional foresters. The following are just some of my clients whose lands, prior to my becoming their forester, have been mined (high-graded), leaving the unhealthiest trees to grow:

Brown Place LLC- Newfane, VT---The better quality oak had been harvested, leaving behind mostly poor quality trees and an erosion problem.

Albert and Nancy Cohen - Marlboro, VT- The better quality mixes of hardwoods species were harvested, leaving behind mostly poor quality trees..

Eben Chesebrough –Townshend, VT- A large portion of the sugar maple and other hardwoods was harvested, leaving behind mostly poor quality trees.

Margaret Comparetta - Westminster, VT-A large portion of the hardwoods was harvested, leaving behind mostly poor quality red maple and other species.

Trillium Land Trust - Halifax. VT- In the western portion of the stand, all quality trees were harvested, leaving behind mostly diseased ash trees.

Robert Grinold – Wilmington, VT- Many different types of species, including white pine, spruce, and fir, and a mix of hardwoods, was harvested, leaving behind mostly poor quality trees.

William Happy – Dover, VT- The high quality sugar maple overstory was removed, leaving behind mostly poor quality trees.

Hermitage LLC – Dover, VT- The high quality sugar maple was harvested, leaving behind a high proportion of diseased beech.

Deborah Brookes – Dummerston, VT- A diverse mix of quality trees of many species was harvested, leaving behind mostly poor quality trees.

Ron Minnes - Brattleboro, VT- A mix high quality hardwoods of was harvested, leaving behind mostly poor quality trees, which were then mined again...

Carol Blackwood - Rockingham, VT – A mix of quality hardwoods was harvested, leaving behind mostly poor quality trees.

Robert Labrie – Brookline, VT- A mix of hardwoods was harvested leaving behind poor quality trees, which was later harvested and the trees left were of even poorer quality.

Melvin Osborne – Halifax, VT- A mix of hardwoods was harvested, leaving behind mainly poor quality trees.

Ann and Eric Floriani – Readsboro, VT- A mix of species was harvested, leaving behind mostly poor quality trees.

William and Jean Graustein – Marlboro, VT- A mix of mostly high quality, mostly hardwood trees, was removed, leaving behind mainly diseased beech.

Thayer Tomlinson and Amit Sharma – **Guilford-VT**- A mix of mostly high quality hardwood trees was harvested, leaving behind mainly diseased beech.

Kathleen Angell and Dutch Leonard - Newfane, VT- A mix of mostly high quality trees hardwood trees was harvested, leaving behind mainly poor quality trees.