

BEYOND THE FENCE

VERMONT FARM BUREAU NEWSLETTER



OCTOBER 2023



Timber Industry Left with No Flood Recovery Options

By Laura Hardie

When Sam Lincoln, of Lincoln Farm Timber Harvesting in Randolph Center, started a routine logging job at the beginning of June, it was supposed to take three weeks. After nine weeks, he had completed three days of work, thanks to wet conditions and flooding.

"Loggers couldn't get to their jobs for anywhere from two days to two weeks because of washed-out roads," Lincoln said. "We've had many loggers who had extended routes to truck to the mills because of the roads washed out. The flood shut down many operations," Lincoln recalled.

Even if logging contractors could get to their jobs, many couldn't work anyway because of wet ground. Lincoln says they rely on suitable soil conditions to operate heavy equipment in the forest to avoid rutting, erosion, and damage to tree roots and the forest ecosystem. On average, loggers can operate equipment 160 to 180 days per year on the rich topsoil and steep slopes in Vermont's forests.

The standstill in production from June through August caused an 80 percent revenue reduction for Lincoln. It came after loggers like him were still recovering from a poor winter harvest combined with the impact of inflation and low pay for timber in the spring.

NEWSLETTER HIGHLIGHTS

Timber Industry & Flooding

Farm Bureau Staff Updates

Photo Contest Winners

4-H'ers at Eastern States Exposition

Ag Hall of Fame, Hay Resource & Risk Management Training

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2 - SEE TIMBER

Timber (continued from p.1)

"We need cold, frozen conditions to put our heavy equipment on the ground without making a negative impact. We had a winter where we had almost no periods of frozen conditions," Lincoln said. "Then, the global economy was starting to feel the effects of what I refer to as a COVID hangover, and building demand decreased very quickly."

This caused the price paid to loggers by mills to drop. Timber cut by loggers in Vermont for boards or dimensional lumber is often exported globally to sawmills, pulp, and paper mills.

"Unless it goes to a local sawmill making rough-cut lumber, it frequently goes out into the global market as a commodity. That means global and geopolitical events have a huge impact on our local businesses now because it's a globally traded commodity."

As loggers across the region, from Western New York to the coast of Maine, faced the double hit of low prices for their product and being unable to work due to wet ground, a shortage of timber occurred, but with no increase in the price loggers are paid.

"When there is a shortage, you would expect a big spike in price, but it has continued to decrease," Lincoln said. "We have seen three months of extreme shortage on the supply side, and yet prices have not responded, so even if someone can work, they are receiving lower prices for the product."

No Options

As farmers across Vermont recover from flooding, financial assistance is available from the state and federal government, non-profits, local funds, trade groups, and more, for various situations. Farmers may also have crop insurance, which they rely on to recoup some of their damages. Lincoln says that, so far, loggers, truckers, and foresters have no options.

"The forest products industry, particularly the logging and trucking capacity, has not been eligible for any funding because it has not been physical damages; it's been purely a revenue loss," Lincoln said.

To date, loggers or truckers cannot obtain insurance to cover their lost revenue either.

"Farmers have crop disaster payments...how do we include loggers, truckers, and forest products in something like that, who have historically not been included in disaster declarations?" Lincoln said.

The Vermont Dept. of Forests, Parks and Recreation

recently surveyed the forestry industry to quantify the financial impact of the wet season. The results will be available soon to help increase awareness of the industry's fragility and provide data to advocate for solutions.

"We are off in the woods, and the general public can't see the damage to our business because it's in our checkbook," Lincoln said. "It's clear the impact was severe to logging and trucking capacity."

Lincoln says he's been able to find work elsewhere, but it hasn't replaced his lost income.

"I parked my logging equipment, took my excavator that I normally use to build roads in the woods, and went to work for the town for five weeks. It was great some of us had that option, but I've talked to other loggers who didn't have that," Lincoln said.

Building Resilience

As ground conditions become less available for harvesting timber due to extreme weather, Lincoln says the forestry industry is coming together to figure out how to adapt.

"Our techniques may have to change – it's physics...we have to spread out the weight of the equipment – and maybe this means developing higher floatation equipment to protect forest ecosystems," Lincoln said.

There are also strategies to prevent erosion on a job site, including temporary strategically placed water bars made of soil and or poles, which intercept the water and divert it into stable vegetation beside logging trails.

Lincoln says in managed forests in the New York City watershed, loggers are reimbursed for much of the costs of measures like water bars, which may have to be installed more frequently.

"Let's say I budget to install water bars two times in the summer on a job. If I've done it ten times in a year like this, I am not reimbursed for that cost," Lincoln said. "You're the shock absorber between the weather, the fixed costs of the job, and the mill. So, this program would potentially reimburse loggers for those costs."

As he looks back on the past year, Lincoln says something has to change.

"There's a passion for doing good work in the woods, but people's confidence in their future has been shaken badly; some leaving the business are third or fourth-generation logging contractors – some are first-generation," Lincoln said, "and we're still not out of it yet."

From The Field: Staff Updates

By Eliza Schraver, Southern Field Rep.

As the days start to turn a bit cooler and we roll into Annual meeting time, all of the field staff, myself included, have been doing some reflection on the past year, and boy, it has been an awesome year. August marked one year for me as the Southern Field Representative, and it has been an incredible year, where I have been able to meet so many folks who are just as passionate about Vermont agriculture as I am.

Over the last couple of months, I have attended Addison County Field days, flood relief fundraisers, the Champlain Valley Agricultural Hall of Fame, helped create a Facebook photo contest for more social media engagement, and helped the Southern Counties create some really awesome resolutions.

I am so happy to see the growth of the Farm Bureaus in Rutland and Windham County over the last year. The ideas they have are really exciting. If you are reading this and wondering what the counties are doing, please reach out to me or the office to find out when your next county meeting is, and please come join us!

Now, to talk a little bit more in-depth about the events I've been to over the last couple of months. First, the Addison County Field days, where I was able to spend three days at the Farm Bureau booth. Those days were filled with talking to farmers, children, and anyone who would listen about Farm Bureau and Vermont agriculture; also a lot of mud. If you know, you know, HA!

Down in Windham County, I was invited to a wonderful evening at Lilac Ridge Farm for a fundraising event put on by NOFA to help farmers who were impacted by the recent flood. It was a lovely event filled with many wonderful folks who all enjoyed a beautiful evening in southern Vermont.

Thank you all for an incredible year, and I am excited for the year to come! Stay safe during this harvest season, and enjoy the beautiful fall colors!

Sincerely,
Eliza



Follow us on social media to stay up to date on all things Vermont Farm Bureau



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Vermont Farm Bureau photo contest entry by Jamie Hamilton

SAVE THE DATE

Farm Bureau Annual Meeting

NOVEMBER 3 & 4

Burke Mountain
East Burke, VT



Vermont Farm Bureau Photo Contest Winners

Thank you everyone who participated in our Facebook photo contest to help us update our website! It was wonderful looking through the over 200 pictures posted!

We would like to congratulate our winners:

- The Willoughby Gap Farmstead
- MacKenzie Young
- Karie Thompson Atherton
- Jennifer Forrest-Kennett
- Cheryl DeRue Irwin
- Stephanie Foster
- Marcy Guillette
- Shawn Gingue
- Hilary Paquet



HILARY PAQUET



CHERYL DERUE IRWIN



SHAWN GINGUE



MARCY GUILLETTE



STEPHANIE FOSTER



THE WILLOUGHBY GAP FARMSTAND



KARIE THOMPSON ATHERTON



MACKENZIE YOUNG



MACKENZIE YOUNG



JENNIFER FORREST-KENNETT

From the Field: Staff Updates & Member Survey

By Kate Rowley, Northern Field Representative

These past few months have been busy, as I am sure you all can relate! From trying to make hay while the sun shines to attending local county field days and fairs, chatting with familiar faces and making new connections, to helping organize local county Farm Bureau meetings, it surely was a busy end to my summer.

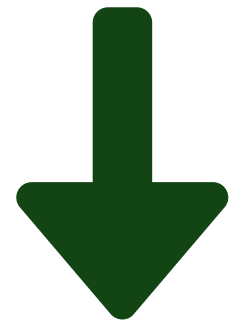
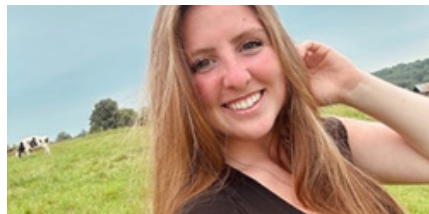
In addition, I have also been working on a member survey. You can take the survey at tinyurl.com/vtfarmsurvey. The idea of a member-based survey popped into my head while at the Nationwide Insurance BEST Training a few months ago with fellow Farm Bureau staff.

As we sat together, we began to discuss our goals as an organization. One of our biggest goals was to better serve and connect with our existing members, and in order to do both of those things, we need to hear your voice. We want to hear what we are doing well, and what we need to work on. We want to better serve you, and in turn, we want to better serve Vermont agriculture as a whole.

However, I am well aware that there needs to be a little bit of an incentive for you to want to take the time to complete a survey, and that is why I have been connecting with local agriculture-oriented businesses to gather items that could be included in the giveaway drawing for those that complete the survey! Who doesn't want the chance to win some free goods from your fellow farmers? These items include local maple and honey products, beef tallow skin care treatments, and even merchandise from your favorite local farmers. To thank these businesses, we will also do a little bit of free advertising in return, on our social media pages (with over 2,400 followers) as another way to connect our local farmers with more consumers.

If you or your farm would like to contribute to our giveaway (with shippable item(s)) as a way to get your farm products and name out there, please contact me for more information!

Best wishes,
Kate
katevtfb@gmavt.net



Take the survey:

tinyurl.com/vtfarmsurvey

Win farm products
and merchandise
from local farms!

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WRITTEN BY:
Shannon Anderson

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Vermont 4-H'ers Victorious at Regional 4-H Dairy Show



Vermont 4-H'ers proved that they are the champions when it comes to showing dairy animals, capturing five of the six fitting and showing championship titles and all but three of the 17 breed championships at the highly competitive 4-H dairy show at Eastern States Exposition in West Springfield, Massachusetts.

4-H dairy members from all six New England states competed in the regional dairy show, held September 16 and 17 in the Mallary Arena. Competitors included 25 from Vermont, who were selected to participate in this show, based on their performance at the State 4-H Dairy Show in August.

For the fitting and showing classes, rankings were determined by how well the 4-H'ers presented and handled their animals in the show ring. Due to the large number of exhibitors, several classes were held for juniors (ages 12 to 14) and seniors (ages 15 to 18). The top two finishers in each class then competed for grand and reserve championships in their age group.

Brailey Livingston, New Haven, was named both Senior Champion and Overall Champion. Natalie Michaud, Greensboro Bend, won Reserve Senior Champion and Reserve Overall Champion with Caroline Allen, Ferrisburgh, finishing as Reserve Junior Champion.

The 4-H'ers placed as follows in their respective fitting and showing classes:

Seniors: Group A: Natalie Michaud, Greensboro Bend (first); Madalyn Perry, East Montpelier (fifth); Morgan Michaud, East Hardwick (sixth). Peyton Ball, Vergennes (eighth). Group B: Brailey Livingston, New Haven (first); Isabella Wilbur, Orwell (seventh). Group C: Gabriel Michaud, East Hardwick (first); Liviya Russo, Lunenburg (second); Lorryn Trujillo, North Clarendon (third); Emma Deering, Middlebury (fourth); Michael Plouffe, Bridport (sixth)

Juniors: Group A: Caroline Allen, Ferrisburgh (first); Dawson Michaud, East Hardwick (second); Emmeline Paquet, East Montpelier (third); Collin Chamberlin, Addison (sixth); Talon Michaud, Greensboro Bend (seventh); Kylee Shepard, Panton (tenth). Group B: Taryn Burns, Whiting (first); Bella Roell, New Haven (fourth); Jayden Ploof, Panton (ninth); Natalie Hill, Greensboro (tenth). Group C: Steven Werner, East Hardwick (fifth); Christopher Brown, New Haven (sixth); Hailey Chase, Bristol (ninth); Samuel Luis, Whiting (eleventh)

In the conformation classes, the focus is on the appearance and body condition of the animal. These classes are arranged according to the breed and age of the animal. The first and second-place winners in each class competed for championships.

CONTINUED ON P. 7

4-H-ers continued from p. 6

Vermont 4-H'ers placed as follows:

AYRSHIRE: Junior Champion, Grand Champion and Supreme Heifer Champion: Bella Roell, New Haven.

- Winter calf: Bella Roell, New Haven (first)
- Fall calf: Collin Chamberlin, Addison (first)
- Winter yearling heifer: Liviya Russo, Lunenburg (first)

BROWN SWISS: Junior Champion and Grand Champion: Jayden Ploof, Panton

- Spring calf: Jayden Ploof, Panton (first)
- Winter calf: Michael Plouffe, Bridport (first)
- Spring Yearling heifer: Samuel Luis, Whiting (second)
- Fall calf: Taryn Burns, Whiting (first); Lorryn Trujillo, North Clarendon (second)

HOLSTEIN: Junior Champion: Madalyn Perry, East Montpelier; Reserve Junior Champion: Emma Deering, Middlebury; Honorable Mention Junior Champion: Talon Michaud, Greensboro Bend

- Spring calf: Talon Michaud, Greensboro Bend (first)
- Winter calf: Natalie Hill, Greensboro (first); Kylee Shepard, Panton (fourth)
- Fall calf: Madalyn Perry, East Montpelier (first); Emma Deering, Middlebury (second); Emmeline Paquet, East Montpelier (fourth); Dawson Michaud, East Hardwick (fifth); Morgan Michaud, East Hardwick (seventh); Christopher Brown, New Haven (ninth)
- Winter yearling heifer: Gabriel Michaud, East Hardwick (first); Steven Werner, East Hardwick (second)
- Fall yearling heifer: Natalie Michaud, Greensboro Bend (first)

JERSEY: Senior Champion and Grand Champion: Isabella Wilbur, Orwell; Reserve Senior Champion and Reserve Grand Champion: Peyton Ball, Vergennes; Junior Champion: Brailey Livingston, New Haven; Honorable Mention Junior Champion: Caroline Allen, Ferrisburgh

- Winter calf: Brailey Livingston, New Haven (first)
- Spring yearling heifer: Caroline Allen, Ferrisburgh (first)
- Fall yearling heifer: Hailey Chase, Bristol (first)
- Two-year-old cow: Isabella Wilbur, Orwell (first)
- Three-year-old cow: Peyton Ball, Vergennes (first)

Karen and Jeff Westcom, Enosburg Falls, served as the night barn people. Poulin Grain donated the grain for the Vermont 4-H herd.

To learn more about the 4-H dairy program in Vermont, contact Wendy Sorrell, UVM Extension 4-H livestock educator, at wendy.sorrell@uvm.edu or (802) 656-7641.



Vermont Farm Bureau photo contest entry by Hilary Paquet

2023 Champlain Valley Agricultural Hall of Fame

Congratulations to the Agricultural Hall of Fame inductees! Thank you for all you've done and continue to do for Vermont Agriculture.



Jake Guest of Fairlee for Lifetime Achievement award



Andy Birch of Derby for the Emerging Leader award



Richard Lawrence's wife, Nancy, accepted on his behalf for Lifetime Achievement



Jed Davis of South Burlington for the Ag Innovator award



Diane Bothfeld of Cabot for Lifetime Achievement Award



SAVE THE DATE

Farm Bureau Annual Meeting

NOVEMBER 3 & 4

**Burke Mountain
East Burke, VT**

Events and Resources

Find or Sell Hay Online with VAAFM Forum

This summer has been one that we will all remember for some time. If you find yourself in need of hay or find that you may have some hay to spare, please consider checking out the forum that the Vermont Agency of Agriculture Food and Markets has put together. This forum is for farmers who may find themselves in need of hay or may have some hay to sell to other farmers after this extremely soggy summer.

Visit: cloud.agriculture.vermont.gov/FeedFinder/FindHay.aspx



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