So, You’re Thinking of Starting a Forest Landowner Co-Op?
An Annotated Bibliography

National Community Forestry Center
Northern Forest Region
July, 2001
The National Community Forestry Center (NCFC) is a decentralized network with four regional centers and a national coordinator. The four regional centers are located in the Southwest, the Appalachians, the Pacific Northwest, and the Northeast. The Northern Forest Regional Center of the NCFC is administered by Yellow Wood Associates, Inc. of St. Albans, Vermont. The northern forest region, our primary area of service, comprises the states of Maine, New Hampshire, New York, and Vermont.

The core purpose of the Northern Forest Regional Center is to help rural people conduct and use research to inform decision-making about forest resources. Our goal is to add value to the work of communities, organizations, and institutions in our region who share a vision of healthy communities and healthy forests, now and for future generations.

The National Community Forestry Center is a program of the National Network of Forest Practitioners. Network members share an interest in rural community development based upon sustainable forestry, and, even more importantly, a conviction that

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**About the National Community Forestry Center**

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The purpose of this bibliography is to provide an overview of materials and resources readily available in the Northern Forest region for those interested in finding out more about how, why, and when cooperative action among forest landowners makes sense—ecologically, economically, and socially. As always, this publication comes with a disclaimer: We have not attempted to be comprehensive. We’ve simply taken a running start by listing the materials we have ready at hand.

We’ve focused upon resources available to residents of the Northern Forest (ME, VT, NY, NH), and provided contact information only for those who have expressed a willingness to assist others in their exploration. We’ve limited the scope to landowner cooperation/cooperatives as a tool, leaving out the burgeoning resources for exploring sustainable forest management and forest certification.

We’ve organized the listing by category of resource: publications, websites, and organizations. Within the listing under each category, we’ve tried to start with resources that will be most helpful if you’re just beginning to explore the potential of forest landowner cooperation and followed them up with sources to take you deeper into the process.

We hope that this document will motivate others to let us know about useful resources for those considering cooperation among forest landowners. We’ll update this bibliography continuously on our webpage, and issue reprints periodically.

These stories provide valuable insight into what it takes to break down the barriers along property lines. The case studies of five Vermont forest landowners who developed informal cooperative relationships with their neighbors are based upon the Neighborhood Wildlife Habitat Program initiated by Vermont Coverts: Woodlands for Wildlife, Inc. in 1997. Vermont Coverts Cooperators used a variety of approaches to initiate and nurture cooperation. During the project, landowners explored each other’s lands, established personal ties across boundaries, created neighborhood maps, and shared advice about foresters and logging contractors.


This article summarizes the approach taken by a group of foresters and landowners during the start-up phase of determining the feasibility of and then forming a cooperative. It includes a step-by-step chronology, a discussion of the research they conducted to determine landowner and market interest, and recommendations for others.
Across the Fences: A Primer on Community-Based Forestry Cooperatives. Draft October, 2000. 37 pps. Available for $10 from the National Network of Forest Practitioners, 305 South Main Street, Providence, Rhode Island 02903, 401-273-6508.

This publication provides useful background information about the history and community benefits of cooperatives. It includes a section discussing how to determine whether a forestry cooperative is a viable option for your group. It then moves to the issues that must be addressed in forming a forestry cooperative, provides estimates of start-up capital and returns depending upon coop services and sales, and offers helpful hints on growing the organization over time. It’s a good basic primer to guide initial exploration and decision-making.


This paper describes “various ways forest owners can work together, from relatively loose knit networks to organizations that act as a clearinghouse for most or all of a member’s purchases and/or sales.” It outlines three models for cooperative organization and provides case studies.

These principles are accompanied by quotes from the discussion that took place during an exploratory meeting on forestry cooperatives held with landowners in Ellsworth, ME. The quotes are at least as informative as the principles.


This article features Massachusetts Family Forests who recently split into a private, non-profit educational organization, Massachusetts Woodlands Institute, and a for-profit marketing and value-added wood processing cooperative, Massachusetts Woodlands Cooperative.


Once you’ve decided that a cooperative is the way to organize, this 160-page, spiral bound manual provides extensive information and documentation. Topics covered include: forest management, sustainable forestry
certification, non-timber forest products, preparing a business plan, cooperative structures and development, co-op governance, marketing, and developing member education programs. The guide draws upon the experiences of several established or newly forming sustainable forestry cooperatives. Appendices provide sample documents, a listing of sustainable forestry publications and websites, contact information for sustainable forestry cooperatives and associations, and a directory of resource people and organizations.

**Organizations**

One of the best places to start is with individuals and organizations who have actual experience in developing cooperation among forest landowners.

**Coverts**

Coverts is a program of the Ruffed Grouse Society in which private woodland owners, called Cooperators, convey a heightened sense of stewardship to other woodland owners by encouraging and helping them form clear land management objectives, develop long-range plans for their land, and enhance wildlife habitat across property boundaries. All four Northern Forest states have Coverts programs. In Maine, contact Catherine Elliot, University of ME, 5755 Nutting Hall - Room 234, Orono, ME 04469-5755, 207-581-2902; in New Hampshire, call Ellen Snyder, University of NH, 55 College Road - Pettee Hall, Durham, NH 03824-3599, 603-862-3594; in New York, contact Gary Goff, Cornell Dept. of Natural Resources, Fernow Hall, Ithaca, NY 14853, 607-255-2824; and in Vermont, call James B. Engle, P.O. Box 64, Peacham, VT 05862, 802-592-3533.
Massachusetts Woodlands Cooperative
(formerly MA Family Forests)

This effort began in the spring of 1999 with shared interest from state and extension foresters, forestry professors at University of Massachusetts, and a local community development corporation. The group’s initial research to determine the needs of both wood users and forest landowners, including survey instruments and results, is available upon request and highly recommended. Early on the technical experts enlisted the support of a core group of landowners and stepped back into the role of resource group. Currently the group consists of 20 landowners, consulting foresters, and resource group members representing more than 2,000 acres. They incorporated a non-profit educational institution (Massachusetts Woodlands Institute) and a for-profit marketing and value-added wood processing cooperative (Massachusetts Woodlands Cooperative) in June, 2001. Contact: Arthur Eve, 413-549-3973, aeve@mediaone.net, 100 Blackberry Lane, Amherst, MA 01002 or David Damery, Dept. of Natural Resources Conservation, University of Massachusetts, Holdsworth 120, Amherst, MA 01003, 413-545-1770, ddamery@forwild.umass.edu.

Residents’ Committee to Protect the Adirondacks

The Residents’ Committee to Protect the Adirondacks monitors water-quality, protects and acquires land, and supports rural community development. RCPA’s Sustainable Forestry Project is an informal association of landowners committed to excellence in silviculture and forest practice. The group is about to enter the forest management certification process. Once their certification is complete, they plan to increase the number of
landowners and landbase involved and develop strategies for group marketing of green certified forest products. Contact Ross Morgan, Box 27, North Creek, NY 12853, 518-251-4257, rcpa.ross@netheaven.com.

**Maine Low-Impact Forestry Project**

The Maine Low-Impact Forestry Project is a group of loggers, foresters, and woodlot owners interested in developing and promoting the methods and technologies of Low Impact forestry. The Maine Low Impact Forestry Project is also helping to connect land owners and practitioners of low impact forestry with emerging markets for sustainably harvested forest products. Contact MLIFP, 395 State Street, Ellsworth, ME 04605, 207-667-7131, hcpc@acadia.net.

**Vermont Family Forests**

Vermont Family Forests is a non-profit forestry education and outreach program initiated and supported by the Addison County Forester of the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation; the Lewis Creek Association; the Otter Creek Audubon Society; and the Watershed Center. Its mission is to conserve the health of the forest community and, when appropriate, to promote the careful cultivation of local family forests for community benefit. VFF sponsors workshops on a variety of forest-related topics. In addition, the organization is certified by SmartWood and is working to develop a market-directed business plan for products of participants. Contact: David Brynn, Addison County Forester, 1590 Route 7 South, Middlebury, VT 05753, 802-388-4969 or Len Schmidt, 802-453-4787, woodwork@together.net.
U.S. Department of Agriculture, Rural Business/Cooperative Development Service

The Service provides technical assistance, maintains statistics, facilitates research, and circulates information about cooperatives. Most states have a cooperative development specialist in residence:

**Maine**
Milton Ross, Jr., USDA Rural Development, 99 Fort Fairfield Road, Presque Isle, ME 04769, 207-764-4155, milton.ross@me.usda.gov
Alden Turner, USDA Rural Development, P.O. Box 1938, Lewiston, ME 04241, 207-753-9400, alden.turner@me.usda.gov;
Ronald Lambert, USDA Rural Development, 28 Gilman Plaza Suite 3, Bangor, ME 04401, 207-990-3676, ronald.lambert@me.usda.gov.

**VT & NH**
Scott Johnson, USDA Rural Development, 10 Ferry Street, Suite 218, Box 317, Concord, NH 03301, 603-223-6045, scott.johnson@nh.usda.gov;
Michael Dolce, USDA Rural Development, 170 South Main Street, Rutland, VT 05701, 802-775-7014 ext. 20, michael.dolce@vt.usda.gov;
David Robinson, USDA Rural Development, City Center 3rd Floor, 89 Main Street, Montpelier, VT 05602, 802-88-6031, david.robinson@vt.usda.gov.

**NY**

Cooperative Development Institute

The Institute offers a full range of technical assistance on a fee-for-service basis to groups wishing to investigate cooperative options. Staff members are familiar with forest landowner cooperative development. Contact Elizabeth Hearn, 277 Federal Street, Greenfield, MA 01304, 413-774-7599, email: info@coöplife.com.
WEBSITES

www.forestrycenter.org. The Community Forestry Resource Center website is a rich source of conference and workshop proceedings, case studies, sample documents, newsletters, and contact information for those who have formed or are in the process of forming coops.

www.familyforests.org. Vermont Family Forests has a new site that provides useful information for anyone contemplating landowner cooperation. You can learn the history of the organization and its operating principles, consider ecological and economic issues, and download documents including a forest management plan template, a timber sale harvesting plan, a timber management checklist, and a landowners memorandum of agreement.

www.acadia.net/hcpc/home.html. The Maine Low Impact Forestry Project has an interesting collection of materials on topics ranging from markets to paying loggers to certification. Some of this material will soon be published as a book with a section on landowner cooperative associations.

www.wisc.edu/uwcc/. The University of Wisconsin Center for Cooperatives develops, promotes, and coordinates educational programs, technical assistance, and research on the cooperative form of business. Their website provides information about cooperative development, governance, history, events, and links to all types of coops throughout the world.

www.sustainablewoods.com. The Sustainable Woods Cooperative, based in Lone Rock Wisconsin, is “the first business of its kind in the nation combining certified sustainable forest management by its members and certified chain of custody sales of wood products from members.”