



Business / Corporate Responsibility

Sweet! Students build a sugar house from wood they sourced responsibly



Sustainable Forestry Initiative
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When students are given the opportunity to work alongside professionals in their field and perform a community service, the rewards can be great. We could all learn a lot from the students in the Forestry Natural Resources Program at Stafford Technical Center in Rutland, Vermont. For a two-semester class project, they worked toward building a sugar house (and more!) from studying forest health to sourcing the timber, learning forestry skills and creating the structure. A sugar house, primarily found in Eastern Canada and northern New England, is a small building where maple sap is boiled to make maple syrup.

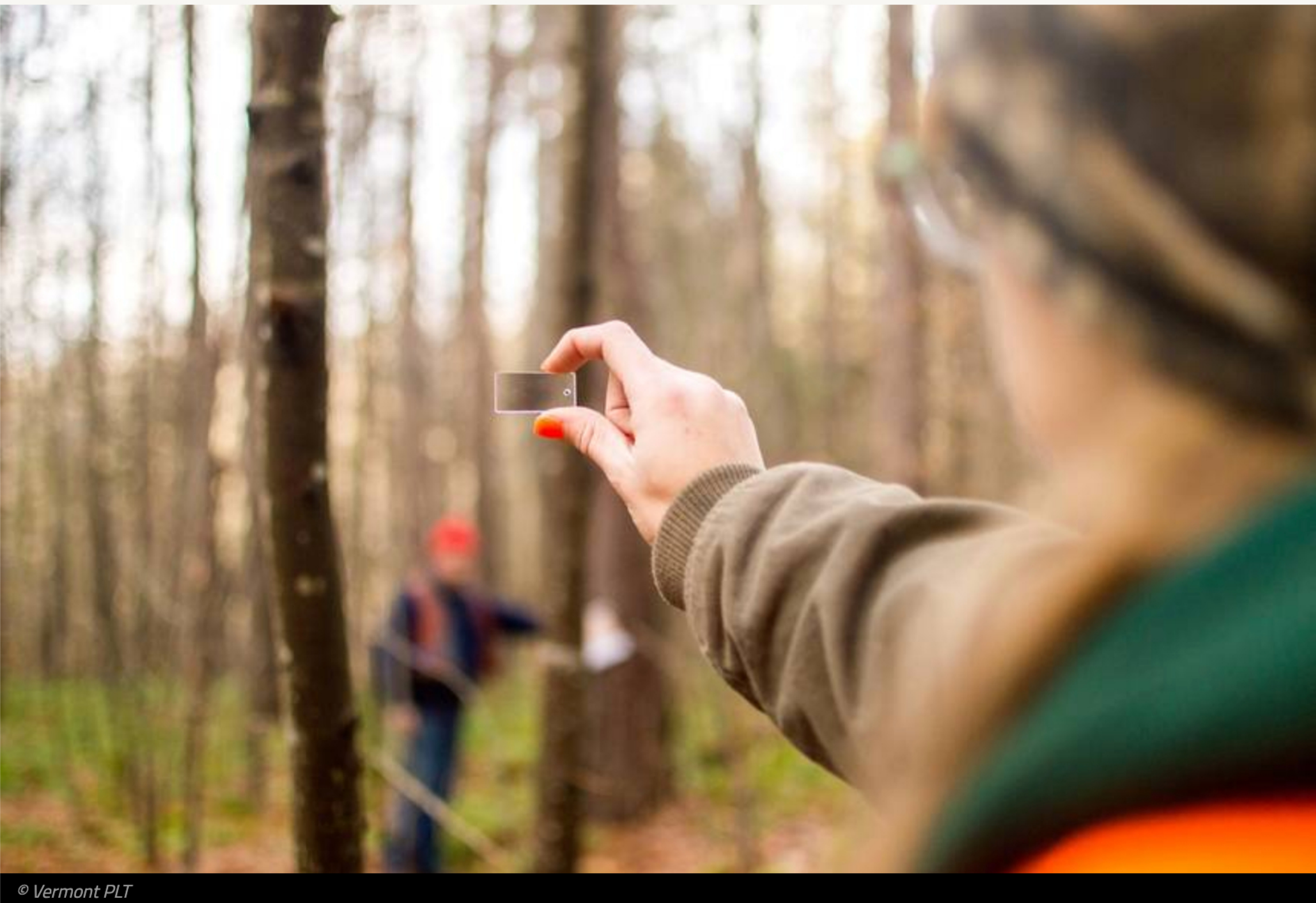


The sugar house will provide a hands-on workspace for Stafford students, as well as local high school students, to learn about the cultural, scientific, economic, and ecological aspects of maple syrup production in Vermont.

The Rutland City Forester and Arborist helped the students identify a declining plantation stand of red pine in the Rutland City Forest in Mendon, Vermont. Threats from insect infestation and the need to improve songbird habitat helped guide the forest management decision to perform a prescribed patch cut and liquidate the timber.

Students learned to estimate volume and stand area, completed logger safety training, and performed a small-scale timber harvest. They then sold most of the logs to Northeast Timber Exchange, where they also learned about concentration yards. They milled the remainder of the logs for the sugar house at their school. Enough logs were left over for an outdoor classroom at a local elementary school and a lean-to for hunter safety education at the nearby Kehoe Conservation camp for children. Students will complete the building of all three structures in the fall of 2018. The work of the students and their Forestry Natural Resources Program instructor, Mark Raishart, has already been honored with the Outstanding Use of Wood Award from the Vermont Forest Products Association.

According to Raishart, “The program relies heavily on organizational relationships within our community to provide engaging opportunities for our students...While some of our projects generate income for the program, we prioritize projects that benefit the general public. This provides students with opportunities to work with professionals in the field to perform community service, and it provides a positive public representation of the program and Stafford Technical Center.”



The sugar house project was funded by Project Learning Tree (PLT) Vermont. PLT became a program of the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) in 2017 to expand its reach in connecting youth to the outdoors, forests, and green jobs.

SFI is an independent, non-profit organization that works at the intersection of sustainable forestry, thriving communities, and responsible procurement. Among many initiatives, SFI supports education and community engagement to connect children to the natural world and inspire them to pursue careers in forestry and natural resource management.

To learn more about SFI, Project Learning Tree, and the power of youth working with forests, visit sfiprogram.org.



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