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A Community Guide to Starting & Running a Wood Bank

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A COMMUNITY GUIDE TO STARTING & RUNNING A WOOD BANK



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FINAL VERSION – March 2015

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Cover Photos: Lamoille Wood Bank and Google Images.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed, citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.” – Margaret Mead

The creation of this community guide would not have been possible without the help of many people. To all the wood bank coordinators contacted, interviewees, editors, coworkers, and friends who have lent their time, shared their knowledge, and shown their support for the duration of our wood bank research thus far: thank you!

It is with great hope that this document will generate awareness and action. May many more Maine communities establish wood banks where appropriate and continually enhance this concept to support our fellow neighbors, our communities, and the environment.

INTRODUCTION

Maine is known for its picturesque summers, but for residents the winters are infamous. The ice storm of 1998 still manages to arise in conversations with the development of a Nor'easter. Storms like that of '98 are becoming increasingly frequent as climate patterns change. Somber winter forecasts pressure citizens to prepare for home heating needs every year, which is a substantial concern being that the winter season is the longest of all. Maine continues to linger in an economic recession. With some of the Nation's highest electricity prices, coupled with grueling winters and economic hardship, citizens need an additional home heating support system when funds and fuel run short.



Figure 1. Cumberland Wood Bank firewood donations

Wood banks have the potential to be a significant support system that citizens can rely on. The purpose of this document is to introduce the concept of wood banks to communities across Maine. The information presented may be used as a guide for establishing a wood bank in any community. This community guide is not a document that provides step-by-step instructions for establishing a wood bank, because each wood bank should be set-up and

operated according to the local situation. This document, rather, contains critical information organizers should consider as they design a wood bank that responds to their local community need.

BACKGROUND

DEFINITION AND LOCATION

Imagine your local food pantry. Replace the food with firewood and you have programs known as wood banks. Like a food pantry, wood banks are programs that aim to help community members with life essentials by supplying firewood at little to no cost to those in need that rely on firewood as a heating source. As straightforward and tangible as these centers sound, as of 2014 only about a dozen wood banks are clearly recognized across the states of Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont, with only a handful consistently active in Maine. There may be many more wood banks that exist but are not advertised or labeled as a wood bank.

MISSION

Wood banks are established to aid and benefit communities. First and foremost, wood banks alleviate the home heating pressure households face during winter months. According to US Census data estimates (2009-2013), almost 14 percent of Maine people live below the poverty line. Many more low- to moderate-income people struggle to make ends meet. Citizens may be faced with an "eat or heat" dilemma. Maine is one of the oldest states in terms of

demographics, and also one of the most forested states in the country. Perhaps not so coincidentally, the 2010 Census data ranks Maine as the state with the second highest per capita use of wood as a primary heating source. Wood banks play to these state characteristics by supporting low-income households while also using local renewable resources.

Not only are households in need supported in a material sense via firewood, but the community at large benefits through community camaraderie. All of the wood banks that have been located and interviewed in northern New England have been run entirely by volunteers. All coordinators stated that wood banks bring community members together.

An indirect benefit of a wood bank is that these systems are supplying households with a renewable form of home heating. Rather than supplying hydrocarbon sources such as oil or gas, households are receiving fuel that can be regenerated sustainably, and comes from our very own state.



Figure 2. Northern New England wood bank and University of Maine representatives at the 1st Annual Northern New England Wood Bank Summit

WOOD BANK BASICS

The follow sections break down the wood bank concept to address their main components. Wood banks are dynamic, meeting the needs of communities. As grassroots programs, wood banks should be tailored to meet the local context. Therefore, each aspect is addressed and discussed broadly, allowing for creative interpretation and innovation.

TIMING

The first aspect of a wood bank is how it is run, most importantly the timing. Wood banks can be organized in a number of ways, cycling through relatively the same process every year. For that reason, the timing of how a wood bank is run will herein be called a system. Initial development requires that a wood bank founder decide the type of support the center is to provide, or the system it will follow. Typically, wood banks are run as one of two systems. They are usually either run for the purpose of being continually accessible by the public or as a seasonal supplement consisting of a single allotment of firewood at the beginning of the winter. These will be referred to as open access and single allotment wood banks.

Regardless of the system, all wood banks have been considered a form of emergency support. They supplement fuel costs, but do not fully support households' full heating needs.

Open Access Wood Banks

Some wood banks are established to support households that have found

themselves in an unexpected and temporary situation without a heating source. For example, a family may have run out of oil and need to heat with wood for a few days until purchasing more oil. Other examples are a sudden power outage or late cord delivery. These circumstances are those that can be addressed with a small amount of firewood and last for only a day or two.

Open access wood banks generally consist of at least a single publically accessible storage container where firewood is located. Those in need simply visit the container and take a small ration or pre-portioned bundle. A second, secured storage container may be used to hold back stock firewood that is used to replenish the public container.

Open access wood banks rely on the honor code. These systems may help those in need in the most crucial circumstances but they are also subject to system abuse. Supplies may be taken advantage of or secured storage containers may be broken into. Security is addressed in the “Security” section of this guide on page 13.

Single Allotment Wood Banks

The purpose of wood banks that supply a specific amount of cord wood for a single allotment is to act as a supplementary heating source for those that find themselves in constant need. These systems are more complex than open access systems, generally requiring more wood donations, a larger volunteer base, more equipment, and detailed organization and planning for a suit of

other logistics that need to be addressed.

Unlike open access systems, firewood recipients usually have to pass through an application or interview process to reduce the likelihood of dramatic system abuse and ensure that firewood is not over allocated. Application processes and qualifications in systems such as this are discussed in the “Recipient Qualification” section on page 11. After the application process, recipients sometimes volunteer in various ways to help process firewood for the season to give back to the wood bank. The firewood is given to recipients on specific days or during a given time period.

In some cases, there may be back stock supply for those who run out and need a little extra firewood to make it through another portion of winter. Back stock is discussed in the “Processing” section on page 9.

LOCATION

Wood banks may be located anywhere. They can be found at churches, at transfer stations, on private land, and other places. Choosing a location requires considering a number of factors. The size of the wood bank, security, and accessibility are the primary considerations. Larger wood banks will need more space and greater security. Volunteers and recipients will need access to the wood bank so locating it in a place already maintained in the winter months is ideal. Otherwise, planning for accessibility will be required.

VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers run all of the northern New England wood banks. These volunteers are in charge of every aspect of the programs. The head volunteer, or coordinator, is usually the citizen that initiated the development of the wood bank and is typically an incredibly passionate and committed community member. Responsibilities of the coordinator include those revolving around the finances, management, and organization of the program. Other volunteers may hold specific positions that include maintenance, processing, distribution, and volunteer organization. How the work is spread among volunteers depends on how many there are and their level of commitment.

For open access systems fewer volunteers are needed in comparison to single allotment systems. In both cases returning and temporary volunteers play vital roles. Wood banks require routine attention, such as checking on supplies, maintaining any facilities or equipment, and assisting with other duties. A group of returning volunteers that can be called upon or agree to work weekly can address these more constant needs. Temporary volunteers are essential for assisting with daily, weekly, or seasonal tasks as they arise.

Volunteers are particularly important for those centers that lack equipment. Volunteers are needed to cut, stack, and distribute or replenish firewood. Their contributions keep the centers running. Volunteers are recruited through many avenues that include word of mouth, newspapers, flyers,

emails, social media pages, radio, and other various media outlets. The more methods used to reach out to people, the greater chances for community involvement.

Volunteers should always be appreciated and recognized for their hard work. At established wood banks volunteers are supplied with food and beverages when possible, and are always accommodated on the large annual workdays. Annual banquets or other forms of gatherings can also be organized so that volunteers receive formal recognition. These gatherings also allow donors, community members, and volunteers to get to know one another and develop an enhanced sense of community.



Figure 3. Cumberland Wood Bank Annual "Bankquet"

FIREWOOD SOURCES

It is likely that towns or local schools have organized a food drive to support a local food pantry. Like a food pantry, wood banks are in constant need supplies, but in this case it is firewood. However, establishing a supply of firewood is much more challenging than that of food.

Maine is the most forested state in the nation, with 94 percent of forested land being privately owned. Firewood donations are usually received from individuals who are managing their property. This could be rural small woodland owners, or even urban homeowners who remove a street tree. They give a portion of their harvest to the wood bank. The availability of future donations by private landowners has the potential to be quite significant, particularly because, as of 2014, there are only a handful of active wood banks in the state. Furthermore, as a fairly new concept, communities and landowners may have yet to hear about wood banks. More private donations could result from increased public awareness.



Figure 4. Lamoille Wood Bank log delivery

In Vermont, the State Forests, Parks & Recreation Department donates a percentage of timber harvested from state lands to a select number of wood banks across the state. The department also reimburses the wood banks for some of their expenses. Maine currently does not have a relationship such as this; however,

one could be developed. This partnership and others are discussed in the “Partnership” section on page 13.

Firewood businesses are a potential source of additional donations. Maine ranks second in the nation for per capita use of wood as a primary heating source. Many people purchase wood from local businesses that harvest timber or bring their own timber to a business for processing. Citizens also purchase additional appliances and materials for running their woodstoves at specialized stores. A wood bank donation option at these businesses could work well. A donation container, a percentage of sales, or a “round up” change program are all options.

PROCESSING

Establishing a supply of firewood is one of the initial hurdles of starting a wood bank. The next challenge is getting the wood ready for distribution. How firewood is processed will depend on the system and the availability of equipment and volunteers.

Open access wood banks usually receive firewood already processed. When it is not, community members may be recruited to help process the firewood. They may be asked to split, stack, or bundle the firewood or fill the public container when necessary. These tasks can be done at almost any site at any time. A splitter usually isn’t needed. Axes and twine may be donated by local businesses, volunteers, or the wood bank organizer. These tasks are of minor scale when compared to the

processing methods of single allotment wood bank. With these types of centers it is even possible for a single person to run it entirely.

For single allotment wood banks, processing is much more complex. There may be weekly needs related to supply or maintenance requiring attention. An established group of weekly volunteers may be recruited to attend to those needs should they arise. Given the nature of larger allotment programs, they often process most, if not all, of their firewood during one intensive volunteer day in the fall or over the course of particular days. Community members and firewood recipients come together to chop, split, partition, and stack the firewood for the season. These tasks are delegated to groups of volunteers. Food and drink are provided for the day, and after the wood is processed it gets distributed that evening or within a given time period at the beginning of winter.

In some cases, wood banks that have more than enough firewood to meet community needs start a rotation process that involves drying some of the firewood for a period of time. The dried firewood will be given out for a future winter season. When the rotation is in full swing the firewood supplied each winter is from a previous year's donations. Starting a drying cycle is suggested if there is enough firewood to do so. Drying the firewood increases burning efficiency and makes the most of the supply.

Back stock for both systems is a necessity. For open access wood banks, back stock is needed to replenish the public container. The frequency of which it has to be

replenished will vary depending on community need, meaning that donations have to be continuously sought after so that high demand does not leave the container empty. In single allotment wood banks, back stock should be considered in the chance that crisis situations arise and result in the failure of the single allotment to meet the needs of a household. Setting aside a portion of the year's donations creates a back stock supply.

Back stock also ensures that the wood bank can continue to function when there is a lack of donations during the next year. Like initial firewood allocation, how this back stock is allotted varies by the wood bank. This subject is discussed in the "Recipient Qualification" section on page 11.



Figure 5. Volunteer day for Lamoille Wood Bank

DISTRIBUTION

Distribution can be a challenging part of running a wood bank. If the center is open access then distribution is straightforward. Those in need pick up the firewood on their own or have a designee, such as someone from the local church, pick it up and deliver it.

For single allocation systems recipients can be required to pick up their allotment or it can be delivered to them. Wood banks that deliver the allotments usually do so on one day or over the course of selected weekends. In such a case a group of volunteers come together to distribute the firewood. While delivering allotments help the households who do not have a way of picking up their allotment themselves, delivering firewood requires an ample supply of equipment and volunteers to make the distribution process efficient. Most recipients of wood banks are either elderly or disabled, so having volunteers to stack the wood once delivered is an important consideration.



Figure 6. Log movement for the Cumberland Wood Bank

Large vehicles that can carry the firewood are needed to physically move the allotments. There should be a legal driver for every vehicle. Along with the actual physical movement of the wood, fueling the vehicles as well

as feeding and safely insuring the volunteers should be considered.

EQUIPMENT

The physical method by which the firewood is processed depends on the equipment and materials on hand. For breaking down cords into usable sizes, axes or wood splitters may be used. Pallets, crates, netting, and caging or a combination of those can be used to partition the wood and help it dry. Heavy-duty machinery or wheel and pulley systems can be used to move the portions. Finally, heavy-duty vehicles can distribute the portions to the recipients or they can be responsible for picking them up from the processing location.



Figure 7. Lamoille Wood Bank wood splitter

Wood banks rely on attaining equipment through donations, fundraising, grants, or other methods.

RECIPIENT QUALIFICATION

Open access wood banks have no specific recipient requirements. The public holding container is simply visited when community members find themselves in need and is kept stocked by the coordinator or a volunteer.

On the other end of the spectrum, single allotment wood banks generally have some form of an application, voucher, or interview process. These processes could range from an extensive form requiring documents to an informal meet-and-greet between the coordinator and recipient. This is not always the case though as some systems believe that those who ask for help probably need it and are willing to help them with no questions asked.

Wood bank coordinators tend to implement a qualification processes to ensure that those receiving wood for the season have good intentions or meet a determined threshold of need. This reduces the likelihood of over-allocation and system abuse. In some cases, poverty income levels have been used or other standards through programs such as that of the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, or LIHEAP.

Wood banks run by social service agencies will sometimes include lifestyle factors in application processes as a way to see where households can be assisted to cut back on consumptive or unhealthy choices that may be contributing to their state of need. Materials and referrals to assist with reducing or changing those lifestyles have been provided to recipients at no cost. For example, a smoking household might be referred to a nicotine helpline or support group.

If a wood bank has back stock for emergency purposes, how that back stock is allocated will also need to be addressed. Allocation of this supply is usually left up to the discretion of the coordinator after some form of a

meeting with the community member to assess their need. A second application or other process may be an applicable alternative.

ALLOTMENT SIZE

How much firewood a recipient receives varies greatly among existing wood banks. Open access wood banks usually have pre-bundled firewood in an amount that would fill a wood stove a few times. Single allotment wood banks have a greater challenge when it comes to this decision. Allotment size generally ranges from 1-4 cords. Truckloads and cords are two measurements used by these systems to gauge distribution. This question really comes down to how much firewood the wood bank has to give out, how much support the wood bank aims to give to each recipient, or how many recipients the wood bank seeks to help.



Figure 8. Cumberland Wood Bank allotment method and size

LEGALITIES & LIABILITY

Running a wood bank does possess some dangers. There is substantial room for injuries, both direct and indirect. Insuring volunteers and

firewood recipients is a significant concern. Programs often do not have insurance policies that cover their volunteers or firewood recipients because of the cost. Waivers or consent forms and written notices for volunteers are used to release liability for injuries and accidents. A professional should write these documents. Wood banks should consult with legal counsel to address liability issues.

Direct Concerns

Volunteer and maintenance work for wood banks is physically demanding and sometimes requires the use of dangerous equipment such as axes, chainsaws, wood splitters, and heavy-duty vehicles. Operators of such tools may injure themselves, someone else, or cause other accidents. Wood bank leaders have to be prepared to address these possibilities with methods such as insurance, waiver forms, or notices.

Indirect Concerns

There are several potential problems that are not obvious points of concern, but hold considerable weight. Households heating with wood could be subject to house fires. Programs do not necessarily know the conditions of the households that are receiving firewood. Wood stoves and chimneys that have not been maintained adequately are hazardous. Smoke detectors may be defective or nonexistent. Additional measures should be taken to relieve centers from such liability, such as waivers and consent forms for recipients. Wood banks may wish to support home safety by providing smoke detectors, supplying batteries, or

arranging chimney inspections by qualified inspectors.



Figure 9. Grapevine Wood Bank volunteers using equipment

SECURITY

No matter the size or location of a wood bank, there will always be security concerns. For open access and single allotment wood banks, occasional police patrols, cameras, notices, and physical barriers such as gates, locks, and chains can all help prohibit system abuse. Above all the public containers at emergency systems are subject to the greatest abuse.

PARTNERSHIPS

Other than donation partnerships, few, if any, wood banks have partnered with local or state governments or business to provide access to appliances or trainings that might be beneficial for the center, recipients, or volunteers.

Wood stove, chimney, and fire detector inspections could be provided at little or no cost to recipients if such a program was established with the local fire department. Business partnerships could develop into deals where

recipients receive discounts or particular financing options for replacing their wood stove, chimney, or other appliances and equipment related to burning firewood. Similar opportunities could be provided through established government relationships, either directly through program development or indirectly through funding.

LONGEVITY

Successfully established wood banks can remain active for many years. The Cumberland, Maine Wood Bank has been active for almost a decade. However, once the initial hurdles are surpassed it then becomes a challenge to keep the program running.

Leadership is key for the success of a wood bank. A passionate and dedicated leader is needed to make sure the program continues to exist. Volunteers are essential but recruiting them is much easier than finding someone who is willing to lead the center and push it to develop and grow. Planning for leadership succession is one of the biggest hurdles for wood banks to overcome

Continuous networking is needed to keep the systems cycle in sync. Reaching out to new stakeholders and developing new relationships and partnerships is vital for the center to grow and accommodate any new or increasing needs. Traditional and social media should be taken advantage of as a way to get the word out about the mission and opportunities that exist for both recipients and volunteers.

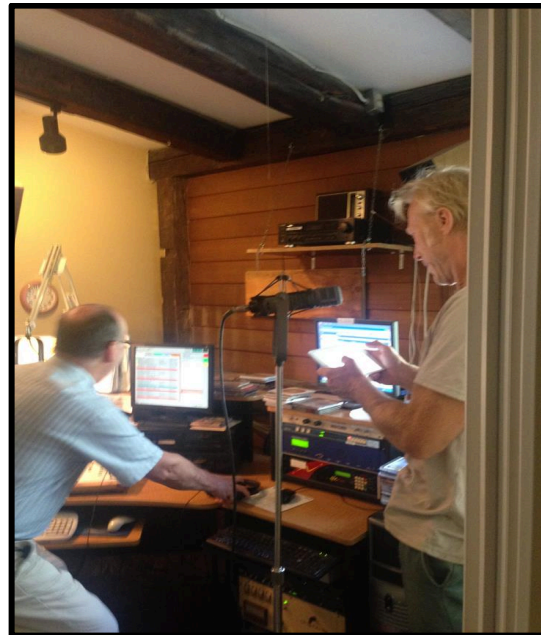


Figure 10. Lamoille Wood Bank making a broadcast

WOOD BANK PROFILES

The following section provides brief profiles of various wood banks across northern New England. This is not a complete list of all the wood bank centers that exist. As dynamic systems these centers may change their processes, location, or contact information over time; therefore, these examples are only accurate to this document's publication date.

Each wood bank profiled is unique in its own way and are excellent examples of the variability among wood banks. These profiles are intended to demonstrate the flexibility of how a wood bank can be run and to encourage folks to establish one in their own community in a way that is tailored to meet their community needs.

MAINE

Boothbay Woodchucks

Contact Information:

Henry Rowe
(207) 663.6527
hcrowe@zwi.net

The Boothbay Woodchucks is a volunteer firewood program located in Boothbay, Maine. It is a full service program that sources, chops, and distributes firewood on an as-needed basis. The program is run by a chief coordinator and consists of a handful of returning volunteers, all of whom are elderly adults.

Wood is received both processed and unprocessed. Property owners with trees or wood to donate but who cannot process or move them contact the Woodchucks to have volunteers travel and pick up the donation. It is brought back to their workstation, which is a small lot of land leased through the local public works department. The wood is processed using volunteers' equipment and stored in a container that can hold about 10 cords, with extra being stored openly outside.

Those in need of firewood fill out a simple application requesting a specific number of truckloads of firewood. The coordinator goes through the applications selecting recipients. Those selected get their requests delivered to them.

The program runs on the honor code, as there are no security measures at their workstation. Volunteers acknowledge the risks of participating

in the program and also sign a liability contract with Public Works.

Cumberland, Maine Wood Bank

Contact Information:

Bruce Wildes
(207) 370.8210
brucewildes@gmail.com

The Cumberland, Maine Wood Bank is located in Cumberland, Maine. This wood bank is run through the Cumberland Congregational Church. The center is unique in that it utilizes firewood donations to assist households with heating needs in multiple ways. Firewood is both given directly to recipients who heat with firewood as well as sold to raise funds for those in need who heat with other resources.

The center consists of a coordinator who receives help from a sizeable amount of volunteers. Some volunteers work on weekly tasks and upkeep and while others volunteer for particular events. Community members donate all firewood. The firewood is either brought to the center or it is picked up by volunteers. There is one day during the fall when volunteers gather to split and portion the year's donations. Equipment is brought by volunteers but also sought after through grant requests. Volunteers deliver the wood to the recipients using volunteers' vehicles.

Direct firewood recipients are chosen after an initial appointment and discussion with the coordinator regarding the household's level of need. Every winter, donors and

volunteers are recognized and thanked at a free “Bankquet” where a meal is provided and speakers give presentations.

Vets Helping Vets

Contact Information:
Rob Pfeifer
(207) 763.4405

Vets Helping Vets is a support group for Maine veterans located in Camden, Maine. This is a group of veterans of all generations in the mid-coast region who come together to offer programs and services to other veterans in the area. The group runs a wood bank program that offers a range of firewood services, including tree removal and firewood movement, splitting, stacking, or donation.

The wood bank program consists of a coordinator and around a dozen other volunteers. Veterans in need of a firewood service contact the coordinator who fulfills the request with some of the other members. Those requesting a donation receive a particular number of truckloads. All of the equipment used for the services belongs to the volunteers. Services are provided on an as-needed basis.

The wood bank receives donations from community members as well as from a regional prison and lumber mill. The prison and lumber mill have an agreement with the wood bank to supply a storing location at both facilities. The majority of the program’s firewood is kept at those two locations, which have security measures in place. When necessary,

the firewood may be kept on a volunteer’s property.

Most wood comes unprocessed, so when the firewood needs processing the group holds several volunteer workdays. The prison has also agreed to process a certain amount of wood. There are no liability measures in place.

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Community Wood Bank

Contact Information:
Town of Warner
(603) 456.2298
selectboard@warner.nh.us

The Warner Town Energy Committee in New Hampshire has a subcommittee that coordinates the Community Wood Bank to address community firewood needs. The wood bank receives help from a few additional committed volunteers.

Firewood donations are received from individuals and the town through town land logging contracts. The wood gets split and stacked on one annual workday that roughly ten volunteers participate in using volunteers’ equipment. All of the firewood is kept gated and locked in a shed on land provided by the town at the local transfer station.

Anyone who wishes to request a firewood allotment contacts the town office that then notifies the coordinators. There is no application or documentation requirement to receive firewood. About one truckload

is donated to the recipients and is even delivered if the firewood cannot be picked up. There are no liability insurances but volunteers are verbally notified of the dangers associated with the wood bank.

The Grapevine Community Wood Bank

Contact Information
Kristen Vance
(603) 588.2620
thegrapevine@mcttelecom.com

The Grapevine Family & Community Resource Center of Antrim, New Hampshire supports its fellow citizens by providing various services and programs, including access to a wood bank. The Grapevine runs a wood bank that supports several dozen households by providing a limited amount of firewood to those who request it.

Firewood donations are made by community members and are kept in a secured shed located on Resource Center grounds. Volunteers are recruited to cut, split, and stack firewood over the course of several designated workdays during fall weekends.

Requests for firewood are made at The Grapevine and a simple set of questions are asked by the coordinator before citizens receive an allotment. The allotment is generally capped at a particular number of visits to the wood bank, each visit amounting to roughly a truck bed full of firewood. However, if needed households may be allowed to get more.

The center helps households secure long-term heating solutions by connecting them with fuel assistance programs, town welfare, and other resources. Additionally, The Grapevine has consulted with both local and out-of-state organizations about developing and running a wood bank, resulting so far in four more wood banks in southern New Hampshire and one in Massachusetts.

VERMONT

Lamoille County Wood Bank

Contact Information:
Dawn Archbold
(802) 888.3252
unitedway@pshift.com

The Lamoille County Wood Bank is located in Morrisville, Vermont. This center is a program that is run through United Way of Lamoille County. It is one of the largest of the New England wood banks and has developed into a major support system for community members.

A coordinator handles administrative and management needs. A designated volunteer is responsible for rallying workers to help with upkeep and labor needs, as well as assist with other tasks as they arise.

The center provides a single allotment to households who meet an established level of need. Households interested in receiving an allotment must fill out an application that is reviewed and based upon LIHEAP income standards and lifestyle factors. Those meeting the need threshold

receive an allotment as well as material supporting any lifestyle changes that could be made to help the household better prepare for the heating needs of next season.

The center has one volunteer day when volunteers split and portion the year's donations. Able-bodied recipients are required to participate on the annual volunteer day either the year they receive the allotment or the following year. Those who do not become ineligible for future wood bank distributions.

Firewood is received from community members as well as from timber harvesting on state lands. A number of truckloads of hardwood pulp harvested from state lands are donated to wood banks across the state as a part of the state's logging contracts.

Lincoln Community Wood Bank

Contact Information:
Sally Taylor
(802) 453.5953
sbt@gmavt.net

The Lincoln County Wood Bank is located in located Lincoln, Vermont. It is an example of how even the smallest operations can strengthen communities. This center is mainly an open access wood bank that was started through the local energy committee and is now run by a small number of community members. It is partially run through a local church that has a fuel fund available for the public that assists community members with meeting a variety of fuel needs.

Firewood donations are received from community members as well as the town, usually already split, and stored in a secured container shed provided by the town. When donations need processing a handful of community members may be recruited to help with the task.

A publically accessible bin is located outside of the secured storage container. Those in need take what is necessary from the public shed and the supply is replenished when necessary. There is no application process or particular requirements to be met. Households that find themselves in constant need can contact the coordinator or local minister to ask for more than a night's ration or funds from the church program may be used to buy them firewood. In general the center is founded upon the honor code.

In the past this program has partnered with another local church, that also runs a wood bank program, through which it received firewood to deliver to those who need more wood than that offered through the open access bin.

Ripton Energy Assistance Program (REAP)

Contact Information:
Millard Cox
(802) 388.7820
millardcox@gmail.com

The Ripton Energy Assistance Program (REAP) is available to residents of Ripton, Vermont. The program assists residents with energy needs through various methods such

as long-term loans or direct fuel assistance. Part of the program includes an open access wood bank.

Every year all town citizens are mailed an informational card about the energy programs, including the firewood aspect, describing its purpose, how to be involved with the program, how to volunteer, and how to ask for donations. Firewood donations are received from the Vermont Transportation Agency, local road crews, and local community members and institutions.

Donations that need to be processed are split, stacked, and moved during designated volunteer days, called "sawing bees." The donations are kept in a shed located on town land next to the local fire station. It is publically available so that those in need can take what is necessary.

CLOSING REMARKS

Northern New England has bountiful natural resources. Sustainable use of forests will certainly play a role in the health and existence of future generations. A wood bank is a community-based concept that is self-sufficient when given adequate attention and effort. Wood banks could be one piece of an approach toward building sustainable communities and a renewable energy future. Their notable contribution toward a positive future is that wood banks support low-income households and bring together community members.

This community guide does not stand alone in its ability to guide the establishment and operation of a wood bank, but we hope it makes a positive contribution. All those inspired by this document are encouraged to pursue a course of exploration and action in their community. Wood banks are a growing concept and there are growing resources to guide the way for more to be established. Above all, we encourage more citizens to start and run a wood bank that meets local community needs. Good luck and thank you in advance for the hard work and dedication to affordable warmth for all Mainers.

WOOD BANK CHECK LIST

This checklist was designed for community members to work through while holding an initial wood bank planning meeting.

1. **NEED:** Does your community have a need for a wood bank?

Notes:

2. **TIMING:** Do you want to establish an open access or single allotment program?

- Open Access
- Single Allotment

Notes:

3. **LOCATION:** Where are the possible places to locate a wood bank in your community?

Notes:

4. **VOLUNTEERS:** What will your volunteers' needs be? Many temporary volunteers, an established basis, or a mix? How will you recruit and retain volunteers?

Notes:

5. **FIREWOOD SOURCES:** What are the possible firewood sources in your community? How will you reach out to those who can supply firewood?

Notes:

6. **PROCESSING:** How will firewood be processed?

Notes:

7. **DISTRIBUTION:** How will firewood be distributed?

Notes:

8. **EQUIPMENT:** What equipment will be needed to run the wood bank and where will it come from?

Notes:

9. **RECIPIENT QUALIFICATION:** Who will be eligible for receiving firewood and how will recipients be selected?

Notes:

10. **ALLOTMENT SIZE:** How much firewood will recipients receive? How will this amount be measured and monitored?

Notes:

11. **LEGALITIES & LIABILITIES:** How will potential legal and liability issues be addressed and reduced?

Notes:

12. **SECURITY:** What security measures will be taken to protect the wood bank facility, supplies, and equipment?

Notes:

13. **PARTNERSHIPS:** What partnerships could be established in your community that would benefit the wood bank?

Notes:

14. **LONGEVITY:** What will you and the community do ensure the success and longevity of the wood bank? What publicity methods will be used?

Notes:

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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Maine Forest Service

Phone: (207) 287.2791

Email: forestinfo@maine.gov

Link: www.maine.gov/dacf/mfs/



Maine State Fire Marshall

Phone: (207) 626.3870

Email: webmaster_fmo@maine.gov

Link: www.maine.gov/dps/fmo/index.htm



New Hampshire Division of Forests and Lands

Phone: (603) 271.2214

Link: www.nhdf.org/



New Hampshire Division of Fire Safety

Phone: (603) 223.4289

Email: fmo@dos.nh.gov

Link: www.nh.gov/safety/divisions/firesafety/index.html



Vermont Department of Forests, Parks & Recreation

Phone: (802) 828.1531 (Forestry Dept.)

Link: www.vtpr.org/index.cfm



Vermont Division of Fire Safety

Phone: (802) 479.7561

Link: firesafety.vermont.gov/



National Firewood Association

Phone: (218) 461.4339

Email: Info@NationalFirewoodAssociation.org

Link: <https://nationalfirewoodassociation.org/>

