



## *Gerry Langdon: ON THE FRONT LINES*

Take a walk along one of Gerry Langdon's carefully constructed woods roads - through stands of hemlock, past the clearing with the small pond, through well-spaced hardwoods, carefully weeded and thinned - and you almost forget that you're just minutes from the highway. But pause for a minute and listen. That's traffic you hear - lots of it. The west side of Langdon's 100-acre property runs right up against one of the busiest thoroughfares in Rockingham County. The forest he works so hard to manage is on the front lines, literally - a precious island in the midst of the increasing development bearing down on the New Hampshire Seacoast.

"We're going to be the hardest hit of any county in the state," says Phil Auger, a forester with UNH Cooperative Extension who's worked with Langdon for more than 20 years. "Population in Rockingham County is projected to increase 63 percent from 1990 to 2020 - that's why blocks of open space are so important."

Langdon says it was thanks to help from extension that he got off to such a good start managing his land. "I didn't want to just manage a Tree Farm," he says. "I wanted to manage for wildlife, aesthetics, and conservation issues. It's a big balancing act." With help from Auger and Extension specialist Ellen Snyder, Langdon discussed ways to achieve his multiple goals for the land.

Today, when he walks with visitors through his forest, he doesn't talk just about the board feet he takes out of it. He also talks about keeping up with the bittersweet vines that he prunes - always leaving some behind for the deer. He talks about the ancient pine he left standing because it fills a hole in the view from his house. He points to a dead branch high overhead, a perfect perching site for owls. He explains why an open stretch of woods road is good for wildlife. And he has all sorts of bat stories. "I can walk these roads at dusk, when the mosquitoes are swarming, and never get bitten," he says, explaining how the bats swoop through, keeping the air insect-free.

Langdon's well-managed forest began with a plan - a very good one. The extensive, 30-page document exists in part because of cost-sharing dollars available through the Stewardship Incentive Program (SIP). "I went the extra mile because I knew the money was there," he explains.



*Gerry Langdon is pictured in the third row, third from the right with other participants in the 1999 Coverts Cooperators class. This intensive training program helps him integrate wildlife and forest management on his land. "I didn't want to just manage a Tree Farm," he says. "I wanted to manage for wildlife, aesthetics, and conservation issues. It's a big balancing act."*

*"More than any other landowner I know, Gerry takes an active part in his own woods," says Charlie Moreno, the consulting forester who drew up Langdon's management plan and who continues to work closely with him. "He asks lots of questions and really wants to learn." Charlie is pictured here.*



SIP funding also helped defray the cost of laying out an extensive network of access roads in preparation for the property's first commercial harvest in 1999. And then there's the main logging road that leads to the landing and crosses a couple of major wetlands along the way. "SIP funding helped us construct those crossings properly," says Langdon, explaining that he was working with long-term goals in mind. He's planning another harvest deeper in the woods in 15 or 20 years. He also wanted to protect the wetlands.

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Langdon, who also serves as chair of the town's Conservation Commission, is passing on what he learns to others, making a difference in his community. But it's closer to home that his knowledge may ultimately have the most impact. Gerry works his land nearly every day, usually with his son Bill, who has two young sons himself. Before long, the boys will join them, learning from their grandfather how to care for the land, and someday, perhaps, harvesting trees that are just now beginning to put down roots.

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