

# With tax credit, new wood stoves save environment and money

By Tom Ayres  
Standard Staff

As temperatures dipped into the single digits and the wind chill factor hit 15 below last weekend, wood stoves and furnaces throughout the Upper Valley cranked up the heat to keep us all warm and comfy. Effective Jan. 1, comfort- and savings-seeking consumers in colder climes nationwide will enjoy a 26 percent tax credit on the installed price of new advanced wood heating systems for residential use. The bottom line? It will cost all of us less to stay warm this winter and for many winters to come.

Experts say the new tax credit, the advocacy for which was led by U.S. Senators Patrick Leahy and Bernie Sanders as well as Rep. Peter Welch, will help Vermont meet its robust renewable energy goals while also supporting our regional forest health and economy. If you’ve a mind to, now is the time to haul that old wood-burner out of your living room, workshop, or basement and replace it with a new, high-efficiency, state-of the art wood stove, pellet stove, or hot water system.

“There are a lot of aging wood stoves in this area and the problem with old wood stoves is that they are not efficient in the way they convert the wood to heat,” said Michael Caduto, the executive director of Sustainable Woodstock, nature writer and environmentalist. “Newer models will provide more heating with more BTUs for the home with less wood than older ones would,” Caduto added.

“The other major issue is that the amount of wood that gets burned is less, so that produces less carbon emissions in a newer stove, for example,” Caduto commented. “Newer stoves are designed so that they burn much more efficiently and as a result produce fewer particulates as well. As much as we all love the smell of woodsmoke and have a lot of nostalgic associations with it, unfortunately the smoke is not actually very healthy for us. It has a lot of carcinogens in it, and so the less of it we have the better. So those are two very good reasons for upgrading stoves.”

Some proponents of the new tax credit have also touted the safety of new, advanced wood heating systems versus the 20-years-old and older models currently in use in many a Vermont home. State fire safety officials, however, were reluctant to take that tack.

G.J. Garrow, the regional manager for the Rutland office of the Vermont Division of Fire Safety, said code enforcement, proper installation, and maintenance of wood burning heating systems are still the keys to safety, and not the age of the systems, although older, less efficient stove models do tend to produce more creosote and other combustibles in flues and chimneys.

“The new models are more efficient,” Garrow acknowledged in a phone conversation. “That means that it costs less to operate those stoves. But strictly in terms of fire safety, our concern is that the installation meets the code regulations and that’s true whether it’s an old stove in a new location or a brand-new model. It’s all about proper installation and regular maintenance by the

homeowner.” The new federal tax credit applies to the installed cost of home heating and hot water systems that use wood pellets, chips, and hardwood at efficiencies greater than 75 percent high heat value. The federal tax credit of 26 percent begins with systems purchased this year, then phases down to 22 percent for stoves and boilers purchased in 2022 and 2023. This means that a wood pellet stove that costs \$4,000 to install in 2021 will realize a savings of \$1,040 once the credit is applied to a homeowner’s tax return, according to calculations provided by the advocacy group Renewable Energy Vermont (REV).

In touting the new tax credit, REV also cited the environmental and economic benefits of a switch to high-efficiency wood heat systems by Vermont homeowners. In a recent statement, REV cited a study the organization prepared last year for the Vermont Department of Forests.

“Vermont has 940,000 tons of additional wood capacity that could be used sustainably every year,” the REV report stated. “If this was used for high-efficiency heating and hot water systems, it could replace the equivalent of 66 million gallons of heating oil annually, reducing CO2 emissions by 792,000 tons per year.

“Utilizing renewable resources within our borders, we can forgo sending \$131 million out of state every year on heating oil and instead invest \$70 million annually back into our local economy while using local wood, which like local food, keeps our dollars local,” the REV study concluded.

# Sustainable Woodstock East End Park Project fledges the nest

By Michael J. Caduto  
For Sustainable Woodstock

With pride and gratitude Sustainable Woodstock announces a new stage of growth for the East End Park. Following a twelve-year effort during which dozens of Sustainable Woodstock’s East End Action Group (EEAG) volunteers worked with the Town, Village and State to move the old snow dump to an environmentally secure location, clean up the site, plant native flowers and edible plants and design and build a bold new community park — long-term stewardship of the East End Project is now moving to the Woodstock Community Trust as part of that organization’s expansive mission to improve the quality of life in Woodstock.

The East End Park Project transformed Woodstock’s primary public access to the Ottauquechee River into a valuable recreational facility for town residents and visitors alike. Park visitors looking north are treated to beautiful views of Billings Farm and Museum, Marsh-Billings Rockefeller National Historical Park and the distant hills — bucolic landscapes that evoke the conservation stewardship and agricultural legacies of George Perkins Marsh and Frederick Billings. The adjoining 3-mile Ottauquechee River Trail enhances the outdoor experience, enabling park visitors to become immersed in the natural beauty of this riparian environment.

Over time, the East End Park Project has rehabilitated a badly deteriorated parcel of prime riverside land and improved water quality in the Ottauquechee River. The project restored a floodplain and riparian buffer seriously damaged by Tropical Storm Irene — using native vegeta-

tion to increase soil stability, prevent erosion, filter runoff and reduce the volume and velocity of the river during flooding events in order to protect downstream properties.

By force of sheer dedication, tireless efforts, creativity, resourcefulness and fortitude, EEAG volunteers took a disused and overgrown brownfield site and reimagined it into a shining new recreation area for all to enjoy. Other partners who have made the park possible by their collaboration and support include many incredibly generous donors, community partners, the Town and Village of Woodstock, Vermont’s Agency of Natural Resources and Dept. of Buildings and General Services, Connecticut River Conservancy, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Vermont Youth Conservation Corps, Boy Scout Troop 220 of Woodstock and numerous other organizations and individuals.

As with all such endeavors that require long-term vision and commitment, the East End Park could not have been created without the perseverance of a core group of passionate and dedicated volunteer leaders, led by Barbara Barry, Mary MacVey, Jack Rossi and Joby Thompson. These individuals inspired others to surmount every obstacle that was encountered. Recent additions to the park include a permaculture garden and apple trees, slide, rock scramble, the Joby Thompson Labyrinth and a magnificent amphitheater and pergola.

Starting with the gestation of the East End Project (2009) and continuing through the construction of the

East End Park (2018-2020), the total investment has been \$683,785 (not including innumerable hours donated by volunteers, partners and Sustainable Woodstock staff).

This figure includes generous funding from private donors and the Town of Woodstock, as well as grants from the State of Vermont, the federal government, foundations and other sources.

The East End Action Group’s vision — coupled with the inspiring generosity of private donors and foundations during a successful capital campaign — are why the park exists today. We cannot say enough how grateful and moved we are by the way in which

supporters have shared their ideas, passion and resources to transform a vision into a vibrant space for nature and humankind to co-mingle. As an organization that conceives and develops projects and initiatives for the betterment of the environment and the public good, it has been Sustainable Woodstock’s honor to be entrusted with creating the East End Park. We are now pleased to transfer long-term care and management of the East End Project to the Woodstock Community Trust.



# Show your love for Woodstock at East End Park

Woodstock Community Trust is proud to have the East End Project join in their mission to invest, refresh and fund properties to benefit the Woodstock community. This new relationship is a natural extension of the work done by both groups to improve the quality of life in our small town. The East End Project is a legacy of Sustainable Woodstock’s extensive environmental and community work.

To kick off this new venture, Woodstock Community Trust will sponsor “We Love Woodstock” at East End Park on Feb. 13 and 14. The park will be decorated for Valentine’s weekend so folks can share their love for Woodstock, their families and that special someone by taking pictures to post on social media. Tag @wood-

stockcommunitytrust on Instagram or Facebook with #welovewoodstock.

Joining the Woodstock Community Trust — with its diverse portfolio of community initiatives — aligns with the East End Project’s broader vision. Joby Thompson, one of the group’s founding members, summed up the move: “Completing the East End Park with Woodstock Community Trust will help build a vibrant neighborhood in the East End.”

The East End Park resulted from more than a decade’s worth of work by dedicated volunteers from Sustainable Woodstock. In 2009 these volunteers recognized the need for major environmental restoration along the Ottauquechee River, which in turn would become a catalyst for economic revitalization in the East End.

Under the leadership of Sally Miller, Sustainable Woodstock’s first Executive Director, the volunteer group launched major environmental work to create the East End Park, while simultaneously laying the groundwork for economic development. In collaboration with the Village of Woodstock plus grants from Vermont state agencies, Sustainable Woodstock moved the municipal snow dump, reclaimed badly deteriorated land, and developed the East End Park.

With the support of Sustainable Woodstock’s current Executive Director Michael Caduto, the East End Project is transitioning to enable the team to secure funds to complete park construction and ensure the long-term future of the Park. “This project is the most

significant public park project undertaken in Woodstock in the past 50 years,” said Mary MacVey, a long-time member of the East End Project. “We’re delighted to see that the Park has quickly become a special gathering place for the entire community. In addition, commercial interest in the East End has picked up significantly.”

Woodstock Community Trust provides community-centered solutions to invest, refresh and fund housing, commercial spaces, and preservation of agricultural and natural areas while working toward a sustainable economic environmental future for Woodstock and its citizens. Sustainable Woodstock’s mission to inspire, educate and empower everyone to live environmentally, economically and socially responsible lives.

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