

December 2009

# Danby Land Bank Cooperative Newsletter

## The 2010 Hay season

The Danby Land Bank will be accepting new members at its first meeting in February (TBA). A membership fee of \$100 will be required this year, and we are looking for new volunteers for the Board of Directors (Welcome Brian Caldwell who has been our first 2010 volunteer). Agricultural assessment will be available to participants starting with the 2010 School Tax.

This season we will be contracting mowing with Peter Moore. Our goals are still wildlife protection and trying to use agricultural waste material, but we also have a member who will work with a few other people if they can qualify and are interested in getting started with the USDA WHIP program that helps pay for cultivation and planting of cool and/or warm season grasses. We hope to begin experimenting on wood management and grazing options for people who are interested.

## 2010 Pelletizing Plant goal

Since cutting biomass for biofuels works best if there is a local biofuels plant, the steering committee has decided that the main emphasis of the Danby Land Bank Cooperative this year should be making the Pelletizer Plant happen. Tony Nekut and Ben Boynton and Ken White have land on Boiceville Rd in Caroline near Rt 79. Their time frame is to start construction this spring. They are still looking for additional investors. One "investment" the Danby Land Bank can make is contributing a sense of community involvement. "Community Biomass Energy" is thinking globally and acting locally, linking the feedstock, the producer, and the consumer in full circle, ideally even putting the remaining ashes back on the fields.

To that end, we and Energy Independent Caroline are sponsoring two town hall meetings in January – one in Danby Jan 13 at 7pm and one in Caroline on Jan 16 at 11am to raise awareness of what is going on with these Pellet entrepreneurs. And, since it is best to buy a pellet stove for optimal load and to make that load as small as possible, we are also bringing in a people from TCAction and INHS to let you know what NYSEDA incentives can do to

make your home more weatherized and energy efficient.

## 2009 Successes

- Had 20 participants and over 350 acres involved.
- Walked everyone's land
- Publicity - 6 articles
- Spread a wide net – Danby government and citizens, Cooperative Extension, Tompkins County Planning board, Soil and water, Cornell, and now USDA
- Created a Steering Committee and an Advisory Committee
- Were not been able to form a legal cooperative but have a much better sense of what that entails
- Gained more understanding of the hay market economy how volatile and dynamic it is. Found out who the players were in the local area. Found that fields to be mowed have more constraints than we originally thought
- Created a website – [www.danbylandbank.com](http://www.danbylandbank.com)
- Earned the \$10K (hay not quite all paid and delivered but looks like we will) for agricultural assessment
- Encouraged a local biofuels entrepreneur to step forward



## The Danby Land Bank's first hay season.

Considering our level of inexperience and lack of capitalization, the pilot project did reasonably well.

We ran into plenty of difficulties, but Warren Van Pelt did get our best hay field mowed and baled, and we were able to sell it for fiber-added feed-hay. Peter Moore was also able to cut some golden rod for us but we were unable to dry it sufficiently to sell to EnviroEnergy since they wanted 12% or less moisture content. Luckily another buyer helped us out.

The rainy weather was terrible for haying and the company, Mesa Reduction, did not come through for us, despite repeated promises. We discovered the difficulty of getting contractors to cut our fields when theirs were waiting for one of the few sunny weeks that came our way this rainy summer.

Our apologies to all of you whose fields we didn't get to.

### Some Facts about Pellet Stoves

There are currently over 800,000 homes in the United States using wood pellet stoves or furnaces for heating, according to the Pellet Fuels Institute.

For heating one ton of wood pellets equals

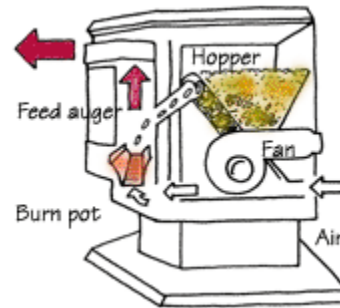
- 120 gallons of heating oil
- 170 gallons of propane
- 16,000 ft<sup>3</sup> of natural gas
- 4,775 kilowatt hours (kWh) electricity

One ton of pellets consists of 50 bags that weigh 40 pounds each. As a rule, one ton of pellets is roughly equivalent to about 1 1/2 cords of wood.

Wood stove users burn from 3 to 4 cords of wood per year. An average pellet stove will use from 1 to 3 tons of pellets per year. Figuring in the costs above, pellets are often less expensive than cord wood. Of course, with pellets you also save on the time and energy needed to stack and carry wood, and you need less storage space; pellets can be stored in only one-third the space needed for cord wood.

Prices for new pellet stoves range from about \$1,700 to \$3,000 for the stove and from \$150 to \$400 for installation, but they don't require installation of a full-height conventional chimney or flue. Despite the fact that pellet stoves are relatively complicated machines they are very easy to operate. The higher end pellet stoves allow for easy thermostat setting and extended hopper

capacity.



Pellet stoves burn incredibly hot and fast, the blower fan pushes this warm air out and can heat a room in a matter of minutes. Since pellet stoves are power vented they can be installed almost anywhere in home, including through the ceiling, through a wall, or into an existing masonry chimney as long as the installation includes at least three feet of vertical chimney.

Federal tax credit provides 30 percent (up to \$1500) for the purchase of a qualified biomass-burning stove or fireplace insert between January 1, 2009 and December 31, 2010. Any wood- or pellet-burning stove that meets the 75 percent efficiency rating qualifies. Professional installation costs are included as long as installation is required for the proper and safe operation of the stove. Learn more by visiting [EPA's Energy Star FAQs](#).

**And for those of you with a small field or land too steep for a tractor?** Even if you own or have used a scythe, you probably don't know what you are missing! The typical farm scythe has an elegant but heavy wooden handle and a blade that is more of a club than a scalpel. European-style scythes, however, are lightweight, efficient, quiet, fume-free, and a delight to use either alone or with a team of scythers to mow hay fields, light brush, or your lawn. For more information visit [www.ScytheConnection.com](http://www.ScytheConnection.com) or contact Ben Altman ([benaltman123@gmail.com](mailto:benaltman123@gmail.com)) for a demonstration, help with choosing good equipment, or to form a scything team.

**Even the USDA has noticed the Danby Land Bank – go to:**

[http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rd/pubs/RuralCoop\\_NovDec09\\_Final.pdf](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rd/pubs/RuralCoop_NovDec09_Final.pdf)