



Annika Johnson helped with the sap harvest at Tucker Mountain Maple Co-op this year.
Photo: Heide Johnson

2010 Was An "Off" Year For Area Maple Producers

By Eric Johnson

Tucker Mountain Maple Co-op

After three very good maple seasons, we were due for one that was "off." In dealing with a product that relies on Mother Nature, you are somewhat at the mercy of whatever the temperatures and trees provide you.

This year's weather – with several daytime temperatures reaching into the 60s – was less than ideal for sugaring. I would also mention the lack of cold temperatures at night – I think that was critical. In addition, the season was about two weeks shorter than it has been during the last several years.

For many of the maple syrup producers in the Andover area, as well as in much of New Hampshire, it was a disappointing season – with some producers making less than half of what they did during the 2009 maple season. The following is a summary of the maple season for some local producers.

Parker Rowe, who operates Salisbury Sugarworks on North Road in Salisbury, made 519 gallons of syrup from approximately 2,700 taps. New for Parker and his crew this season was a beautiful sugarbush on Rabbit Road in Salisbury. This new bush, combined with some expansion in several of his existing sugarbushes, meant an additional 500 taps this season.

Parker boils on a large wood-fired evaporator, nicknamed "Mighty Marvin," that burns an amazing 50 cords of wood in an average season. When Marvin is running full tilt, it is quite a sight to see. Certainly worth a visit during Maple Open House Weekend next season...

Everett Jones, who runs the sugar house at Taunton Hill Farm on Maple Street in Andover, reported one of his worst seasons ever. Everett made 19 gallons from the 220 taps he has on three different properties in East Andover. Everett was very disappointed with the season, noting that for him it was all over by March 20. Last year Everett boiled into the early part of April.

Tucker Mountain Maple Co-op, run by Mark Cowdrey, Dave Swanson, and me, made 154 gallons off of 625

taps. In addition to the sap produced from the Co-op members' trees, an additional 1,200 gals of sap was brought in from another local producer. When you subtract that out of the total season's production, the Co-op produced .21 gallons of finished syrup per tap versus the .33 gallons of syrup per tap averaged over the last three seasons.

The best run of the season was the last run – from March 28 until April 1. Two days later it was 80 degrees out – great weather for washing tanks and buckets.

Bill Clough and his brother John operate a nice sugarhouse on Whitney Brook Road in Wilmot. They set out between 525 and 550 taps this season and produced a disappointing 55 gallons of syrup. Bill noted that his 55 gallons were only 40% of the crop he produced in 2009. Bill also pulled his taps a week or so earlier than last year as the end-of-season syrup he was producing was very slow to filter.

For some comparison, Dave Fuller, who operates **Fuller's Sugarhouse** in Lancaster had one of his best seasons ever. Fuller's is a relatively large operation, with over 7,000 taps in the Lancaster/Whitefield area. They produced .37 gals of finished syrup per tap for the entire season.

One notable difference in his season was the weather in Lancaster. Lancaster – almost two hours north of us – saw overnight temperatures get down into the mid 20s when ours were only barely below freezing.

As I look toward the 2011 maple season, I cannot help but be optimistic. Many who had disappointing seasons will make improvements over the summer and into the fall so as to guard against another off year. The chance of having two off years in a row has to be pretty low.

One silver lining for the Co-op this year is since we did not make as much syrup as in years past, we have more cordwood left over in our woodshed. This head-start on getting wood in for next season means more time to go out and get more taps for next year. Ready, set, go....

ANDOVER FISH & GAME KIDS SPRING TROUT DERBY

By Rich Gross

Andover Fish and Game Club

The Andover Fish and Game Club is sponsoring its 15th annual Kids' Spring Trout Fishing Derby at Highland Lake in East Andover. The derby will be held on Saturday, May 8. This is for all kids ages 15 and under.

poles and bait.

Stocking Highland Lake

New Hampshire Fish and Game needs our help stocking Highland Lake on Friday, May 7, at around 5 PM along the channel. All kids and their parents are welcome to come and help.

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