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**To:** Coriell, Scott  
**Subject:** Gov. Shumlin Officially Opens Maple Sugar Season at Slopeside Syrup

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

March 17, 2015

**Gov. Shumlin Officially Opens Maple Sugar Season at Slopeside Syrup**

**RICHMOND** – Gov. Peter Shumlin kicked off Vermont's 2015 maple sugar season today, officially tapping a tree at Slopeside Syrup, in Richmond. The Governor was joined by Vermont Agriculture Secretary Chuck Ross and students from Richmond Elementary, who tap trees at Slopeside as part of their “farm to school” curriculum.

Slopeside Syrup is located on the grounds of Cochran’s Ski Area, a not-for-profit ski center founded in 1961 by Mickey and Ginny Cochran. The sugaring operation was established in 2011 by four of Mickey and Ginny’s grandchildren: Jim Cochran, Tim Kelley, and Roger and Douglas Brown.

“For more than fifty years, Vermont’s young people have come to Cochran’s to learn how to ski,” said Gov. Shumlin. “Today, they are learning another essential Vermont skill...sugar-making!”

Co-owner Roger Brown, who was named 2014 Maple Person of the Year by the Vermont Maple Sugar Makers Association, says the idea for a sugaring operation at Cochran’s took shape in 2009, when a forester pointed out that the property was rich with mature maples. In 2011, they began tapping trees and today Slopeside has about 23,000 taps. They sell their syrup in a variety of local retail outlets, as well as online at SlopesideSyrup.com. They’ve also recently introduced a maple energy gel for athletes called Untapped. Sold in single-serve pouches, Untapped is marketed as a pure-maple energy booster for performance athletes. [www.untapped.cc](http://www.untapped.cc)

Flanked by members of the maple community, the Governor used the occasion as an opportunity to build awareness for “real maple.” He called on Vermonters to help him bring attention to the many imitation maple products lining grocery shelves, which threaten the reputation of Vermont maple.

“Vermonters know real maple, but across the country, food manufacturers are mislabeling artificially produced products as maple, and that creates confusion,” the Governor said. “We need to build awareness for real maple...there is no substitute.”

“As a business owner, my livelihood is threatened by those who market ‘fake maple,’” Brown says. “My hope is that Vermonters will take an interest in this issue and vow to buy ‘real maple’ to support our sugarmakers.”

Vermont continues to lead that nation in maple production. In 2014, Vermont produced 42% of the nation's syrup, twice the amount produced by the next largest maple states, combined (New York and Maine each produced 17%, respectively).

After tapping a tree, the Governor toured the Slopeside sugarhouse and enjoyed some French toast prepared by Richmond Elementary school kitchen director Karyl Kent . This is the fourth year Slopeside Syrup has provided maple syrup for Richmond Elementary, and has taught students about tapping trees.

“This is a fantastic example of Ag Literacy in action,” said Chuck Ross, Secretary of Agriculture. “This hands-on experience will make a lifelong impression on these students, building awareness for the way our food system works.”

The Cochran family has a long and storied history in the world of skiing: over the years, eight Cochrans have raced on the U.S. Ski team, including Barbara Ann Cochran, who won a gold medal in slalom at the 1972 Olympics in Sapporo, Japan.

Today, a whole new generation is coming to Cochran's to learn to ski and enjoy real maple syrup.

“It doesn't get much more ‘Vermont’ than this,” said the Governor.

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