

A natural resource inventory identifies and describes naturally features, communities and habitats in the forest. It provides the municipality with the information needed to proactively plan for and protect sensitive areas, or important features. A natural resources inventory should be used to guide planning and informed decision making for locating new trails or adding infrastructure to the forest. For example, trails should not be constructed through a vernal pool or wetland. The scope of a natural resource inventory depends on the needs of the municipality. Natural resource inventories can include mapping existing data or conducting a field-based inventory and assessment.

Collecting Information

In this planning process, natural resource information is collected on a baseline natural resource map and ground-truthed during the visioning process and community survey. One of the first tasks of the steering committee is to compile a baseline natural resource map. This map provides an opportunity to identify existing, known, features within the forest. This map serves as the starting point for collecting additional information at the public visioning workshop.

At the workshop, the public is invited to review natural resource information on a larger floor map. Participants are encouraged to draw on the map, adding information on natural resources of note in the town forest. Questions posed during the visioning session include: are there any known natural features missing on the map? What kind of wildlife has been seen in the town forest? What human activities (existing or planned) conflict with these resources? Participants are also asked to consider the impact of recreation on natural resources, such as deer wintering areas, vernal pools, large ledges or cliffs, groundwater seepage areas, and forested swamps. This process draws on local knowledge to fill in the gaps and is designed to help participants begin to consider how use impacts natural resources.

If the town is interested in a more detailed inventory of the forest natural resources, it might consider contracting out a field-based natural resource inventory and assessment. This work can be completed by a natural resource professional, a licensed consulting forester, an environmental consulting groups or in some cases by partnering with a higher education institution.

Resources

UVM Rubenstein School of Environment and Natural Resource

[Service Learning Community Partnership](#)

[PLACE Based Landscape Analysis and Community Engagement](#)

Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department [Community Wildlife Program](#)

VT Secretary of State, Office of Professional Regulation

Vermont Licensed Foresters [Licensee Lookup](#)