

Town of Woodbury, Vermont

TOWN FOREST RECREATION PLAN



Vermont Town Forest
Recreation Planning

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Executive Summary

Over the past year, Woodbury has worked with a consulting firm that specializes in community planning, SE Group, in a robust planning process to develop an action-based town outdoor recreation plan. The innovative planning model included a public visioning workshop, needs assessment, facilitated walks in the forest, a community survey, a public strategies workshop, and an engaged Conservation Commission. The process has resulted in a plan that provides actionable strategies to assist the community in taking the next steps.

Through the planning process, the Woodbury community identified the following priorities:

- Parking Lot and Access Trail
- Wetland Outdoor Education Facilities
- Develop a Trail System
- Access Paths and Connections
- Interpretation
- Educational Programming Partnerships
- Trail Maps

This process, and the community conversations throughout, captured a strong desire among Woodbury residents to utilize their town forest. Key steps to meet this desire include constructing a parking lot, designing and building a trail system, and creating access paths and connections to the village center.

Moving forward, the Conservation Commission is committed to working with Woodbury Elementary School, community groups and organizations, and dedicated volunteers to implement these key strategies and move towards the community's vision for the Woodbury Town Forest and Wetland.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Acknowledgements

All community plans are the result of a collective effort. In the development of this Town Forest Recreation Plan many individuals provided considerable input and expertise to the outcome. The project team would like to thank them for their tremendous assistance.

Project Team

Steering Committee

- ❖ Paul Council, Chairperson
- ❖ Michael Gray
- ❖ Jack Travelstead
- ❖ Charles Wohlers
- ❖ Kiley Briggs

Interagency Working Group

- ❖ VT Urban and Community Forestry Program—Project Lead
- ❖ VT Agency of Natural Resources—Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation
- ❖ VT Agency of Commerce and Community Development

Consultant Team

- ❖ SE Group—Project Lead
- ❖ Arrowwood Environmental—Natural Resources Sub-Consultant

OUR PARTNERS

The Vermont Urban & Community Forestry Program is a joint initiative of Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation (FRP) and UVM Extension. Working group members include FPR's Recreation Program, Agency of Commerce and Community Development, and Extension's Tourism and Marketing Program. Partners include over 40 organizations and stakeholders who have helped shape the process and deliverables.

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About the Vermont Town Forest Recreation Planning Community Assistance Program

Vermont has a long and proud tradition of town-owned and managed forests. Over 168 municipalities own over 67,000 acres of forestland, all open for public benefit. The values of these town forests are diverse, including watershed protection, wildlife habitat, forest products, outdoor classrooms, and neighborhood gathering places. Outdoor forest-based recreation is both a great opportunity and a growing challenge. Recognition of the economic and community benefits of forest-based recreation is on the rise. Concurrently, increased pressure from multiple recreation groups accentuate the need for planning assistance to balance the growing recreation interests and the health of the forest. In response, the Vermont Urban & Community Forestry Program and its partners received a grant from the US Forest Service to provide recreation planning assistance to ten diverse Vermont communities, and ours was one of those selected!

Project Purpose and Scope

At the broadest level, the Vermont Town Forest Recreation Planning Community Assistance Program is intended to empower communities to move forward with confidence on recreation projects in their town forests. This process has provided robust community involvement and comprehensive consideration of potential projects, so our community can move forward with confidence knowing that we are addressing the needs and preferences of our residents and visitors, we are protecting the forest resources in our charge, and that we are effectively managing our forest for the resources and activities we value.



The project encompasses four key areas:

1. Developing the Town Forest Recreation Planning Toolkit to enable planning in ALL Vermont communities
2. Developing a compelling and inspiring vision to help guide the future management of our town forests
3. Developing discrete, clear and action-oriented strategies for improvement of recreation and stewardship that achieves the vision
4. Fostering implementation with support for local plan adoption, guidance for implementation, and the project toolkit



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Project Process

Over the past year, we have worked with a consulting firm that specializes in community planning, SE Group, in a robust planning process to develop an action-based town forest stewardship and recreation plan. The innovative planning model included a public visioning workshop, needs assessment, facilitated walks in the forests, a public survey, a public strategies workshop, an engaged steering committee. This process has resulted in a plan that provides actionable strategies to assist our community in taking the next steps. This process has led to a town forest recreation planning toolkit to support sustainable, forest-based recreation in town forests statewide.

How to Use This Plan

First and foremost, this plan is intended to document the community's desires for the town forest. Through robust public engagement, the planning process identified and solidified the community's comprehensive vision, which encompasses all the primary uses of town forests: conservation, recreation, education, and timbering and forest products. When decisions are being made about the town forest, the vision outlined in this document should be referred to and should inform how the community might weigh in on the future direction of the forest.

In addition to the establishing a shared vision for the forest, this planning process has also identified a series of concrete actions the town and its partners could take to implement the community's vision for the Forest in terms of recreation. Strategies for improvement of recreation could be physical enhancements—such as new trails, parking lots, or facilities—but strategies might also be non-physical improvements like enhanced maps and signage or policy-oriented strategies like creating a process for proposing and reviewing new trails or projects in the forest. Potential strategies were reviewed and prioritized by the steering committee and the public during the Draft Strategies Workshop. All strategies identified by the steering committee and project team are found within the action plan table, but the highest priority projects have also received enhanced detail in the action plan.

For each strategy, the action plans identify:

- Project description
- Action responsibility
- Timing (immediate, short, medium, long-term)
- Partners involved
- Action or planning dependencies
- Available toolkits & support resources
- Funding & grant opportunities
- Magnitude of costs (\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$)

Some of these strategies can be implemented directly by the town, its volunteers, and partners without additional funding or resources—others may require additional planning and design or require grants to complete. If grants or additional planning and design steps are needed, likely funding sources and implementation partners are identified in the action plan.



Vermont Town Forest Recreation Planning

The Vermont Town Forest Recreation Planning Toolkit—a companion to this plan—offers guidelines, designs, case studies, best practices, and standards for the town to pursue towards realizing its vision. Whether the next step involves recruiting volunteers, writing a grant application, or building a trail, the Toolkit can help the town and its partners move forward.

The Vermont Town Forest Recreation Planning Toolkit is available on Urban and Community Forestry's website at: <https://vtcommunityforestry.org/>

Community Benefits of Recreation in Town Forests

Recreation in town forests provides many benefits for local residents, economies, and the natural communities of Vermont.

Conservation and Habitat Protection

A town forest, as a protected natural area, has intrinsic conservation value. They act as habitat for local species and help conserve the area's natural resources. Town forests can connect existing forest blocks, providing a larger, safe habitat for species. Linked habitat blocks also allow species to travel and adapt to changing conditions. The forests also protect and buffer local streams, improving water quality and habitat for aquatic species. In absorbing and filtering water, the forests improve flood resiliency and water quality across the watershed. Forests also help protect soils and biodiversity and provide a buffer against pests and disease. As a municipally owned parcel, the forest can leverage additional funds for conservation through taxes and community development grants.

A town forest also provides humans with benefits from conservation by linking people to nature and allowing them to experience a wide range of natural environments. It is becoming clearer that contact with nature is an important element of a healthy life style. Providing convenient, local access to forests and natural areas can make it easier to connect with and experience nature,



which is particularly important for the youth in our communities. According to the Institute for Social Research, the average American boy or girl spends just four to seven minutes in unstructured outdoor play each day, and more than six hours each day in front of an electronic screen (National Wildlife Federation, 2016). This is startling data that has been causing a ripple effect across the country. Nearly every industry that works with young people across the nation has established initiatives to help change this statistic. From school districts and environmental education organizations to federal land managers, conservationists and the outdoor retail industry, new funding streams for outreach and programs have developed.



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There are several negative long-term effects of kids’ “nature deficit disorder,” as coined by Richard Louv, but the two greatest impacts are general health and well-being of America’s youth and the ability and desire for future generations to steward and value our public natural and wild areas, including our town forests. Although this national phenomenon is less of an issue in rural places like Vermont, convenient access to forests could help get even more young people outdoors more often.

Close to Home Recreational Opportunities

Town forests provide trails for both residents and visitors to enjoy. Town forest trails allow walkers, bikers, runners, skiers, and snowshoers to combine exercise and a natural experience in a convenient location without having to travel far from their home. Studies have shown that close and convenient access to recreation and the outdoors can significantly increase an individual’s physical activity levels (Schipperijn et al, 2017). Town forests may also connect surrounding trail systems, enhancing the community’s overall trail network. Town forest recreational opportunities can also integrate recreation with outdoor education through interpretive signage and nature walks, promoting other community values of health and nature education.

Economic Development

In Vermont, outdoor and forest-based recreation and the associated tourism are major drivers of the economy. Outdoor and forest-based recreation brings people into our communities. In the Mad River Valley, 78% of visitors have reported that trails and access to the outdoors was important in their decision to visit (MRV Moves, 2017). Trail users, both residents and visitors, will visit local restaurants and shops, bringing in tax revenue and creating jobs as well. Across our state, just four trail systems—the Catamount Trail, the Long Trail, the VAST system, and Kingdom Trails—have been found to generate over \$30.8 million annual economic activity, over \$2 million in annual tax revenues, and have supported over 365 jobs annually (VT Trails and Greenways, 2017). A single trail system in the Green Mountain National Forest—the Blueberry Lake Trails—has been found to generate \$1.8 million in annual sales, \$320,000 in annual tax revenues, and has supported 22 jobs annually (MRV Moves, 2017).



Many people when moving to Vermont will choose a location based on its natural features and recreational opportunities. Nationwide, the National Association of Realtors found that 80% of Americans consider having trails and places to take a walk one of their top priorities when deciding where they would like to live. This ranked higher than even “high quality public schools” in their Community Preference Survey, which was selected by 74% of survey



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respondents (National Realtors Association, 2015). Access to the outdoors is increasingly being seen as a cornerstone of quality of life, particularly in rural communities, and having this access allows communities to attract and retain their workforce, which in turn helps attract and retain businesses. Therefore, an accessible town forest can be a key factor for strengthening the economic vitality of Vermont towns.

Health Benefits

Almost all hospitals and health providers encourage patients to include some form of physical activities in their daily lives to increase many aspects of their health. By providing convenient access to the outdoors, a town forest encourages community members to walk, bike, ski, snowshoe, or run in the forest regularly.



Obesity is one of the most significant health threats today. More than two-thirds (68.8 percent) of American adults are considered to be overweight or obese. More than one-third (35.7 percent) of American adults are considered to be obese (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2016). Vermont has slightly lower rates of overweight and obese Adults at 57.7% overweight and 23.2% obese, but the issue is of critical importance in our state as well (CDC, 2012). Active lifestyles and physical activity help to combat obesity. Obesity exacerbates many other types of illnesses and reducing the levels of obesity leads to overall better health.

Studies have shown that trails and outdoor recreation contribute to healthy communities and lower healthcare costs for individuals and local governments. A 2004 cost-benefit analysis of using trails in Lincoln, Nebraska to reduce health care costs associated with inactivity found that for every \$1 invested in trails for physical activity, \$2.94 of public health benefits are produced (Wang et al, 2004).

Spending time in the forest's peaceful, natural setting is also proven to be beneficial to community members' mental health. In addition, the forest's trees improve the air quality of the surrounding area as well.



Chapter 2: Existing Conditions

Community Profile

The community profile presents relevant demographic, economic, and recreational information to planning for the town forests.

Summary

Woodbury is a small town in northern Vermont. Although its median age is right around the statewide average, Woodbury has few school age children to enroll in its school system. The median household income is well above the state average and few residents are below the poverty level. There are many seasonal camps in town and the area as a whole does have some tourism. Woodbury fails to capture visitor spending, with no open stores or restaurants at this time. The town has some open spaces and parks but no trails on public land currently exist. There are many unposted lands with walking trails in Woodbury, as well as the Woodbury-Hardwick Rail Trail and other trails on private lands.





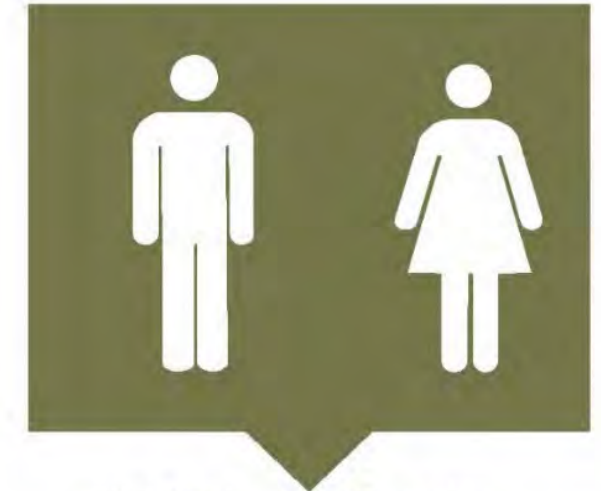
Population: 906



Median Age: 44.4



of School Age Children: 121



53 % Male 47 % Female



Household Median Income: \$73,068



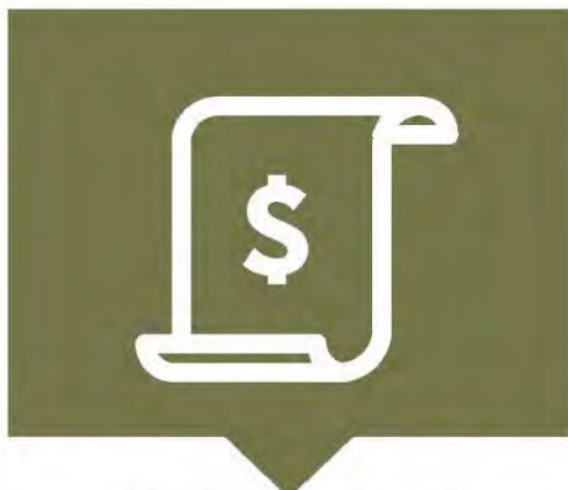
Residents Below Poverty Level: 6 %



45 % Residential Units in Seasonal/Recreational Use



16 % County Employment in Travel & Tourism



Grand List Assessed Value: \$6,224,900



Number of Parks and Open Spaces: 3



Miles of Trails: 0



of Playgrounds: 1



Town Forest Profile

Forest Overview

This plan looks at both the Woodbury Town Forest and the Town Wetland.

The Woodbury Town Forest is a 65.7-acre parcel near the center of town – a short walk from the Elementary School and Post Office. The Town Forest was donated to the Town of Woodbury by Hugo Meyer in 1958. Earlier, when Mr. Meyer acquired the land, it was known as the “Drennan Sugar Place.” At present, the forest is underutilized, recreationally, as there is no public parking, trailhead kiosks, or maintained trails, and few residents are aware of the town forest. There is an unmaintained snowmobile trail through the property that is lightly used. Some area residents hunt on the parcel, although that use is also fairly minimal given the proximity to State Highway 14. The forest has many interesting cultural and ecological features – a cellar hole, mature hardwood forest, vernal pools, and visible bedrock formations. Charismatic large mammals (bears, moose) are known to frequent the forest. The forest is also home to many reptiles and small mammals.



The Town Wetland is located adjacent to the elementary school. The wetland itself is a shallow body of water that the school uses for canoeing and as an outdoor learning lab. There are a few trails around the wetland as well. The school, through its ‘friends organization,’ is currently working on a designated gathering/observation space and classroom near the wetland and has recently secured grant funding to move that project forward. The school and town each own half the wetland and are planning for the area collaboratively.

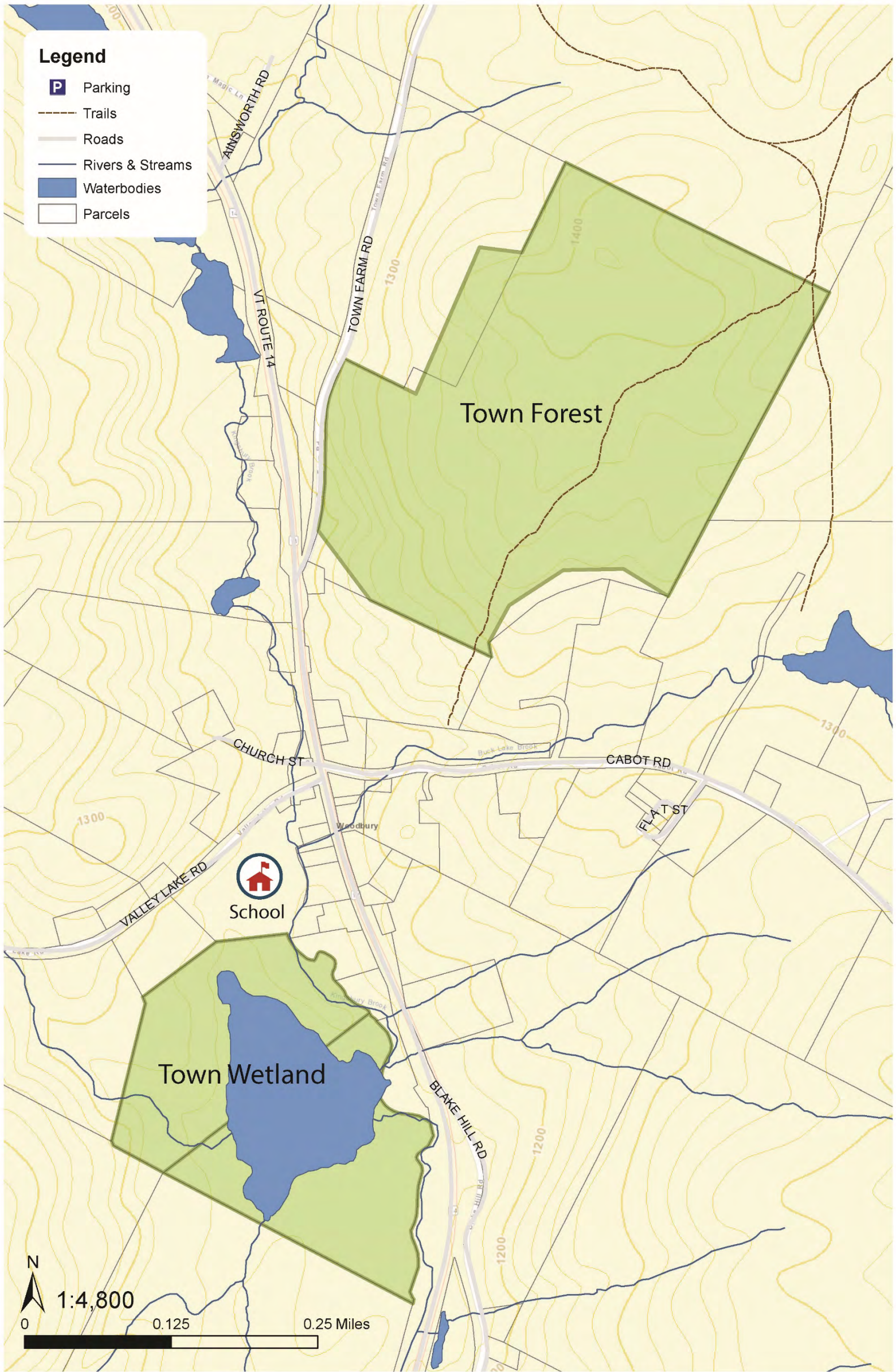
Land Ownership and Conservation Background

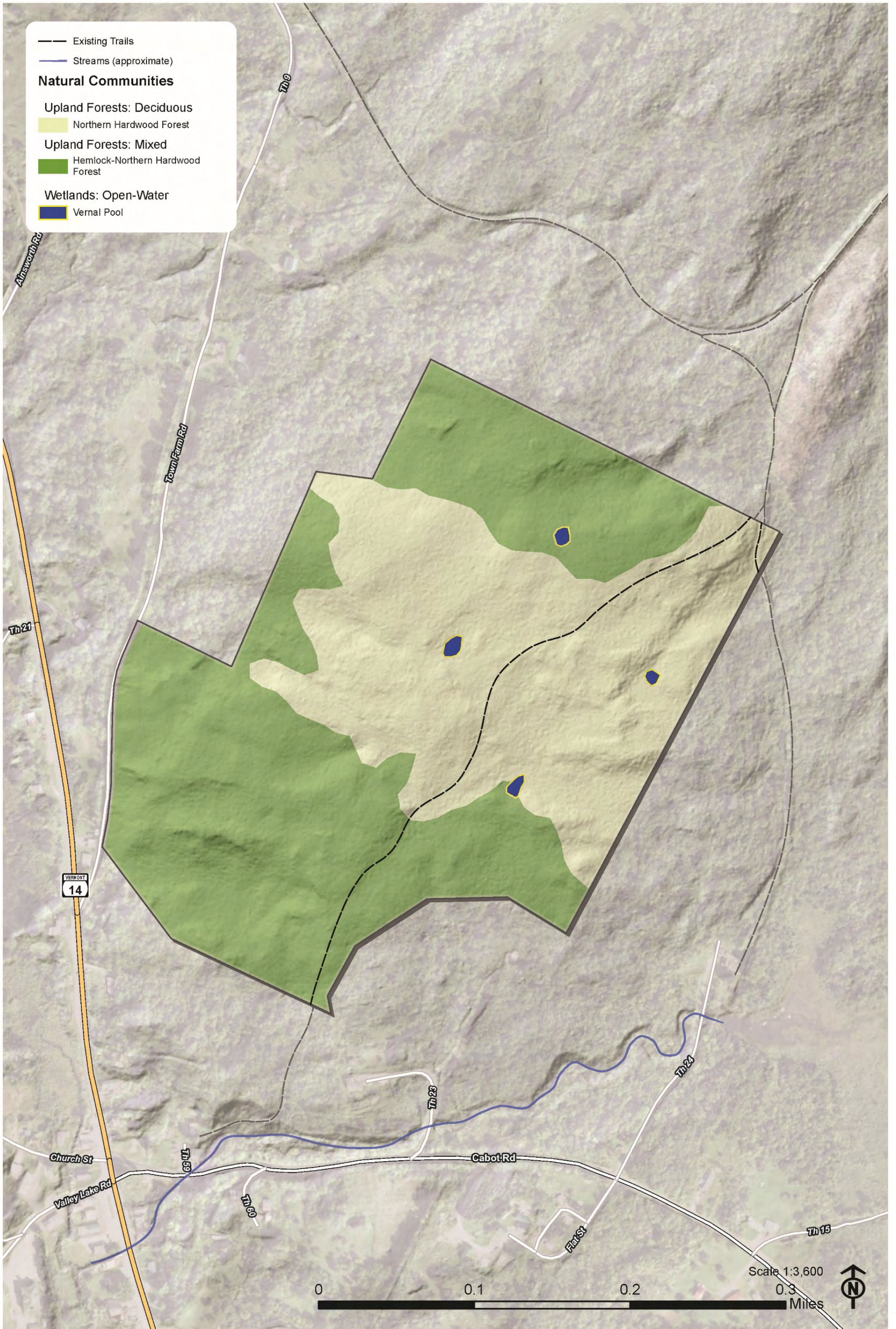
The Town Forest is managed by the Woodbury Conservation Commission, with some oversight from the town selectboard. The forest parcel has belonged to the town since the 1950s and it has not been logged since coming under town ownership. In 1998, the town selectboard adopted a resolution supporting the conservation of the forest and prohibiting its despoliation. That resolution remains in effect today and serves as the guiding principle for management of the forest. There is currently no management plan for the forest. The County Forester has urged the town to come up with a vision for the forest before embarking on a management plan. That management plan will be used to set the allowed and prohibited uses of the forest.

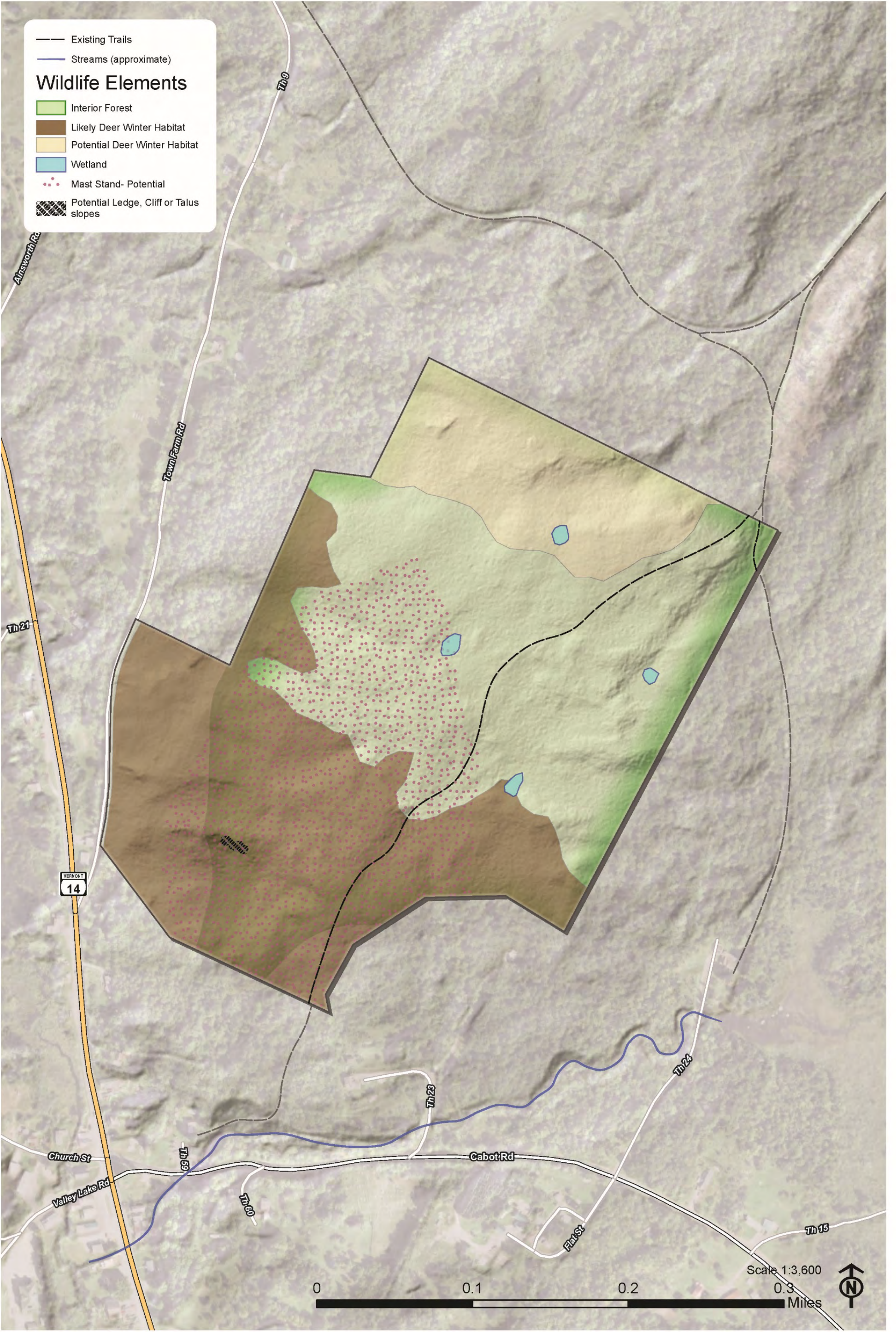


The wetland area is across two parcels, one owned by the town and the other by the school.









Existing Trails
Streams (approximate)

Wildlife Elements

- Interior Forest
- Likely Deer Winter Habitat
- Potential Deer Winter Habitat
- Wetland
- Mast Stand- Potential
- Potential Ledge, Cliff or Talus slopes



Chapter 3: Public Engagement Summary and Needs Assessment

To bring the “town” into town forest, a robust public engagement process was at the heart of this plan. There were multiple workshops open to the public, a community survey, and many steering committee meetings to guide the plan. Through this process, the public identified issues, needs, desired attributes, and strategies to enhance the forests. The public also offered feedback on the strategies and draft plans, to ensure a fit with the town and forests’ needs, interests, and capacity.

Public Engagement

Kickoff Summit

A project kickoff summit with all 10 towns was held at the Bethel Town Hall on Friday, November 17, 2017. The summit introduced members of the town steering committee to the project and served as an initial opportunity to provide input. The project team provided a background of the project and an overview of the process. Through a working lunch, the committee members completed a SWOT worksheet (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) to begin thinking about and analyzing the forests. A web survey was also available for other committee members who were not present to provide their thoughts. Facilitators led a community breakout session for the committee to speak to existing conditions, issues, and their vision for the town forests. From Woodbury, four people were in attendance.



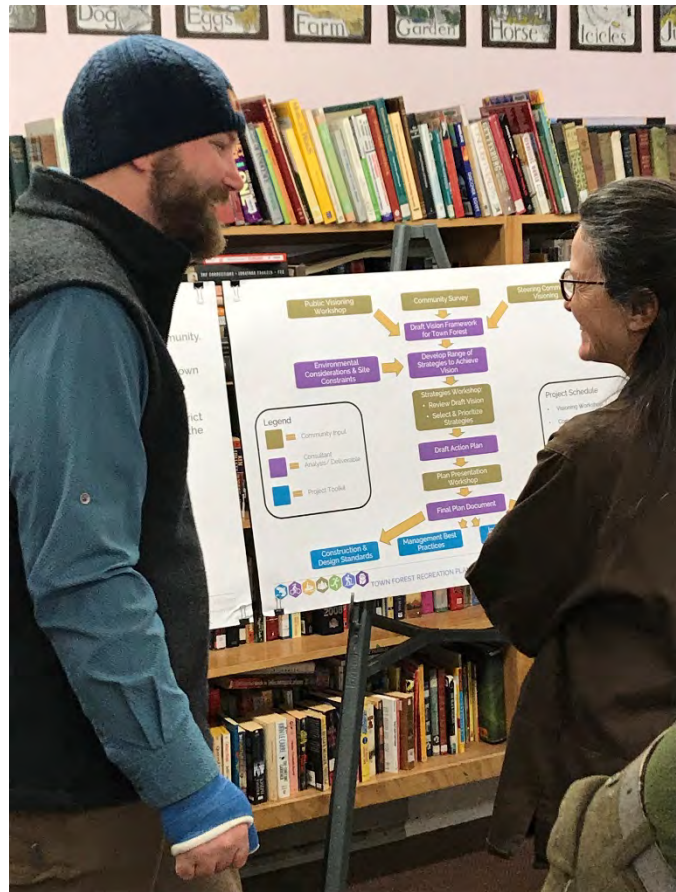
Steering Committee Process

The Steering Committee, made up of the Conservation Commission, was instrumental to the process. Members of the steering committee attended the kickoff summit, helped plan and spread the word about the public workshops, reviewed the draft strategies and draft plan, and met with the project team and on their own to provide ideas and feedback throughout the process.

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Visioning Workshop

A Visioning Workshop for the Woodbury Town Forest and Wetland was held at the Woodbury Community Room on January 25, 2018. The meeting was a drop-in anytime, open house format with questions about an overall vision for the town forests; the balance of recreation, education, conservation/natural resources, and forest products; the natural resources present on the site; and future activities in the town forests. Attendees wrote responses on boards, completed dot exercises, and drew their ideas and knowledge on maps. Members of the project team and steering committee were available for one-on-one chats with attendees, and a general comment box was provided for open-ended feedback. Background/baseline information about the project, the community, and the forest, was also provided. 17 people signed in and an estimated 20-25 people were in attendance.



Please see Appendix 1 – Visioning Process Results, which combines the findings from this meeting and the community survey.

Community Survey

The Community Survey was launched at the public visioning workshop on January 25, 2018 and remained open through the Pie Breakfast—March 18, 2018. The community survey asked the same questions as the public visioning workshop, in order to give the people who could not attend the meeting an opportunity to provide input. Both online and hard copy surveys were made available. The community was made aware of the survey through a variety of methods including flyers distributed around town, press-releases and news articles, and email blasts and social media posts. In total, the survey received 37 responses—20 online and 17 hard copy.

Please see Appendix 1 for the Visioning Process Results, which combines the findings from the visioning workshop and the community survey.



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Strategies Workshop

A strategies workshop for the Woodbury Town Forest and Wetland was held at the Woodbury Library on July 26, 2018. The meeting was a combination presentation and open house. First, the attendees learned about the project process, the toolkit, vision framework, the management plan, and draft strategies. The meeting transitioned to an open house where attendees prioritized the strategies on boards and had the opportunity to have one-on-one discussions with members of the project team and steering committee. Attendees also indicated locations for the strategies on a large map. One person signed in and an estimated 10-12 people were in attendance.

Please see Appendix 2 for the Strategies Workshop Results.



Plan Presentation Workshop

The steering committee presented the plan to the selectboard and members of the public on October 22, 2018. In the presentation, the steering committee explained the project purpose and process and shared the vision framework and top priority strategies they developed. Representatives from Urban and Community Forestry and/or the Department of Forests Parks and Recreation were present to show support for the plan.

Implementation Summit

Representatives from our town attended the Town Forest Implementation Summit held on November 9, 2018 at the VYCC West Monitor Barn in Richmond, VT. The summit included representatives from all 10 pilot communities and provided opportunities for networking and information sharing. Attendees learned about commonalities and major takeaways across all ten town forests, the action plans developed by each of the towns, grant opportunities, and interpretive signage. The attendees heard from a panel about management and public decision making, received a sneak preview of the Vermont Town Forest Recreation Planning Toolkit, and took a walking tour of Richmond's town forest and the VYCC trail infrastructure.



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Needs Assessment

Through the public engagement process, community members identified the issues and needs associated with the forest to be resolved in this planning process. Additional issues and needs were identified via site visits and natural resources assessments. The following issues and needs were identified:

1. Town residents unaware of the forest
2. Small town with limited resources and local businesses
3. No existing parking, signage, or trail system
4. Unmanaged forest (has not been logged in 60+ years)
5. Wetland sees significant use but no place to gather classes
6. Town forest and wetland on opposite sides of Route 14
7. Need resources in order to build trails
8. Many seasonal camps and second homes in town – part-time homeowners with unknown needs



Chapter 4: Town Forest Vision Framework

A vision framework is a critically important tool that informs the goals and direction of the town forest recreation plan. The vision framework encompasses all forest uses—not just recreation—to understand how recreation should fit in with the community’s overall intent for the forest. The vision framework is directional, descriptive, and aspirational, communicating what the community believes are the ideal conditions for the forest—how things would look if all opportunities and issues were perfectly addressed.

The vision framework includes:

1. A discussion of the management balance in the forest; and
2. A list of key attributes that describe the community’s desired character for the forest

The vision framework is broad enough to encompass a variety of local perspectives. Unlike a simple one or two sentence vision statement, a vision framework allows for more complexity to be communicated and better illuminates the community’s desired character for the forests—which is often multi-faceted.

The management balance discussion and list of key attributes work together to communicate the community’s overarching aspirations for the forests. Both aspects of the vision framework should align, without repeating each other. The management balance describes the community’s management priorities for the forests, while key attributes are a list of words or short phrases that expand upon the management balance and describe the community’s desired future character for the forest. These two pieces work together and support each other to communicate the multi-faceted values of the community.

Visioning

At the public visioning workshop and in the community survey, attendees/respondents were asked, “What word or phrase best describes your EXISTING experience with the town forest in your community?” and “What word or phrase best describes your DESIRED FUTURE experience with the town forest in your community?” The results of these exercises are demonstrated in the word clouds below. The size of the words in the word clouds corresponds to the number of times that word was used in the responses.

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Existing Experience

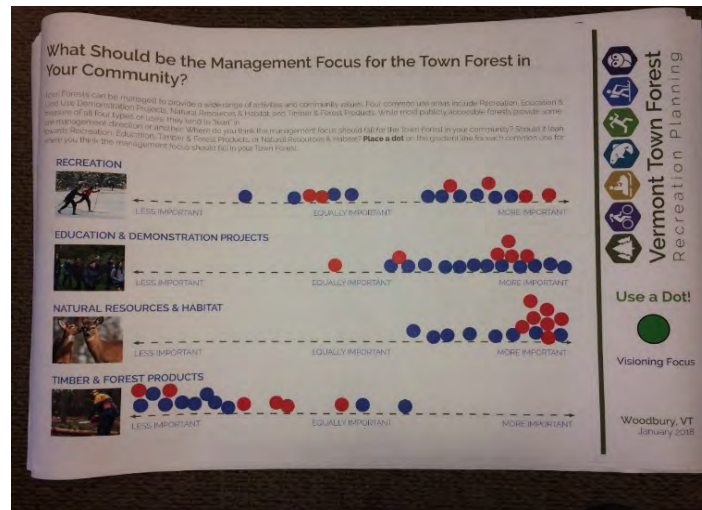
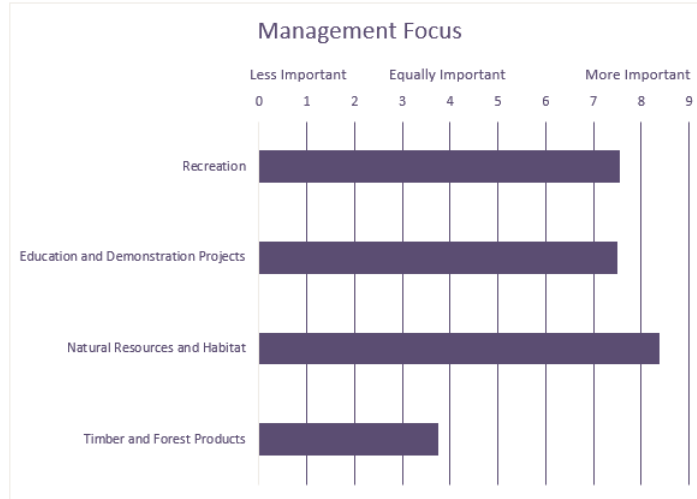


For the most part, community members had no experience with the forest and many were unaware of its existence. The few who were aware of it remarked on its beauty and quiet. Respondents provided one response for both the wetland and the forest.



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meeting) and asked survey and workshop participants “Where do you think the management focus should fall for the Town Forests in your community? Should it lean towards Recreation, Education, Timber & Forest Products, or Natural Resources & Habitat?” Their responses are below:



The Woodbury community expressed that each of the four use areas are important in the management of the town forest and wetland, but that a much greater emphasis should be placed on Recreation; Education & Demonstration Projects; and Natural Resources & Habitat than on Timber & Forest Products. Timber management should be conducted primarily for the purpose of wildlife enhancement and habitat improvement.

At the wetland, Education & Demonstration Projects should be most important while Natural Resources & Habitat should be the top priority at the forest.



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Key Attributes

The following list of key attributes are the words or short phrases that communicate what the community believes are the ideal conditions for the forests – how things would look if all opportunities and issues were perfectly addressed, which may be the same or different from how things currently look. This list is based on the analysis of public and committee input received through the visioning process, as well as the review of the community’s demographics, profile, forest information, current management plans, and surveys.

1. Year-round recreation (snowshoeing, cross country skiing, hiking)
2. Natural, peaceful, and quiet
3. Sustainable and well-maintained trail system
4. Protection of bird and wildlife habitat
5. Protection of vernal pools, wetlands, and other water resources
6. Part of a larger connected forest block
7. Connectivity with other forest areas, the VAST trail, Buck Lake Management Area, and Hardwick via Woodbury-Hardwick Rail Trail
8. Maintain healthy balance between stewardship and human uses
9. Low key and low intensity use
10. Local community gathering place
11. Healthy older growth forest
12. Multi-generational
13. Solitude, rest, and rejuvenation
14. An involved community maintaining the trails
15. Hunting opportunities
16. Opportunities for learning about stewardship, history, and the forest
17. Easily accessible from village center and Woodbury Elementary School
18. A community oriented around outdoor education
19. Wetland area effectively utilized for outdoor education
20. Place for children and community to be outside and experience nature
21. Protection and sharing of historical and cultural resources
22. Woodbury as a gateway to the Northeast Kingdom and the forest encourages passersby to stop in the town
23. Well-known community asset



Chapter 5: Action Plan

Introduction

The Action Plan is a set of recommended strategies and projects to achieve the town's vision. These strategies and projects were developed based on the key attributes, needs assessment, forest walks, and input from the steering committee and community. From a larger initial list of strategies, the steering committee has selected and edited the strategies to craft an action plan well-suited to the community's interest, needs, and capacity.

The Action Plan includes an Action Plan Table, detailed "project pages" for the highest priority strategies, and an Action Plan map to graphically display the highest priority strategies.

Detailed Project Pages

The following pages provide more detail on the strategies that are mostly likely to achieve the community's vision for the forest and that have been identified by community members and the steering committee as top priorities. These project pages include the key attributes and needs assessment items that the strategy responds to, a more detailed description of the rationale and process to carry out the strategy, and the other items included in the action table.

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Parking Lot and Access Trail

Key Attribute #:

17 23

Need #:

1 3

Estimated Cost:

\$\$\$

Timing:

Short-Term

Since it became a town forest, Woodbury's forest has been relatively underutilized recreationally. Although many factors have contributed to this, chief among them is a lack of direct access to the forest. As the forest's southwestern corner is very close to the village center, the town has a major opportunity to create a direct, convenient public access into the forest. With an easy route to walk or drive to the forest, the community will begin to utilize and enjoy their forest.

The Conservation Commission has proposed creating a small parking area and trailhead off of Town Farm Road. Constructing the parking area will require clearing a small piece of the forest and dealing with the design constraints of the site, especially the drainage that runs along the Town Farm Road. The proposed parking area would have room for three to five cars, a reasonable amount given the size of the proposed trail system and the short walking distance between the forest and the village center. The Conservation Commission has also worked with VYCC to design the access trail reflected on the Action Plan Graphic.

The trailhead kiosk should include a large posted map of the forest, smaller maps for distribution, and information about forest programming, allowed uses, and trail etiquette.

Responsibility:
Conservation Commission

Partners Involved:
Town

Planning Required:
Parking lot design, Kiosk design

Funding Opportunities:
LWCF, RTP, RTC, TAP, RFG, AIG

Toolkit Resources

Parking Considerations Toolkit

Land Conservation and Recreational Access Toolkit

Trailhead Kiosk Volunteer Designs



Vermont Town Forest Recreation Planning

Wetland Outdoor Education Facilities

Key Attribute #:



Need #:



Estimated Cost:

\$\$\$

Timing:

Short/Medium-Term

Woodbury Elementary School is seeking to distinguish itself with a robust, unparalleled outdoor education offering. The school is well-located for that, with the wetland and a small forest adjacent to it. The wetland spans a parcel owned by the town and a parcel owned by the school. The two should collaborate to develop infrastructure that facilitates productive, educational outdoor school experiences. These improvements are primarily located on the parcel owned by the school.

A nature interpretive trail around the wetland would teach students about the trees, botany, and natural features around them. Interpretive signage should be placed along the trail that identifies trees and explains the ecology. The signage should be geared towards elementary school students and older students could even be involved in creating the signs. The existing trail along the wetland may need to be upgraded with boardwalks and bridges in some areas.

An outdoor classroom will allow school groups to gather outside for instruction. The school has already received a grant for this project and this project is complete. The space has log benches or earthen mounds where students can sit and learn at the beginning and end of wetland outings or simply for class on a nice day.

A pier/boardwalk along the edge of the wetland will be a dry space for classes to gather and observe the wetland up close. As with the outdoor classroom, the town, school district, and Friends of Woodbury Elementary School should jointly apply for grants. This outdoor educational infrastructure will likely draw other local schools to take field trips to Woodbury.

Responsibility:

Elementary School/Friends of Woodbury Elementary School

Partners Involved:

Conservation Commission

Planning Required:

Classroom/Viewing Pier Design

Funding Opportunities:

LWCF, RTC, RTP, RFG, AIG

Toolkit Resources

Programming Partnerships

Sustainable Facility Standards

Sustainable Trail Standards

Interpretation Guidance Toolkit

Natural Resource Guidance Toolkit



Vermont Town Forest Recreation Planning

Develop a Trail System

Key Attribute #:



Need #:



Estimated Cost:

\$\$\$

Timing:

Short/Medium-Term

A looping hiking trail should be constructed to realize the potential of the Woodbury Town Forest as a community recreational and educational resource. The trail would be open to hikers, cross country skiers, snowshoers, and dogwalkers.

The primary access point to the trail system should be the trailhead on Town Farm Road. The trail from the parking area would soon split into a loop. The proposed loop goes around the forest, passing by the interesting historical and natural features of the forest. At each of these locations, a pause place should be constructed, with interpretive signage and a bench to allow forest visitors to learn about the forest and rest. For one segment, the new proposed trail follows the existing VAST trail through the property. The Conservation Commission, VYCC, and/or local trail builders should assess the existing trail and rehabilitate and redesign it as necessary to ensure the trail is sustainable, with no drainage or erosion issues. Throughout the forest, existing trail corridors present opportunities but should be rebuilt to sustainable standards for user experience and natural resource protection.

All new trail constructed should meet the sustainable trail standards found in the Vermont Town Forest Recreation Planning Toolkit. The Conservation Commission worked with VYCC on the initial design for the trail and should continue partnering with them for trail layout and construction.

The Conservation Commission should reach out to adjacent landowners to coordinate on their personal access to the forest, management, and the potential for future public trail connections.

Responsibility:

Conservation Commission

Partners Involved:

VYCC, Local Trail Builders

Planning Required:

Trail design

Funding Opportunities:

RTP, RD, VCDP, RDF, VCF, LF, PBCG, RWJF, TCPN

Toolkit Resources

Sustainable Trail Standards

Interpretation Guidance Toolkit

Natural Resource Guidance Toolkit

Trail Assessment Forms



Vermont Town Forest Recreation Planning

Interpretation

Key Attribute #:

2 13 16 20 21

Need #:

3

Estimated Cost:

\$\$

Timing:

Medium-Term

The Woodbury Town Forest has many interesting historic and natural features that present opportunities for interpretation. At these points of interest, an informational sign should be posted, along with a bench to allow forest visitors to pause, rest, and enjoy the scenery.

The Town of Woodbury and the previous owner, Hugo Meyer, have left little evidence of human presence. However, the historic occupants left stone walls, an old cellar hole, and the foundation of an old sugar house. Interpretive signage should be created that gives a sense of what the town was like in earlier times. A sign should be posted at the interesting geologic feature, to help forest visitors understand the geologic history as well.

The proposed trail also passes by multiple vernal pools, another interesting feature to be interpreted. The signage should explain what vernal pools are, what ecological benefits they bring, the species that live in them, and how to observe them without disturbing the habitat.

Throughout the forest, signage should be posted about the wildlife that can be found in the forest – from the charismatic large mammals like bears and moose to the birds, fingernail clams, and other small creatures that make the forest their home.

The Conservation Commission should also create species identification lists. These lists should be available at the trailhead kiosk, encouraging students and other forest visitors to record the species they see in the forest. This interpretation around the natural features of the forest will help visitors understand and appreciate the natural world.

Responsibility:

Conservation Commission

Partners Involved:

Program and educational partners

Planning Required:

History and natural resource research, pause place design

Funding Opportunities:

LWCF, RTC, RTP, RFG, AIG

Toolkit Resources

Interpretation Guidance Toolkit

Pause Places Toolkit

Bench Volunteer Designs

Natural Resource Guidance Toolkit



Vermont Town Forest Recreation Planning

Educational Programming Partnerships

Key Attribute #:

16

18

19

20

Need #:

2

Estimated Cost:

\$

Timing:

Short/Medium-
Term

Between the wetland and the forest, Woodbury has two fantastic locations to host outdoor recreation and education programming. Woodbury Elementary School is expected to heavily utilize these natural areas and the new facilities at each. Yet the school should reach out to other schools and organizations so that more children and adults can experience Woodbury's unique educational resource.

The school should continue to reach out to Four Winds Institute, the main provider of outdoor education at Woodbury Elementary. Four Winds Institute provides outdoor education to schools across the state and trainings for educators in outdoor education. Four Winds should be encouraged to bring other schools to Woodbury and host educator trainings at the wetland and forest. Woodbury should also directly invite the nearby schools that do not receive Four Winds programming.

Hardwick Trails, just north of Woodbury, is a popular location for outdoor education for both Hardwick schools and the neighboring communities. The Conservation Commission and the school should meet with Hardwick Trails committee members to discuss forest programming ideas, how to bring neighboring schools to the forest, and the necessary facilities to support such programming.

The Conservation Commission and the school should also host outdoor educational programming geared towards adults. The Commission members have the expertise to lead ecology tours in the forest. These should be advertised to the Woodbury community and surrounding towns.

Responsibility:

Woodbury Elementary School and Conservation Commission

Partners Involved:

Four Winds, Friends of Woodbury Elementary, Hardwick Trails, other local schools, other program and educational partners

Planning Required:

Funding Opportunities:

VCF, VHCB, LF, BJB

Toolkit Resources

Programming Partnerships Toolkit

Mapping and Promotion Toolkit



Vermont Town Forest Recreation Planning

Trail Maps

Key Attribute #:

7 16 23

Need #:

1 2 3

Estimated Cost:

\$\$

Timing:

Short-Term

Once the forest is accessible and the trails are laid out, trail maps must be readily available. The maps should display all the trails in the forest, point out the pause places and interpretive signage, and list the allowed and prohibited uses of the forest.

These maps should be available at the trailhead kiosk and the post office in the village. Large-scale maps should also be posted at both of these locations. The map should also be available online on a town forest website. As the majority of residents are currently unaware of the forest, the map should be posted all over town and in the business in nearby towns that Woodbury residents frequent. The town also has many second homeowners with camps on the ponds. The Conservation Commission should reach out to them with maps of the forest. Visiting the forest will bring them into the village, enhancing the economic opportunity for a store to reopen in town.

The town should also pursue opportunities to include the forest on regional trail maps, especially to promote the Hardwick-Woodbury Rail Trail.

Responsibility:

Conservation Commission

Partners Involved:

Planning Required:

Graphic design,
cartography

Funding Opportunities:

RTP

Toolkit Resources

Interpretation Guidance Toolkit

Pause Places Toolkit

Bench Volunteer Designs

Natural Resource Guidance Toolkit



Vermont Town Forest Recreation Planning

Access Paths and Connections

Key Attribute #:

7

17

22

Need #:

2

6

Estimated Cost:

\$\$\$\$

Timing:

Medium/Long-
Term

The proximity of the town forest to the village center offers incredible potential for economic and educational benefits. The proposed forest trailhead kiosk is about a quarter mile from the village center and only slightly further from the Elementary School. Visitors to the forest could easily walk into the village and vice versa and students could easily walk to the forest for field trips as well. However, currently one would need to cross state Highway 14 against traffic and walk along the highway's narrow shoulder to reach the forest. Especially with large groups of students potentially walking back and forth, a formal access path should be created.

For the access path, the town and Conservation Commission should work with VTrans to develop a wide, protected walking path. The path could either be attached to the road with a small buffer or separate but within the ROW. The town should also work with VTrans on enhancing the crossing at Cabot Road and 14. Signage should be posted at the crossing and all along the route, with signs that warn drivers of pedestrians and encourage them to slow down and signs directing Woodbury visitors or passthroughs to the forest.

Another connection opportunity for the Woodbury Town Forest is to Hardwick. The Hardwick-Woodbury Rail Trail runs from Hardwick directly to the Woodbury Town Forest. At present, the trail is relatively unknown and has no online presence. Woodbury should work with Hardwick on promoting the trail and the recreational opportunities on either end.

Responsibility:

Conservation
Commission/Town

Partners Involved:

School District, VTrans,
Town of Hardwick

Planning Required:

Scoping Study/Trail Plan

Funding Opportunities:

BCP, BPP, STBG, TAP,
MPG

Toolkit Resources

Vtrans Signage Program

Land Conservation and
Recreational Access
Toolkit

Sustainable Trail
Standards



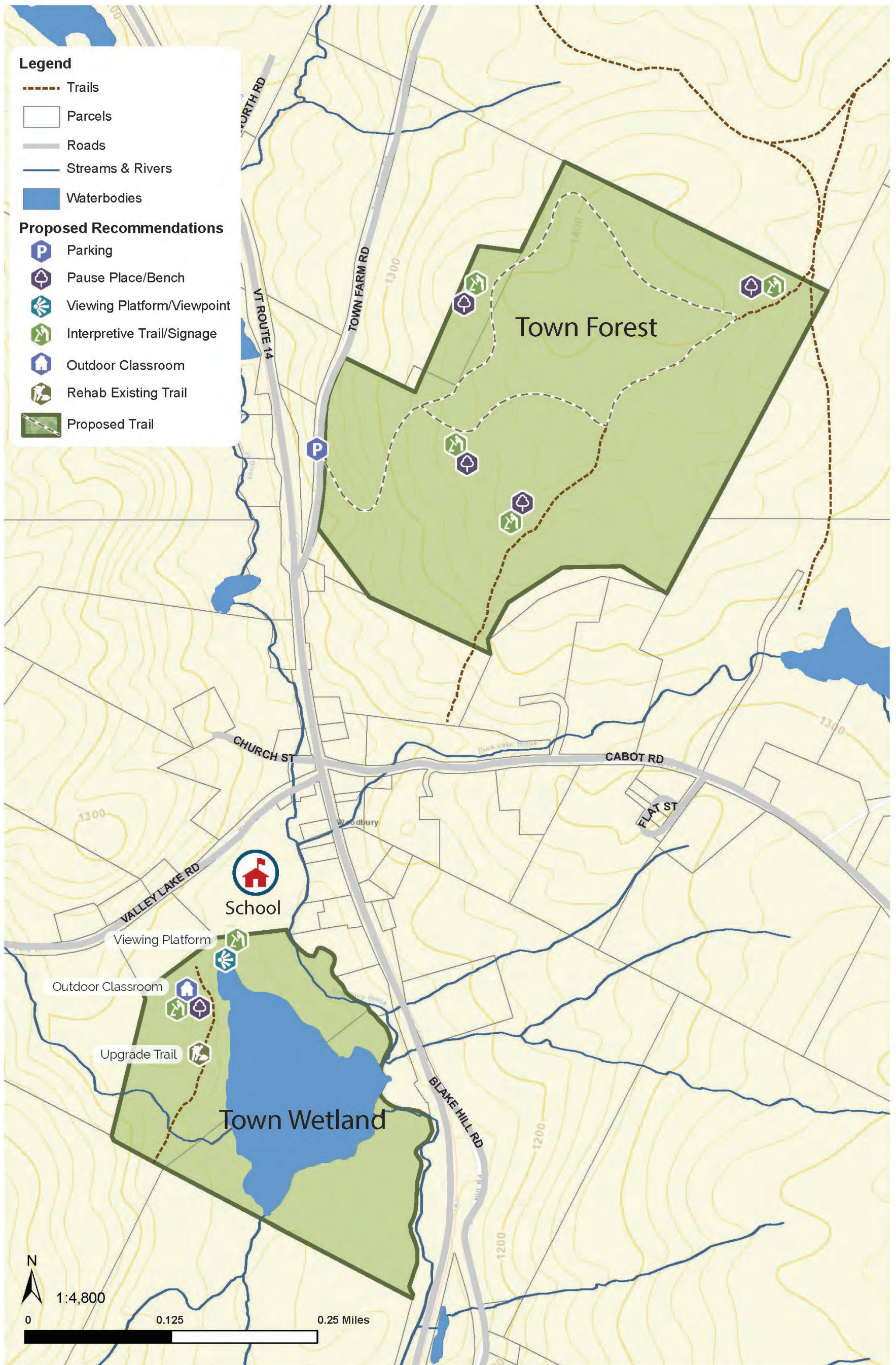
Vermont Town Forest

Recreation Planning

Action Plan Graphic

The following diagram shows conceptual locations for the high priority strategies with a spatial component. These locations are based on the community's pinpointing of strategies at the workshop, the natural resources of the forest, the facilitated forest walks, and the project team's understanding of the right spacing and locations for these strategies. The locations on this map are generalized and, in most cases, further planning and design will be necessary before construction.





Action Plan Table

The Action Plan Table on the following pages includes all the strategies for the town and additional information to help with implementation. The strategies were categorized under Parking & Access; Trails; Other Facilities & Structures; Education & Programs; Events; Maps, Outreach, and Promotion; and Administrative Actions. Each strategy has the following additional information:

- A detailed strategy description
- Responsibility – who the responsible parties are to pursue this strategy (i.e., Town, Conservation Commission)
- Timing (ongoing, short, medium, long-term) – when the responsible party should begin pursuing this strategy
- Partners involved – possible partners to be involved in this project (i.e., Vermont Land Trust, Vtrans, local trails groups, local schools)
- Planning required – planning, designs, assessments, or studies that needs to happen before this strategy can be pursued (i.e., trail system design, wildlife habitat assessments)
- Relative Cost (\$,\$\$,,\$\$\$,\$\$\$\$\$) – a ballpark estimate of what the project will cost. One dollar sign is little to no cost, two dollar signs is moderate, three dollar signs is more expensive, four dollar signs is very expensive. \$-\$\$ indicates the relative cost is between those two levels. \$/\$\$ indicates that the project can be either \$ or \$\$, depending on the chosen route (i.e., volunteer trail counts vs. electronic trail counter)
- Funding Opportunities – potential sources of funding for the project. These could be grants, local business sponsorships, or fundraising events
- Toolkit and Support Resources – the toolkit elements that provide guidance on pursuing this strategy. Guidance from Vtrans, the Vermont Town Forest Stewardship Guide, or other support resources can also be useful to pursue this strategy

| Strategy or Action | Description | Responsibility | Timing (Ongoing, short, medium, and long-term) | Partners Involved | Planning required | Relative Cost (\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$) | Funding Opportunities | Toolkit & Support Resources |
|---|--|------------------------------|--|----------------------------------|---|--------------------------------------|--|---|
| 1. Parking & Access | | | | | | | | |
| Parking lot and trailhead development | Develop a parking lot along Town Farm Road with a trailhead kiosk.. | Conservation Commission | Short=Term | Town | Parking lot design | \$\$\$\$ | LWCF, RTP, RTC, TAP, RFG | -Trailhead Kiosk Volunteer Designs -Parking Considerations Toolkit |
| Access paths and connections | Develop access path between the town forest trailhead and the Woodbury Elementary/Post Office area. | Conservation Commission/Town | Long-Term | School District | Scoping study/trail plan | \$\$-\$\$\$ | BCP, BPP, STBG, TAP, MPG | - Sustainable Trail Standards - Local Motion Safe Routes to Schools Technical Assistance |
| Vehicle wayfinding signage | Add vehicle wayfinding signage from town and major roadways to the forest. | Town | Medium-Term | Vtrans | Signage design | \$\$ | Vtrans Signage Program, BPP | -Trail Markers and Wayfinding Toolkit -Vtrans Signage Program |
| Forest kiosk | Place forest kiosk with maps and wayfinding signage at the Post Office. | Conservation Commission | Medium=Term | Town, Post Office | Kiosk design, mapping | \$ | RTP, RTC, AIG | -Trailhead Kiosk Volunteer Designs -Trail Markers and Wayfinding Toolkit |
| 2. Trails | | | | | | | | |
| Existing trail conditions assessment and review | Study the trails and logging roads that currently exist on the property and consider potential for future trail building. Existing corridors may provide opportunities, but should be rebuilt to sustainable trail standards for both user experience and natural resource protection. | Conservation Commission | Short=Term | VYCC, local trail builders/users | Trail reroute & design | \$ | RTP, RTC, VHCP, ERG | -Trail assessment forms -Natural Resource Guidance Toolkit -Sustainable Trail Standards |
| New rugged multi-use paths | Develop rugged, multi-use, non-motorized paths that are designed to accommodate multiple user groups (i.e., hikers, snowshoers, dogwalkers) | Conservation Commission | Short=Term | VYCC, local trail builders | Trail design | \$\$ | RTP, RD, VCDP, RFG, VCF, LF, PBCG, RW/JF, TCPN | -Sustainable Trail Standards |
| Trail markers and signage | Add signage in the forest for wayfinding, information, and trail etiquette. Ensure it communicates town ownership and/or conservation commission management. | Conservation Commission | Short=Term | VYCC | Signage design | \$\$ | RTP, RTC | -Trail Markers and Wayfinding Toolkit |
| Nature Interpretation Trail | Develop a nature trail loop with interpretive signage about the forest. | Conservation Commission | Medium=Term | VYCC | Trail design, natural resource research, pause places | \$\$ | RTP, RD, VCDP, RFG, VCF, LF, PBCG, RW/JF, TCPN | -Sustainable Trail Standards -Interpretation Guidance Toolkit |
| Partner with VYCC on trail building | Continue working with VYCC on trail design, building, and maintenance strategies. | Conservation Commission | Ongoing | VYCC | -- | \$\$ | -- | -Sustainable Trail Standards |
| Convene local trails group | Partner with local trail supporters for volunteers for trail building and maintenance. | Conservation Commission | Short=Term | Local trail users | Meeting facilitation | \$ | NPCB | -Volunteer Development and Recruitment Toolkit -Programming Partnerships Toolkit |

| 3. Other Facilities and Structures | | | | | | | | |
|---|--|---|-------------|---|---|------|--------------------------|--|
| Outdoor Classroom/Learning Lab | Create a small gather space with log benches, earthen mounds etc. for schools and other groups at the Town Wetland parcel. . | Woodbury Elementary School, Friends of Woodbury Elementary School | Short-Term | Conservation Commission, Four Winds | Classroom/Playground./Viewing Pier Design | \$\$ | LWCF, RTC, RTP, RFG, AIG | - Sustainable Facility Standards -Natural Resource Guidance toolkit -Interpretation Guidance Toolkit |
| Pause Places | Develop a series of "Pause Places" along the trail system. These may be a rest stop, an informational stop, or both. All pause places should include a bench or appropriate rocks/boulders for seating and should capitalize on locations with the potential for views, sunsets, rest, and rejuvenation. Opportunities for natural and historical interpretation should also be explored. Larger ones may include a picnic table. Some could also include public art or a 'little free library.' | Conservation Commission | Medium-Term | Program and educational partners | Historical and natural resources research, pause place design | \$\$ | LWCF, RTC, RTP, RFG, AIG | - Pause Places Toolkit -Bench Volunteer Designs '-Interpretation Guidance Toolkit |
| Wildplay or natural playground at Town Wetland | Natural playgrounds are play environments that blend natural materials, features, and indigenous vegetation with creative landforms to teach children about the wonders and intricacies of the natural world while they play within it. | Woodbury Elementary School, Friends of Woodbury Elementary School | Medium-Term | Conservation Commission | Classroom/Playground./Viewing Pier Design | \$\$ | LWCF, RD, RFG | - Sustainable Facility Standards |
| Educational viewing pier | Add an educational viewing pier at the edge of the wetland for classes to gather. Boardwalk and bridges may also be necessary at wet spots on trails near the wetland. | Woodbury Elementary School, Friends of Woodbury Elementary School | Medium-Term | Conservation Commission, Four Winds | Classroom/Playground./Viewing Pier Design | \$\$ | LWCF, RTC, RTP, RFG, AIG | - Sustainable Trail Standards - Sustainable Facility Standards |
| 4. Education & Programs | | | | | | | | |
| Partnerships with local schools | Host frequent field trips about ecology and local history in the forest and wetland. Seek regional school partnerships as well. | Woodbury Elementary School | Ongoing | Conservation Commission, Friends of Woodbury Elementary School, Four Winds, other local schools | -- | \$ | -- | -Programming Partnerships Toolkit |
| Partnerships with state/local groups, camps, etc. | Host kids camp, retreats, or educational activities in the forest. | Conservation Commission | Medium-Term | Four Winds, day camps, and other program and educational partners | -- | \$ | -- | -Programming Partnerships Toolkit |
| Education Programs | Host educational programs in the forest about ecology and the arts such as nature photography or wildlife sketching programs. | Program and educational partners | Medium-Term | Four Winds, Conservation Commission | -- | \$ | VCF, VHCB, LF, BJF | -Programming Partnerships Toolkit |
| Ecology tours | Offer ecology tours (birdwatching, plant identification, etc.) for children and adults. | Program and educational partners | Short-Term | Four Winds, Conservation Commission | Ecological research | \$ | VCF, VHCB, LF, BJF | -Programming Partnerships Toolkit |
| Interpretive signage | Develop interpretive signage that support educational programs and self-guided learning. Coordinate with development of pause places | Conservation Commission | Medium-Term | Four Winds, Woodbury Elementary School | Historical and natural resources research, pause place design | \$\$ | LWCF, RTC, RTP, RFG, AIG | -Interpretation Guidance Toolkit |

| | | | | | | | | |
|--|--|--|-------------|---|---|----|-------------------------------|---|
| Story Walk | A StoryWalk is an innovative and delightful way for children — and adults! — to enjoy reading and the outdoors at the same time. Laminated pages from a children's book are attached to wooden stakes, which are installed along an outdoor path. As you stroll down the trail, you're directed to the next page in the story. | Conservation Commission, Friends of Woodbury Elementary School | Short-Term | Library | -- | \$ | -- | - Story Walk Toolkit |
| Species identification lists | Bird, plant and mammal species identification checklists could be developed and made available at the trailhead kiosk. Should also be utilized in education experiences. | Conservation Commission | Short-Term | Program and educational partners, Four Winds, Hardwick Trails | Ecological research | \$ | VCF, VHCB, LF, BJJ | -Programming Partnerships Toolkit |
| 5. Maps, Outreach, & Promotion | | | | | | | | |
| Develop and disseminate trail maps | Develop trail maps and print and post at the trailhead and at the post office. Also post the trail map online on a town forest website. | Conservation Commission | Medium-Term | -- | Graphic design, Cartography | \$ | RTP | -Mapping and Promotion Toolkit |
| Promote forest and wetland to nearby towns | Invite nearby schools to participate in outdoor education programming at the wetland and forest. | Conservation Commission | Medium-Term | Orleans Southwest Supervisory Union, Four Winds | -- | \$ | -- | -Mapping and Promotion Toolkit -Programming Partnerships Toolkit |
| Learn from other forests and outdoor education programs. | Meet with committees of other forests (i.e., Hardwick) for ideas about nature-based education. | Conservation Commission | Short-Term | Hardwick Trails | -- | \$ | -- | -Programming Partnerships Toolkit |
| 6. Administrative Actions | | | | | | | | |
| Management plan | Develop a forest management plan for the long term success of the forest. Ensure it includes provisions for partnerships and revisions. Coordinate with management zones in the forest. | Conservation Commission | Medium-Term | Town, forest users and volunteers | Management Plan | \$ | CCG, MPG, ERG, VCF, VHCP, BJJ | - Vermont Town Forest Stewardship Guide |
| Management zones | Consider management zones of the forest to consider and plan for all uses. Designate areas more suitable for wildlife habitat, hunting, or hiking, for example. | Conservation Commission | Medium-Term | Town, forest users and volunteers | Management Plan | \$ | CCG, MPG, ERG, VCF, VHCP, BJJ | -Management Zones Toolkit |
| Adopt formal process for proposing and reviewing new trails and facilities | Process will include ecological concerns and will provide all stakeholders and user groups an opportunity to propose new trails and facilities. | Conservation Commission | Short-Term | Town, forest users and volunteers | Review, adjustment, and adoption of model process | \$ | RTP, RTC, VHCP, ERG | -Model Proposal Process -Natural Resource Guidance Toolkit |
| Work with adjoining landowners | Work with adjoining landowners on access, connections, and management. | Conservation Commission | Ongoing | Neighbors | -- | \$ | -- | -Land Conservation and Recreational Access Toolkit |

Chapter 6: Implementation

Town Forest Recreation Planning Toolkit

The Vermont Town Forest Recreation Planning Toolkit has been developed in concert with this plan and the nine other town forest recreation plans currently underway through the overall US Forest Service grant. The intent behind the toolkit was to build up a replicable process and a set of tools that could be used for both the professionally-facilitated process with the first ten communities, of which Woodbury is one, and for other towns to do their own recreation plans after this project has ended.

Perhaps more importantly for Woodbury, the toolkit includes a number of guidance documents, designs, case studies, best practices, and standards the Town can use to implement strategies identified in this plan. The action plan table and detailed project pages identifies the most relevant toolkit resources for each strategy. In addition, the full list of toolkit resources is described below.

The toolkit is organized through six (6) specific “pods.” These include an existing conditions and assessment pod, a public engagement pod, a natural resource pod, a plan development pod, an implementation pod, and a stories pod. Each are described below.

The Vermont Town Forest Recreation Planning Toolkit is available on Urban and Community Forestry’s website at: <https://vtcommunityforestry.org/>



Vermont Town Forest Recreation Planning

Existing Conditions Pod

The existing conditions and assessment pod provides a checklist to communities to identify background information and municipal plans that should be considered in developing their plan. This pod also includes trail counting forms and extrapolation sheets modified for Vermont from the National Bike and Pedestrian Documentation Project materials. Trail and facility assessment checklists are also included, so the baseline conditions of the town forests can be well understood. Information about available resources such as VT UCF and the county foresters are also provided. Instructions on how to use the VT Center for Geographic Information (VCGI) interactive map viewer to produce basic maps is also included in this pod.



Vermont Town Forest Recreation Planning

Public Engagement Pod

The public engagement pod provides a series of promotional material templates, such as flyers and press releases, and public meeting materials, like informational boards and handouts, that communities can use to explore concepts and constraints with the public. Informational board templates provide opportunities to both present information and gather feedback through write in questions, dot exercises and similar interactions. Surveys and visioning materials that allow towns to identify their priorities for use of their forests are an integral part of this pod. Finally, guidance and best practices on how to facilitate steering committee and public meetings round out the range of materials available in this pod.



Vermont Town Forest Recreation Planning

Natural Resources Pod

The natural resources pod, developed by Arrowwood Environmental includes guidance for using ANR's Natural Resource Atlas for general resource mapping, a process for inventorying natural resources in the forest, workshop and survey questions for natural resources, and a model process for proposing and evaluating new trails or facilities. Most importantly, the natural resources pod also includes the Natural Resources Guidebook and associated activities and resources matrix. The guidebook includes information and links to relevant regulatory documents and contact information at both the State and Federal level for each of the following natural resource areas: Vernal Pools, Deer Wintering Areas (DWA), Ledges/Cliffs/Talus, Mast Stands, Interior Forest, Significant Natural Communities, Wetlands, Rare, Threatened or Endangered Species, Floodplain Forests, Streams/Rivers, Early Succession Forests, and Lakes and Ponds. The guidebook also includes an activities matrix for each of these resources that provides compatibility, management information and recommended buffers for a range of activities and facilities, including: Hiking Trails, Biking Trails, X-C Ski Trails, ATV trails, Snowmobile Trails, New Access Roads, Structures/Buildings, Parking Lots, Forestry/Logging, Camping, Sugaring, and Extraction (gravel, sand).



Vermont Town Forest Recreation Planning

Example Content from the Natural Resources Guidebook

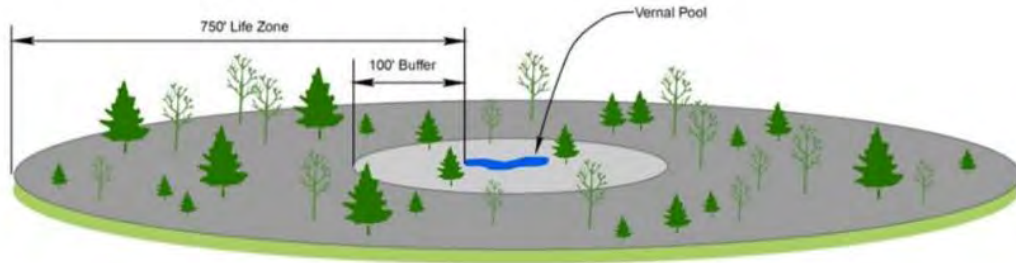


Figure 1. Vernal Pool management zones

Vernal Pool Management Matrix

| Activity | Compatibility in Pool* | Compatibility in 100' Buffer* | Compatibility in 750' Buffer* | Comments (seasonal restrictions, buffers, mgmt.) |
|---------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|---|
| Hiking Trails | N | Y | Y | Avoid creating ruts or standing water |
| Biking Trails | N | Y | Y | Avoid creating ruts or standing water |
| Ski Trails | N | Y | Y | Avoid creating ruts or standing water |
| ATV trails | N | N | Y | Avoid trails through wet areas. Avoid creating ruts or standing water. Close trails during spring migration period. |
| Snowmobile Trails | N | Y | Y | Avoid trails through wet areas. Avoid creating ruts or standing water. Close trails during spring migration period. |
| New Access Roads | N | N | Y | Avoid roads through wet areas. Avoid creating ruts or standing water. Close roads during spring migration period. |
| Structures/Buildings | N | N | Y | See guidelines in text and links provided. Only appropriate if most of buffer remains forested. |
| Parking Lots | N | N | Y | See guidelines in text and link provided. Only appropriate if most of buffer remains forested. Runoff needs to be managed. |
| Forestry/Logging | N | N | Y | Some forestry activity compatible with vernal pools, see text and links provided. |
| Camping | N | N | Y | Camping may be compatible in larger buffer zone. See general guidelines in text. |
| Sugaring | N | Y | Y | Refer to forestry guidelines in text and links provided. |
| Extraction (gravel, sand) | N | N | N | Extraction can disrupt local hydrology and negatively impact nearby pool. See development guideline in text and links provided. |

* In many cases, an activity is deemed compatible only if the management recommendations listed in the comments, text and links provided are adhered to.

Vermont Town Forest Recreation Planning

Plan Development Pod

The plan development pod can help facilitate the development of a Town Forest Recreation Plan by other interested communities, or update this existing recreation plan. The pod includes templates and guidance on crafting a vision statement for a town forest as well as case studies of each of the 10 selected communities and their plans highlighting the process they undertook. The plan development pod also includes a recreational improvements strategy database that allows communities to search sample implementation actions based on resources, topics or activities. This database includes all strategies contained in the 10 established plans, and their relative cost. Template action plan tables and bubble diagram map guidance is also included.



Vermont Town Forest

Recreation Planning

Implementation Pod

The implementation pod contains a number of tools to aid in implementation of this plan. In addition to a list of available grant, funding and support resources relevant to town forests, the pod also includes grant writing best practices to help make sure you get the necessary funds to move forward. Design guidance and standards for building sustainable trails and facilities for a wide range of user types is also provided. Guidance on acquiring additional lands or easements is also included. Volunteer designs, materials lists, and construction instructions are also provided in this pod.



Vermont Town Forest

Recreation Planning

Town Forest Story Pod

The town forest story pod includes personal narratives and how-to webinars from participants in the 10 town forest process on what it actually takes to be a volunteer managing a town forest in your community. The stories share tips, tricks, and pitfalls to help keep you on course, as told by others in the same role!



Vermont Town Forest Recreation Planning

Grants and Funding Sources

For most of the strategies and projects in this plan, moving them forward will require financial resources. Luckily, Woodbury and the town budget do not have to go after it alone. There are many grants and alternative funding sources that can help provide the necessary funding. Perhaps the best approach to move a project forward is to select a project with strong community support, secure grant funding, and leverage local resources and volunteers.

The description of each grant below suggests the types of projects the grant funds, the required match from the town if necessary, and a link for more information. Some grants have been identified in the Implementation Matrix using their respective abbreviation.

Federal and State Grants and Programs

Land and Water Conservation Fund State and Local Assistance Program (LWCF)

The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) state assistance program provides matching grants to help local communities enhance the outdoor recreation resources on public land. LWCF funding has benefited nearly every county in America, supporting over 40,000 projects. The grants create parks and open spaces, protect wilderness and forests, and provide outdoor recreation opportunities. Eligible projects are acquisition of land for parks and public outdoor recreation or development and/or renovation of existing facilities for outdoor recreation. This 50:50 matching program is the primary federal investment tool to ensure that families have easy access to public, open spaces. In Vermont, LWCF is administered by Vermont Department of Forests, Parks & Recreation.

<http://fpr.vermont.gov/recreation/grants/lwcf>

Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (STBG)

The State Surface Transportation Program (STP) is the main program of Federal Transportation Funds, managed by VTrans, for transportation improvements on state highways. Possible projects include recreational trails, pedestrian and biking enhancements, sidewalks, and signed routes.

<https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/specialfunding/stp/>

USDA Rural Development Loan and Grant Assistance (RD)

USDA Rural Development (RD) forges partnerships with rural communities (defined as towns and villages with less than 20,000 inhabitants), funding projects that bring housing, community facilities (including trails and active transportation facilities), business guarantees, utilities and other services to rural America. This program provides funding to develop essential community facilities in rural areas. An essential community facility is defined as a facility that provides an essential service to the local community for the orderly development of the community. Relevant to this plan, possible projects include transportation facilities, parks, and community gardens

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<http://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/community-facilities-direct-loan-grant-program>

National Park Service Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program (RTC)

The National Park Service Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance (RTC) program supports community-led natural resource conservation and outdoor recreation projects across the nation. Their national network of conservation and recreation planning professionals can partner with community groups, nonprofits, tribes, and state and local governments to design trails and parks, conserve and improve access to rivers, protect special places, and create recreation opportunities. Current projects include trail rehabilitation, interpretive trails, connector trails, trail master plans, trails collaboratives, and rail trail connectors. No monetary grants are made.

<https://www.nps.gov/orgs/rtca/index.htm>

FHWA Recreational Trails Program (RTP)

The Recreational Trails Program (RTP) provides funds to communities for development and maintaining recreational trail projects. Grants are awarded to well-planned projects that help to develop, protect, and maintain trails and trail systems that improve connections in the community, livability, user-ability, and are maintained for public recreational use. RTP funds support a wide range of trail activities including hiking, mountain biking, walking, running, cross-country and backcountry skiing, nature-based interpretive trail use, equestrian, snowmobiling, and off-road motorized recreation. Funds can be used for the following types of projects: construction of new trails or trail connections; construction of new trailhead areas/parking facilities; construction of trailside facilities; maintenance, renovation, or restoration of trails; improvements to signage or trail structures along the trail; assessments of existing trail conditions for accessibility and improvements; equipment; and trail-related educational projects (i.e., information about trail safety, appropriate trail use, environmental protection, etc.). The program is administered by the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation in the Agency of Natural Resources, in cooperation with the Vermont Agency of Transportation.

<http://fpr.vermont.gov/recreation/grants/rtp>

Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)

The Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) is a grant program administered by VTTrans that provides funding for programs and projects defined as transportation alternatives, including on- and off-road pedestrian and bicycle facilities, sidewalks, and bicycle infrastructure. These funds will cover a maximum of 80% of the project with the remaining portions most likely coming from the project-sponsoring organization or town. The FY 2019 funds are reserved for environmental mitigation projects.

<http://vtrans.vermont.gov/highway/local-projects/transport-alt>

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VTrans Bicycle and Pedestrian Program (BPP)

The Vermont Bicycle and Pedestrian Program (BPP) provides funds managed by VTrans for scoping, design, and construction of bike and pedestrian facilities, sidewalks, shared-use paths, and bike lanes. A local match is required but varies based on the type of project.

<http://vtrans.vermont.gov/highway/local-projects/bike-ped>

Vermont Community Development Program (VCDP)

The Vermont Community Development Program provides Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) to all Vermont towns and cities, aside from Burlington. The grant provides financial and technical assistance to identify and address local needs in housing, economic development, public facilities, public services, and handicapped accessibility modifications. The four types of grants are Accessibility Modification Grants (AM), Implementation Grants (IG), Planning Grants (PG), Scattered Site Grants (SS). These grants must primarily benefit persons of low and moderate incomes.

http://accd.vermont.gov/strong_communities/opportunities/funding/vcdp

State Grants and Programs

Vermont Community and Urban Forestry Council Grants (Caring for Canopies Grants, CCG)

These Caring for Canopies Grants (CCG) are awarded to municipalities to aid in taking the necessary actions to developing and sustaining a community-wide tree program, including tree plantings, inventories, maintenance, and planning. There are two grant categories, Caring for the Canopy and Canopy Mini. Caring for Canopy is for projects that help move a community's tree management program towards a sustained level while Canopy Mini is for smaller projects to help move a tree management program forward. The grants range in size from \$500 to \$5,000 and require a 50% match.

<https://vtcommunityforestry.org/programs-0/financial-assistance/caring-canopy-grants>

Municipal Planning Grant Program (MPG)

The Municipal Planning Grants (MPG) are Vermont State grants for a wide range of municipal planning projects including land use plans, zoning and subdivision bylaws, trail networks and walking and biking improvements, resiliency planning, economic plans, and village and neighborhood planning. The range of the grants is from \$2,500 to \$20,000 with a required 10% match.

<http://accd.vermont.gov/community-development/funding-incentives/municipal-planning-grant>

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Recreational Facilities Grants Program (RFG)

The Recreational Facilities Grants (RFG) program provides matching state grants for capital costs associated with the development and creation of community recreational opportunities. This program provides last gap funding for shovel ready projects and does not support any ongoing fundraising initiatives. The program requires a 100% match and awards are capped at \$25,000.

<https://bgs.vermont.gov/commissioner/building-communities-grants>

ANR Ecosystem Restoration Grant Program (ERG)

The ANR Ecosystem Restoration grant program gives grants for design and construction projects that target nonpoint sources of pollution that cause or contribute to the state's surface waters.

<http://dec.vermont.gov/watershed/cwi/grants#Ecosystem%20Restoration>

Northern Border Regional Commission Grants (NBRCG)

The Northern Border Regional Commission invests in community and economic development projects in economically distressed counties in Vermont, Maine, New Hampshire, New York. In Vermont, the eligible counties are Essex, Orleans, Caledonia, Lamoille, Franklin, and Grand Isle. Projects must focus on the following program areas: transportation infrastructure, basic public infrastructure, telecommunications infrastructure, workforce develop, entrepreneurship and business and technology development, resources and open space conservation, recreation and tourism, and renewable and alternative energy.

<http://accd.vermont.gov/economic-development/funding-incentives/Northern-Boarder-Regional-Commission>

Better Connections Program (BCP)

The Better Connections Program seeks to align state and local investments to increase transportation options, build resilience, and strengthen economic vitality in Vermont's community centers, through an annual grant program administered by Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans), in partnership with the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development (ACCD). Municipalities annually compete for approximately \$200,000 in projects funds. A 10% local cash match is required. The program supports implementation-focused, municipal planning initiatives that: provide safe, multi-modal and resilient transportation systems that supports the Vermont economy; support downtown and village economic development and revitalization efforts; and lead directly to project implementation. The program has been used for trails and active transportation master plans, village connection planning and other multi-modal planning efforts.

<http://vtrans.vermont.gov/planning/projects-programs/better-connections>

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VOREC Community Grant Program

The Vermont Outdoor Recreation Collaborative (VOREC) is launching a community grant program for outdoor recreation in Vermont municipalities. The grant is designed to help communities leverage their local outdoor recreation assets and applying communities must have completed some prior planning or mapping of outdoor recreation assets, have identified outdoor recreation as a component of their local economy through previous plans, and have a dedicated staff and/or volunteers to ensure long-term success of the project. The funds can be used for consultants, small scale outdoor recreation infrastructure improvements, materials or equipment to support outdoor recreation programs, marketing relating expenses, community based outdoor recreation planning, and securing public access through acquisition of land, easements, or rights-of-way. Communities are also responsible for making products and deliverables that could be adapted and reproduced by other communities in the state. The program is administered by FPR in partnership with ACCD and VOREC and offers grants between \$10,000 and \$100,000.

https://fpr.vermont.gov/VOREC_Community_Grant

State Organizations

Vermont Community Foundation – General Grants (VCF)

A variety of grants are available to support projects to improve environmental sustainability, cultural heritage, social justice, historic preservation, and vitality of Vermont communities. The different types of grants offered include: Place-Based Grants, Arts Endowment Fund, Special and Urgent Needs, and Nonprofit Capacity Building (see below). Each place-based grant is only available to a specific region of the state. For information about which grants are available for your community, please see the website below.

<http://www.vermontcf.org/Nonprofits/AvailableGrants.aspx>

Vermont Community Foundation – Nonprofit Capacity Building (NPCB)

The Nonprofit Capacity Building program is small grants to support the cost of consultants to facilitate discussions related to strategic planning, financial sustainability funding, or facilitating a merger. These grants are meant to supplement other funding. This grant is available to both nonprofits and municipalities.

<https://www.vermontcf.org/NonprofitsGrants/AvailableGrants/NonprofitCapacityBuilding.aspx>

VHCB Local Conservation Projects (VHCP)

The Vermont Housing and Conservation Board provides funding to conserve natural areas, recreation lands, and historic properties. For public outdoor recreation projects, VHCB provides loans to enable the project to leverage other funds or grants in cases where local efforts to obtain sources of funding have been exhausted. The available funds vary based on whether the parcel has

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statewide significance. For conserving locally-significant land, other sources must provide 1/3 of the project funding. VHCB also provides funding for feasibility analysis, project-specific capacity (i.e., engineering work, historic preservation analysis, and hazardous materials analysis).

<https://vhcb.org/our-programs/conservation/apply-for-funding>

Lintilhac Foundation (LF)

The foundation's central purpose is to support organizations that are making sustainable, positive change for Vermont's environment and its people. Grants are available in three core giving areas, water quality, energy, and conservation. The conservation giving is primarily to backcountry recreational access to lands and integrative land use planning.

<http://www.lintilhacfoundation.org/application-guidelines/>

Vermont Arts Council Animating Infrastructure Grant (AIG)

The Animating Infrastructure Grant (AIG) funds projects that integrate public art into existing or proposed infrastructure improvements, which could include buildings, recreational paths, parks, bridges, small-scale renewable energy projects, and water treatment facilities.

<http://www.vermontartscouncil.org/grants-and-services/organizations/animating-infrastructure>

Ben & Jerry's Foundation (BJF)

The Ben & Jerry's Foundation funds multiple grants programs to help communities in Vermont. The Vermont Economic Justice Program gives grants to non-profits working to address the economic, social, and environmental impacts of poverty. The Vermont Community Action Team Grant is a small grant awarded to non-profits, schools, and municipalities. The Community Action Teams provide general or project support. The CATs fund the following types of community programs: social services organizations, cultural, recreational, arts programs, and community celebrations.

<https://benandjerrysfoundation.org/vermont-grant-programs.html>

National Organizations

PeopleforBikes Community Fund (PBCG)

The PeopleforBikes Community Grant Program (PBCG) provides funding for important and influential projects that build momentum for bicycling in communities across the U.S. These projects include bike paths and rail trails, as well as mountain bike trails, bike parks, and large-scale bicycle advocacy initiatives. PeopleforBikes will fund engineering and design work, construction costs, and reasonable volunteer support costs. The maximum grant award is \$10,000 and the grant cannot make up more than 50% of the total project budget.

<http://www.peopleforbikes.org/pages/community-grants>

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Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Grants (RWJF)

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) provides grant funds to improve the health and health care of all Americans. For town forest projects, RWJF awards grants for projects creating healthier communities. This funding has gone towards walking and bicycling facilities and upgrading underutilized green space.

<https://www.rwjf.org/en/how-we-work/grants-and-grant-programs.html>

Trails Connecting People with Nature: A program of the Sierra Club's Nearby Nature Initiative (TCPN)

Trails Connecting People with Nature is a Sierra Club initiative that works to ensure that access to the outdoors is increasingly equitable and available to all communities. The Sierra Club Foundation awards one year trail grants ranging from \$5,000 to \$20,000 towards trail creation or maintenance projects that engage new leaders and provide opportunities for communities to connect with nature.

<https://content.sierraclub.org/ourwildamerica/nearby-nature>

How Woodbury Intends on Using this Plan

This Plan helps answer the question of how our Town Forest can benefit the most people in Woodbury while maintaining its natural integrity. With this Plan in hand, we can approach a county forester to help create a management plan for the natural resource aspect of the forest. Because of the community involvement in creating the Plan, we are in a much better position to move forward with steps to improve access to our Town Forest. We are also better situated to take advantage of the educational opportunities our School Wetland has to offer. We can build a trail in our Town Forest, and we can work to provide facilities such as an observation dock at the School Wetland. With this Plan, we are in a better position to approach sources of funding that will enable us to do these things. The project toolkit provided in this document will be utilized as we move forward toward implementation of the strategies.