

Maps are an essential tool that makes the forest accessible for all. With a map, even a first-time visitor can find their way around the forest. Maps help people navigate the forest, avoid getting lost, and plan a trip route that matches their abilities and interest. Maps, posted on websites and available in town, are also a useful tool to promote the forest and encourage visitors.

## Getting Started Mapping Your Town Forest Trails

- **Start by gathering spatial data on the trails and features of the town forest.** Use Handheld GPS units or even your cell phone (with apps such as Avenza or GPS Tracks) to capture trail alignments and locations in the town forest.
- **Use online mapmaking software to prepare the map itself.** Google Maps and Google Earth offer free basic software for mapmaking. Also, VCGI Interactive Map Viewer and VT ANR Natural Resource Atlas can be used to create a trail map. If available to you, ArcGIS is a higher-level mapping software option.
- **Maps should include more than trails.** Add key natural features, pause places, viewpoints, and other potential destinations.
- **Make sure all trails are included on the map.** If appropriate, include level difficulty (i.e. mountain biking or cross-country skiing trails) as well.
- **Update the map frequently.** It is essential that the maps be frequently updated as trails are added or closed in the town forest. Inaccurate maps frustrate trails users and detract from the visitor experience. The committee should pursue funding to update maps as necessary.
- **Work with local businesses to get sponsors for printing maps.** Local businesses can act as map sponsors, making a contribution in exchange for their logo being printed on the map. This not only helps with the cost of map printing but also helps connect forest activity to economic activity in town.
- **The maps should be posted in as many places as possible** – both online and in print. For websites, the map should be placed on the town website, the town forest-specific website, local tourism, and the chamber of commerce websites, trail group websites, and local outdoor-related business websites. A large scale map should be posted in a kiosk in the downtown or village center with copies available at the kiosk, town hall, local business, lodging, the library, and other community gathering spaces.

## Promoting Town Forest Trails

Once the town forest trails are mapped, they should be added to these statewide trails databases.

### Trail Finder

Run by the Upper Valley Trails Alliance and VT Department of Forests Parks and Recreation The website is an interactive map of trails across Vermont and New Hampshire with descriptions, primary trail use, and directions. It is becoming a go-to resource for trail users looking for new trails to hike, bike, snowshoe, or ski anywhere in the state.

<https://www.trailfinder.info/>

### Vermont Center for Geographic Information (VCGI)

The Vermont Center for Geographic Information (VCGI), a division of the State of Vermont's Agency of Digital Services (ADS), maintains statewide trails data.

<https://maps.vermont.gov/vcgi/html5viewer/?viewer=vtmapviewer>