

Partnering with a diverse array of local groups, organizations, and committees is a crucial component of implementing town forest initiatives. The formality of the partnership depends on the needs of all parties. It can be as simple as a handshake, a memorandum of understanding, or a formal legal agreement. Regardless of the format, documentation of the partnership can be useful for determining shared and individual roles, responsibilities, and desired outcomes.

Here are some tips for developing these relationships:

- ❖ **Recreation groups:** recreation groups are frequently looking for new trails and areas for hiking, biking, and other activities. Town forest committee members should reach out to local mountain biking clubs and hiking groups. These groups could hold group bike rides or hikes in the town forest or help promote it as a destination on their website. They could also run clinics and camps for new and developing users, helping to get more people outdoors and enjoying the town forest. These groups can also typically assist with trail design, layout, building, and maintenance.
- ❖ **Parks and Recreation Departments/Committees:** Municipal Departments and Committees could hold forest-based recreation programming in the town forest. Possible programs could include more traditional activities like hikes, bike rides, and snowshoeing, but could also include programs like orienteering, species identification or foraging workshops, or fairy house building. The Parks and Recreation Department could also bring day camps and other children's programs into the forest for education and exploration. These programs would bring the Parks and Recreation Department's many regular participants to the town forest.
- ❖ **Schools:** Local schools are an important partner for many town forests, since educating young community members is central to their mission. Town forest volunteers should reach out to elementary school teachers, as well as middle and high school science teachers to encourage them to bring their classes to the forest. Schools can engage in a variety of curriculum-based activities, such as helping develop interpretive signage, conducting inventories for species lists, or helping to build and maintain trails. Adopting trees or writing forest poetry is also a popular program with young students. The forest should reach out to the schools in town but also schools in neighboring communities, particularly ones without a town forest. Also, Career and Technical Center students can be a great partner not only in getting young people out into the town forest but helping to get work done in the town forest.
- ❖ **Higher learning institutions:** If a higher learning institution, such as colleges, universities, and technical colleges, is located nearby, partnering with them can provide educational

opportunities for the students and enhance activities in the town forest. Technical colleges can frequently incorporate timber management, sugaring, and general forest management into their curriculum. Universities and colleges may be interested in conducting inventories and assessments, as well as monitoring programs in the forest. Town forest committees should reach out to ecology or natural resource management professors to see if they would be interested in using the forest for their studies and classes.

- ❖ **Kids camps and other youth groups:** Kids camps and other youth groups (i.e., religious groups, boy and girl scouts, etc.) are often looking for field trips and outdoor locations for programming. The committee should reach out to these groups in the community and encourage them to host programming in the forest. Boy and girl scouts are also typically looking for service projects, and older scouts could help with trail maintenance as well.
- ❖ **Religious organizations:** Religious organizations (such as churches, synagogues, and mosques) may be interested in worshipping and volunteering in the forest. Typically, these organizations have a significant service component and may be interested in volunteering to maintain the trails. These organizations may also be interested in hosting outdoor services, spiritual walks, or other religious programs in the forest.
- ❖ **Libraries:** Libraries are fantastic partners. Consider partnering with the local library to develop a story walk, offer a woods walk or hold local history events in the forest.
- ❖ **Outdoor education non-profits:** Outdoor education non-profits, such as Four Winds Institute and Audubon, hold many forest-based programs and may be interested in organizing events in your forest. These groups bring a large following with them of people interested in learning about the forest.