

Town of Hartford, Vermont

TOWN FOREST RECREATION PLAN



Vermont Town Forest
Recreation Planning

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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

- ❖ Angela Emerson, Chairperson
- ❖ Jon Bouton
- ❖ Bill Brown
- ❖ Sheila Hastie
- ❖ Scott Hausler, Town Parks and Recreation Director
- ❖ Mary Hutchins
- ❖ Tom Kahl
- ❖ Allan McDougall
- ❖ Sean Ogle, Upper Valley Trails Alliance
- ❖ Matt Osborn, Town Planner
- ❖ Jason Oulette
- ❖ Lisa Phillips
- ❖ Anna Schaal
- ❖ Tim Schaal
- ❖ Gary Schall
- ❖ Chuck Wooster
- ❖ Richard Wright

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.

Vermont Town Forest Recreation Planning

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 Hartford 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 Forest. This process has provided robust community involvement and comprehensive consideration of potential projects, so the community can move forward with confidence knowing that it is addressing the needs and preferences of its residents and visitors, is protecting the forest resources in its charge, and is effectively managing the forest for the resources and activities it values.



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 Forest. This process has provided robust community involvement and comprehensive consideration of potential projects, so the community can move forward with confidence knowing that it is addressing the needs and preferences of its residents and visitors, is protecting the forest resources in its charge, and is effectively managing the forest for the resources and activities it values.

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 the town forest
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



Vermont Town Forest Recreation Planning

Project Process

Over the past year, Hartford has 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 forest, a community survey, a public strategies workshop, and an engaged steering committee. The process has resulted in a plan that provides actionable strategies to assist the 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 and grant opportunities
- Magnitude of costs (\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$)

Some of the 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.



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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 provide 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 Relators 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.



Vermont Town Forest Recreation Planning

Chapter 2: Existing Conditions

Community Profile

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

Summary

Hartford is one of the largest towns in Vermont. The town is made up of five villages, with the town forest located roughly in the center. With its size, it has both a large population of school age children and senior citizens interested in a wide range of recreational opportunities. Given its size, the town has many parks, open spaces, and playgrounds and Quechee Gorge and the State Park are major tourist destinations. There are many miles of trail in Hartford and in neighboring Vermont and New Hampshire communities. The town and the larger Upper Valley region do see significant tourism, but many other recreational properties serve this market.





Population: 9,828



Median Age: 44.6



of School Age Children: 1,613



49 % Male 51 % Female



Household Median Income: \$56,927



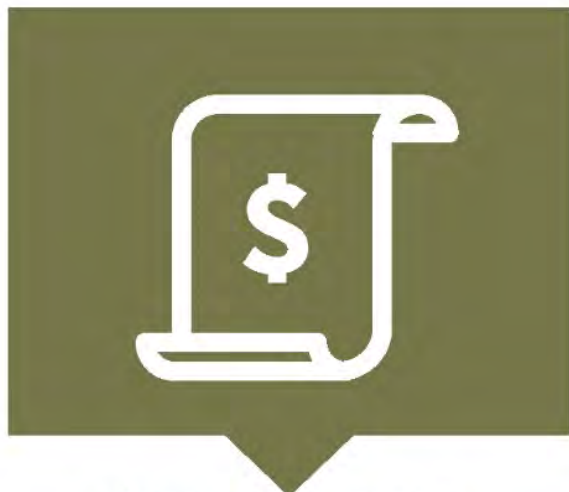
Residents Below Poverty Level: 9 %



14 % Residential Units in Seasonal/Recreational Use



23 % County Employment in Travel & Tourism



Grand List Assessed Value: \$114,613,600



Number of Parks and Open Spaces: 18



Miles of Trails: 12.5



of Playgrounds: 7



Town Forest Profile

Forest Overview

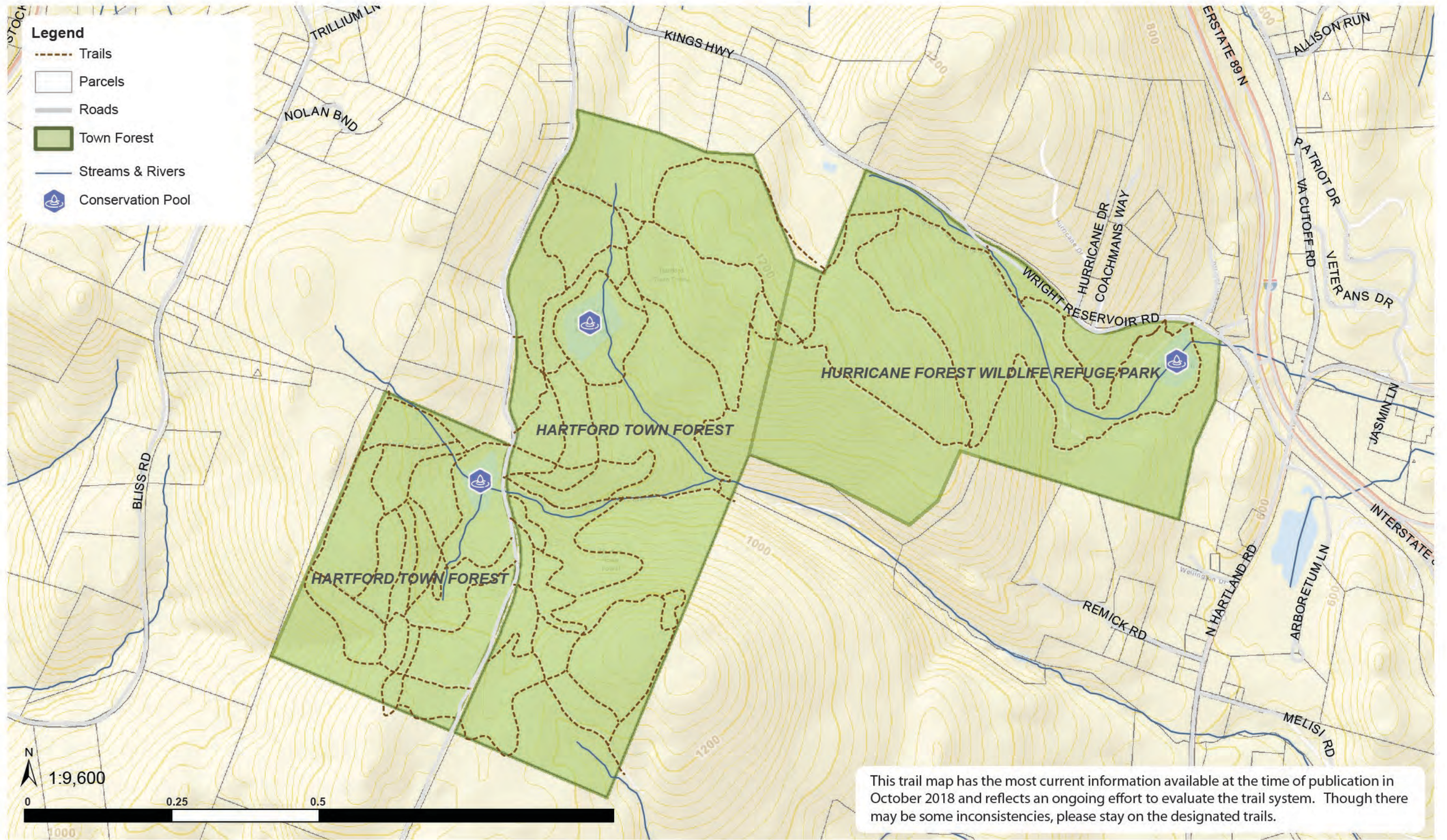
The Hartford Town Forest is a 423-acre parcel in a rural hilly section of Hartford. It is located in the middle of all five villages of the Town and adjoins the Hurricane Forest Wildlife Refuge. The forest has 12.5 miles of trails and the Hartford Conservation Commission manages the forest. It is a popular area for mountain biking, hiking, hunting, snowshoeing, and snowmobiling.

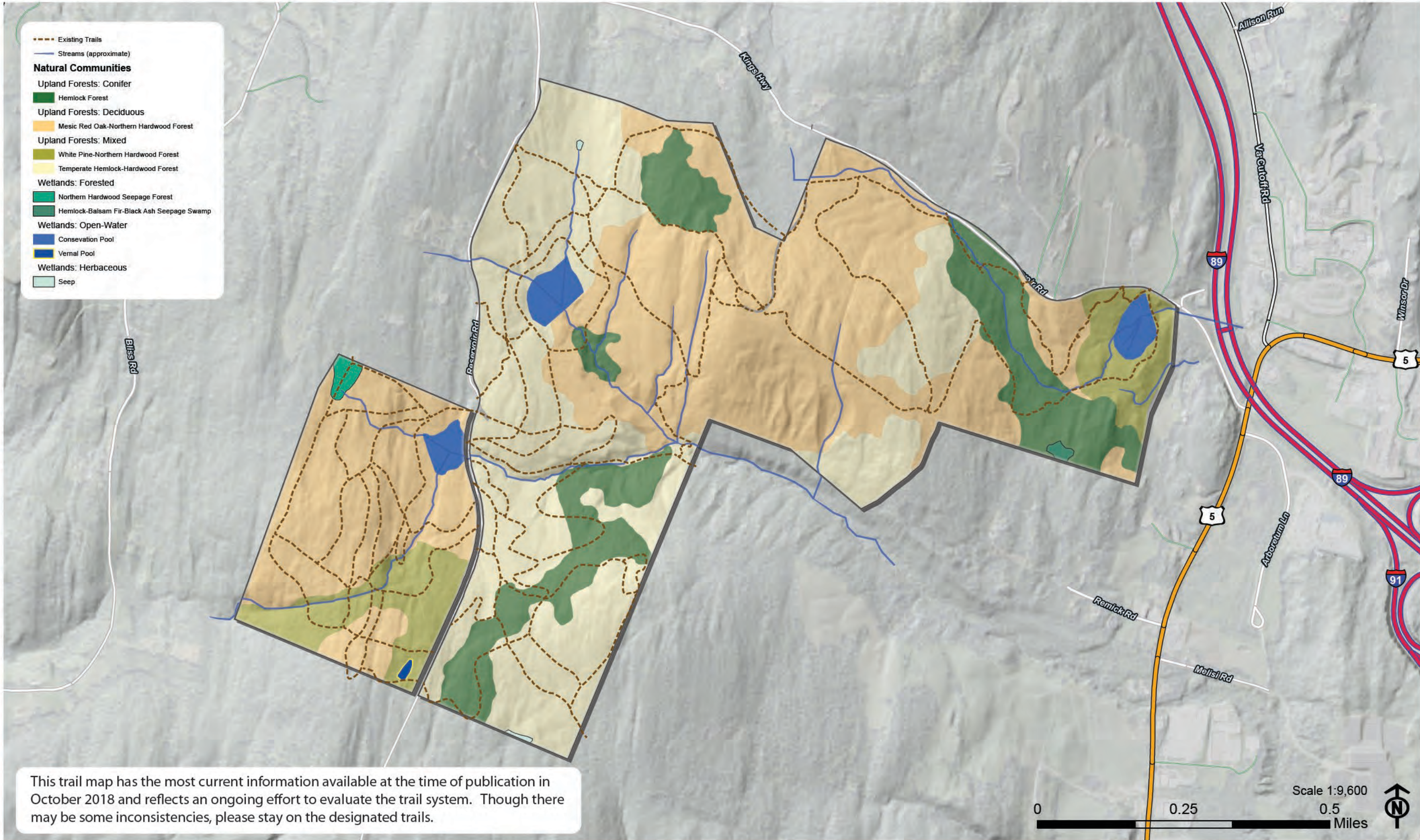
Land Ownership and Conservation Background

The property has long been under town ownership – the former reservoirs in the forest were the town’s drinking water beginning in the 1890s. In the 1950s, the town shifted to a well system and recreation became the predominant use of the forest. In the 1980s, commercial logging occurred on the property. The Hartford Conservation Commission was established in 1990. During the 1990s, recreational use increased in the forest and there was no rules or entity in place to manage it. In 1997, the Conservation Commission stepped in and began to manage the forest. A Recreation Management Plan was established in 2002 to manage recreation so as to limit natural resource impacts. The Conservation Commission has completed many natural resource inventories of the forest but has yet to integrate those into a comprehensive management plan. The inventories include an Amphibian Inventory (Vermont Center for Ecostudies, 2010), Bird Habitat Assessment (Audubon Vermont, 2010) and a Wildlife Habitat Assessment (Northern Stewards, 2011).

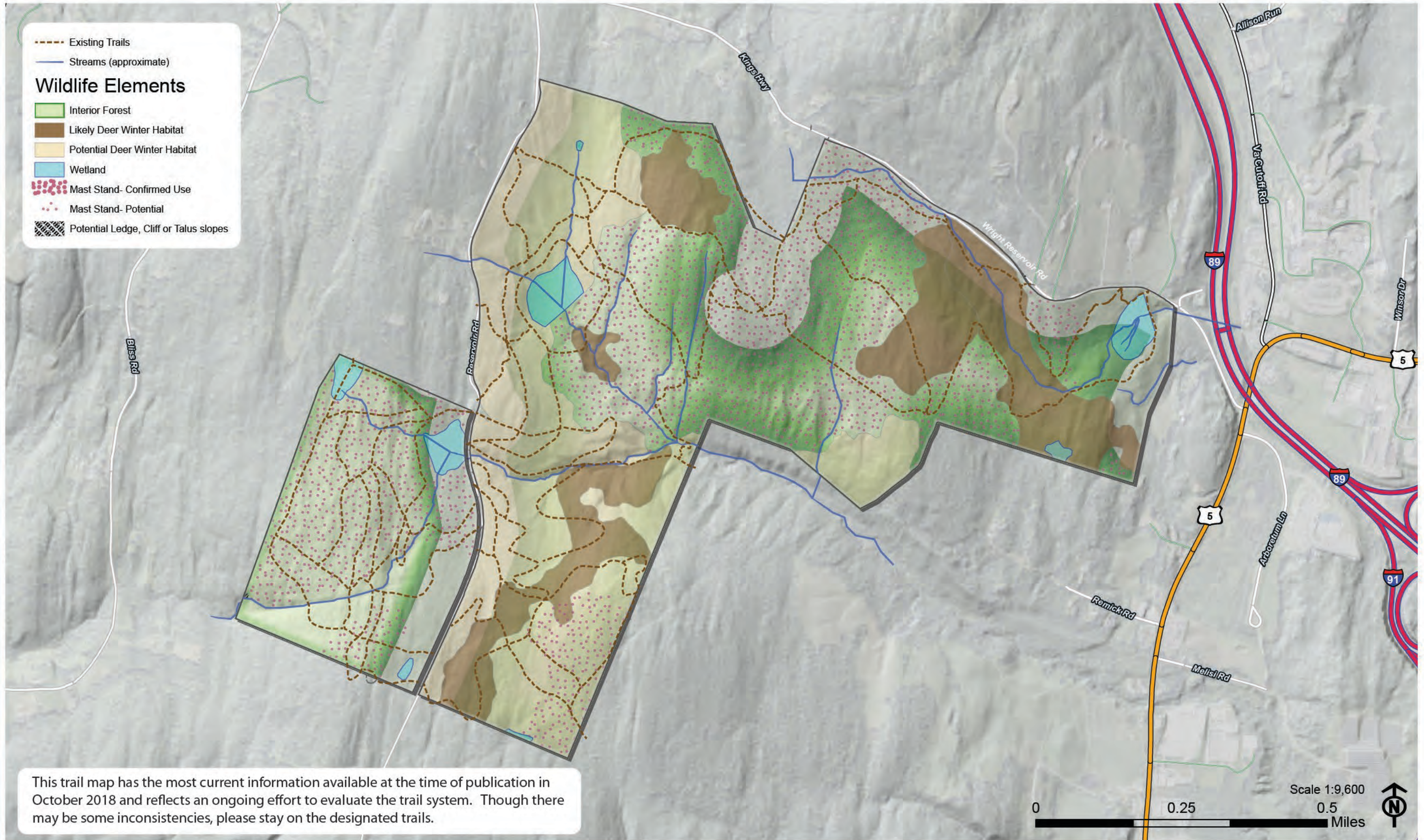


The Hartford Conservation Commission continues to manage the town forest. The adjoining land, the Hurricane Forest Wildlife Refuge, is managed by the Parks and Recreation Department. ATV’s and bicycles are prohibited in the refuge except for a small section of trail that is a route for mountain bikers who access the town forest from Wright Reservoir Road on the Route 5 side. A Forest Resource Management Plan for both properties was last updated in 2009 and describes the resources on the property and lists management prescriptions.

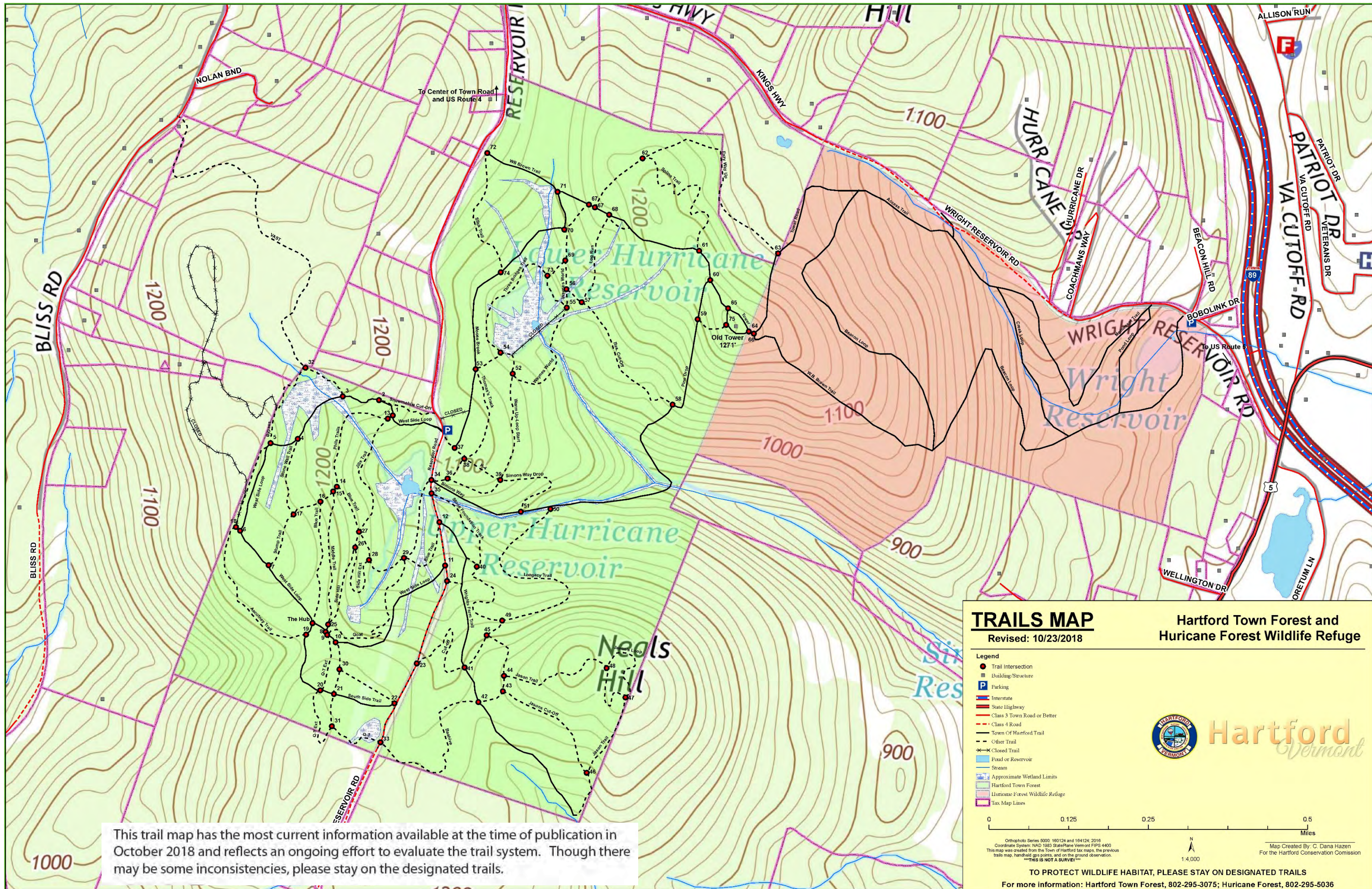




This trail map has the most current information available at the time of publication in October 2018 and reflects an ongoing effort to evaluate the trail system. Though there may be some inconsistencies, please stay on the designated trails.



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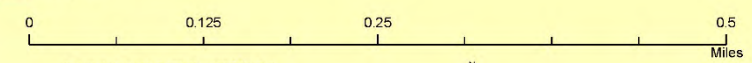
This trail map has the most current information available at the time of publication in October 2018 and reflects an ongoing effort to evaluate the trail system. Though there may be some inconsistencies, please stay on the designated trails.

TRAILS MAP

Revised: 10/23/2018

Hartford Town Forest and Hurricane Forest Wildlife Refuge

- Legend**
- Trail Intersection
 - Building/Structure
 - P Parking
 - Interstate
 - State Highway
 - Class 3 Town Road or Better
 - Class 4 Road
 - Town Of Hartford Trail
 - Other Trail
 - Closed Trail
 - Pond or Reservoir
 - Stream
 - Approximate Wetland Limits
 - Hartford Town Forest
 - Hurricane Forest Wildlife Refuge
 - Tax Map Lines



Orthophoto Series 5000, 160124 and 164124, 2016
 Coordinate System: NAD 1983 StatePlane Vermont FIPS 4400
 This map was created from the Town of Hartford tax maps, the previous trails map, hand-drawn geo points, and on the ground observation.
 THIS IS NOT A SURVEY

Map Created By: C. Dana Hazen
 For the Hartford Conservation Commission

TO PROTECT WILDLIFE HABITAT, PLEASE STAY ON DESIGNATED TRAILS
 For more information: Hartford Town Forest, 802-295-3075; Hurricane Forest, 802-295-5036



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 forest. The public also offered feedback on the strategies and draft plans, to ensure a fit with the town and forest’s 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 forest. 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 forest. From Hartford, six people were in attendance.



Steering Committee Process

The steering committee, made up of town staff, community members, and members 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 Hartford Town Forest was held at the Hartford Town Hall on January 23, 2018. The meeting was a drop-in anytime, open house format with questions about an overall vision for the town; the balance of recreation, education, conservation/natural resources, and forest products; the natural resources present on the site; and future activities in the Town Forest. Attendees wrote responses on boards, completed dot exercises, and drew their ideas and knowledge on maps. Members of the project team and local 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. 26 people signed in and an estimated 60-70 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 23, 2018 and remained open through the Sunday after Town Meeting Day—March 11, 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 103 responses—101 online and 2 hard copy.

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



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Strategies Workshop

A Strategies Workshop for the Hartford Town Forest was held at the Hartford Town Hall on July 18, 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 draft 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 draft strategies on a large map. 12 people signed in and an estimated 15-20 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 November 7, 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.

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



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identified via site visits and natural resources assessments. The following issues and needs were identified:

1. All trails in the town forest have been evaluated by the Upper Valley Trails Alliance. Some segments have sustainability issues and should be reviewed for type of use, seasonal access, repair, relocation or closing.
2. Underutilized – town forest is in the center of town, but has little connection with any of the Town villages
3. A more formalized trail maintenance program is needed to protect ecologically sensitive areas and address issues identified in the Upper Valley Trails Alliance Trails Assessment
4. Need to continue a collaborative community dialogue around trails
5. Need to raise awareness of the town forest in general, and of the Conservation Commission's management responsibility



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 forest—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 forest. Both aspects of the vision framework should align, without repeating each other. The management balance describes the community’s management priorities for the forest, 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:

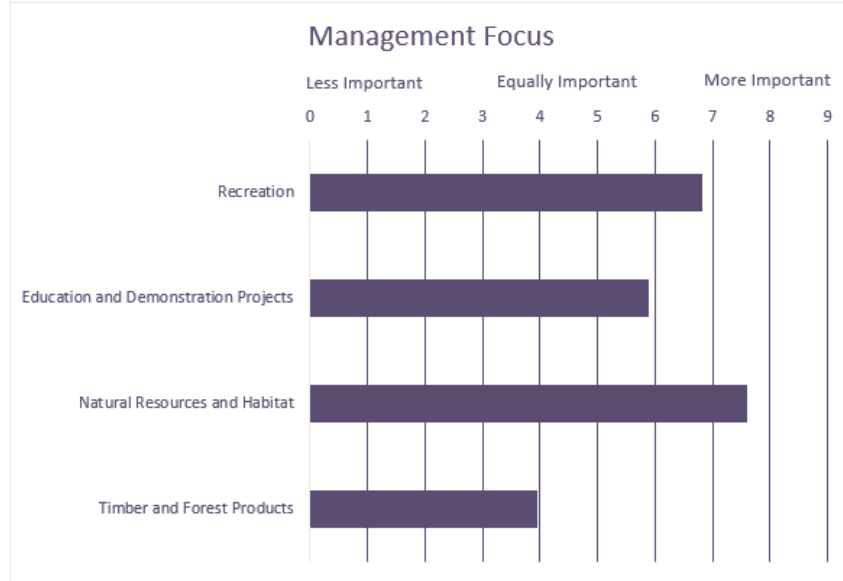


Many of the existing experience responses revolved around recreation; “trails,” “biking,” “walking,” and “recreation” were some of the most common responses. Another common set of responses were positive words about the forest – “love,” “awesome,” and “good.” There were also many respondents whose existing experience was “none.”

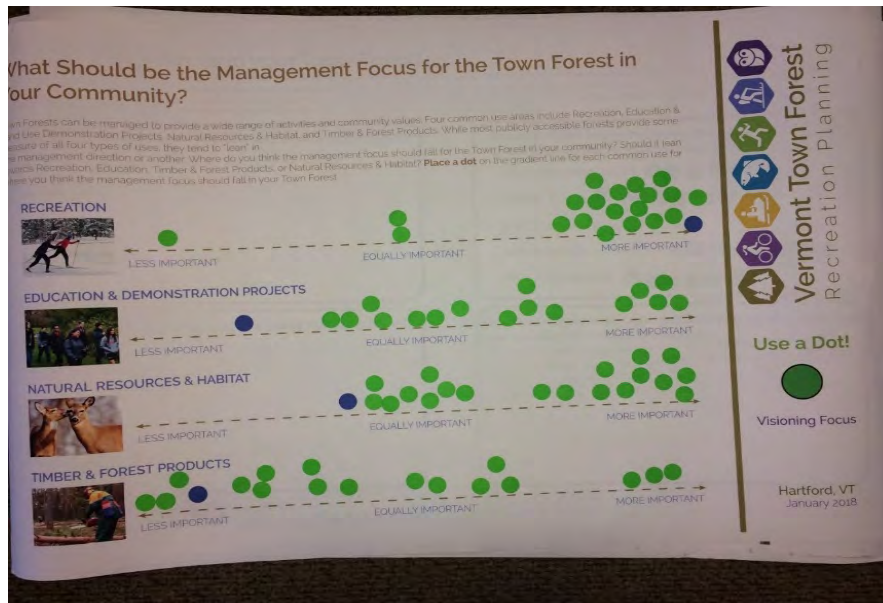


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Survey Results



Workshop Results



Through these interactions, the Hartford community expressed that each of the four use areas are important in the management of the town forest, but that a slightly greater emphasis should be placed on Recreation; Education & Demonstration Projects; and Natural Resources & Habitat than on Timber



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& Forest Products. There was a difference of opinions on Timber & Forest Products amongst workshop participants. The Steering Committee was concerned by the response to Timber & Forest Products and felt that education around sustainable forestry may be necessary.

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 forest – 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. **Overall, the committee felt that these key attributes and strategies should be aimed at preserving the forest, rather than turning it into a park.**

1. Functioning as a Forest
 - a. Protection of forest integrity
 - i. Manage wildlife habitat
 - ii. Protection of vernal pools, wetlands, and other water resources
 - b. Part of a larger block of connected forests
 - i. Connectivity with the Hurricane Forest Wildlife Refuge and adjacent private lands, utilize sustainable forestry practices to enhance wildlife habitat and recreational opportunities
2. Maintain healthy balance between stewardship and human uses
 - a. Sustainable management for multiple uses
 - b. Low key and low intensity use
 - i. Peaceful and quiet
 - ii. Recreational use geared to individuals and small groups
 - c. Year-round recreation (hiking, biking, snowshoeing, hunting)
 - i. Sustainable and well managed trail systems
 - ii. Open hunting ground for the community
 - d. Important VAST trail corridor
 - e. A forest for all of Hartford
 - i. Inclusive of all community perspectives and uses
 - ii. Accessible and encouraging community forest activities
3. Opportunities for learning about forests
 - a. Multi-generational
 - b. Multi-dimensional
 - c. Teaching young and old about healthy forests
 - i. Respectful and sustainable forestry practices
 - ii. Connections between forests and humans
 - d. Kids in the outdoors



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.

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., Upper Valley Trails Alliance, Upper Valley Mountain Bike Association, Upper Valley Land Trust, Vermont Land Trust, 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

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- 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



Note: See the Grants and Funding Sources section of this plan (pg. 51) for the key to funding opportunities acronyms

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								
Vehicle wayfinding signage	Add vehicle wayfinding signage from villages to the forest.	Town Forest Steering Committee/ Conservation Commission	Short-Term	Vtrans/Town Highway Department/Parks & Recreation Department	Signage design	\$	BPP, LWCF	-Trail Markers and Wayfinding Toolkit
2. Trails								
Existing trail conditions assessment and redesign	The Hartford Town Forest has a trails network with some sustainability issues. The Upper Valley Trails Alliance completed a trails assessment in the summer of 2018. The assessment should be used to guide the sustainability, repair, relocation or closing of certain trail segments.	Town Forest Steering Committee/ Conservation Commission	Ongoing	UVTA, UVMBA, local builder/users, Parks & Recreation Department, Vermont Youth Conservation Corps	Trail reroute & redesign	\$\$\$	RTP, RTC, VHCP, ERG, LWCF	-Per Upper Valley Trails Alliance Trail assessment -Natural Resource Guidance Toolkit -Sustainable Trail Standards
Hartford Trails Collaborative	Continue to engage mountain bikers, hikers, and other user groups to begin an ongoing dialogue around trails and to establish a	Upper Valley Trails Alliance, Upper Valley Mountain Bike Association and Town Forest Steering	Short-Term	UVMBA, GMC, UVLT, Parks & Recreation Department etc.	Meeting facilitation	\$	RTP, NPCB	-Volunteer Development and Recruitment Toolkit



Vermont Town Forest Recreation Planning

	framework for collaboration in the future. Build upon partnerships with Upper Valley Trail Alliance (UVTA).	Committee/ Conservation Commission						
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.	Town Forest Steering Committee/ Conservation Commission	Short-Term	UVTA, UVMB, local builder/users, Parks & Recreation Department	Signage and wayfinding plan	\$\$	RTP, RTC, LWCF	-Trail Markers and Wayfinding Toolkit -Interpretation Guidance Toolkit
3. Other Facilities and Structures								
Pause Places	Develop a series of "Pause Places" or "mini-destinations" 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.	Town Forest Steering Committee/ Conservation Commission	Medium-Term	Program and educational partners, Parks & Recreation Department, School District, Vermont Youth Conservation Corps, Vital Communities	Historical and natural resource research, pause place design	\$\$	LWCF, RTC, RTP, RFG, AIG	- Pause Places Toolkit -Bench Volunteer Designs -Interpretation Guidance Toolkit



Vermont Town Forest Recreation Planning

Create and maintain locations for birding and viewing wildlife.	Build more locations to sit and observe wildlife. Benches are encouraged in a variety of locations. Coordinate with Pause Places. Caution should be taken to not changing the character of the forest.	Town Forest Steering Committee/ Conservation Commission	Medium-Term	Program and educational partners, Parks & Recreation Department, School District, Vital Communities	Historical and natural resource research, pause place design Coordinate with Forest Management Plan, Amphibian Inventory, Bird Habitat Assessment and Wildlife Habitat Assessment.	\$\$	LWCF, RTC, RTP, RFG, AIG	- Pause Places Toolkit -Bench Volunteer Designs -Interpretation Guidance Toolkit
4. Education & Programs								
Develop a trail maintenance program	Work with Hartford Career & Tech Center on a trail maintenance program. School groups or Boy Scouts are other possible maintenance groups. Coordinate with trails collaborative effort.	UVTA and Town Forest Steering Committee/ Conservation Commission, Parks & Recreation Department	Short-Term	UVMBA, GMC, UVLT, etc.	Meeting facilitation	\$	RTP, NPCB	-Volunteer Development and Recruitment Toolkit
Host school group programs in the forest	Bring students to the forest for ecology programs, recreation programs, etc. Work with the Hartford Area Career Technology Center Consider a high school mountain biking team.	Town Forest Steering Committee/ Conservation Commission, School District	Medium-Term	Program and educational partners	--	\$	VCF, VHCB, LF, BJF	-Programming Partnerships Toolkit
Ecology tours	Offer ecology tours (birdwatching, plant identification, etc.) for children and adults.	Program and educational partners, Parks & Recreation Department	Medium-Term	Town Forest Steering Committee/ Conservation Commission, Parks & Recreation Department	--	\$	VCF, VHCB, LF, BJF	-Programming Partnerships Toolkit



Vermont Town Forest Recreation Planning

Lessons, skills day camps, and clinics	Offer lessons, skills day camps, and clinics for trail running and mountain biking.	Program and educational partners	Medium-Term	Town Forest Steering Committee/ Conservation Commission, Parks & Recreation Department	--	\$	VCF, VHCB, LF, BJF	-Programming Partnerships Toolkit
Species identification lists	Bird, plant and mammal species identification checklists could be developed and made available online and at the Town Hall, schools libraries, and trailhead kiosk. Should also be utilized in education experiences.	Town Forest Steering Committee/ Conservation Commission	Short-Term	Program and educational partners, Parks & Recreation Department	--	\$	VCF, VHCB, LF, BJF	-Programming Partnerships Toolkit
5. Events								
Races in the forest	Hold small-scale, local mountain bike, trail running, or nordic skiing races in the forest.	Program and event partners	Medium-Term	Town Forest Steering Committee/ Conservation Commission, Parks & Recreation Department	Event and parking plan	\$	VCF, VHCB, LF, BJF	-Programming Partnerships Toolkit
6. Maps, Outreach, & Promotion								
Improve maps of the forest	Finalize maps that show all trails in the forest and make these maps readily available both online and in print. Explore opportunities to engage local businesses in sponsoring map printing. Ads from local businesses can not only fund map	Town Forest Steering Committee/ Conservation Commission	Medium-Term	UVTA, Trails Collaborative, Parks & Recreation Department	Graphic design	\$\$	RTP	-Mapping and Promotion Toolkit



Vermont Town Forest Recreation Planning

	printing, but can also help connect forest use with economic activity in the villages. Ensure it communicates town ownership and/or conservation commission management.							
Online presence	Improve the online presence of the forest with a forest specific website. Continue working with Upper Valley Trails Alliance (UVTA) to promote the forest. Ensure it communicates town ownership and/or conservation commission management.	Town Forest Steering Committee/ Conservation Commission	Medium-Term	UVTA, Parks & Recreation Department	Website design	\$-\$\$	RTP, VCF	-Mapping and Promotion Toolkit
Town Forest Business Roundtable	Evaluate a Town Forest Business Roundtable to share "trail friendly business" ideas that can help support trail use in the community, connect forest visitors with local businesses, and help support Town Forest efforts.	Town Forest Steering Committee/ Conservation Commission	Long-term	Local business, Chamber of Commerce	--	\$	VCF	-Trail Friendly Business Toolkit
7. Administrative Actions								
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	Town Forest Steering Committee/ Conservation Commission, Parks &	Short-Term	Hartford Trails Collaborative	Review, adjustment and adoption of model process	\$	--	-Model Proposal Process -Natural Resource



Vermont Town Forest Recreation Planning

	propose new trails and facilities.	Recreation Department						Guidance Toolkit
Management zones	Review and revise management zones of the forest management plan to consider and plan for all uses. Designate areas more suitable for wildlife habitat, hunting, or mountain biking, for example.	Town Forest Steering Committee/ Conservation Commission	Long-term		Update to Management Plan	\$	--	-Management Zones Toolkit
Partner with Hartford Parks and Recreation Department	Partner with Hartford Parks and Recreation to utilize the Town Forest for Town recreation programs and to benefit from staff expertise. Consider joint management of the Town Forest.	Town Forest Steering Committee/ Conservation Commission	Short-Term	Hartford Parks and Recreation Department	--	\$	--	-Programming Partnerships Toolkit
Long-term conservation	Explore the pros and cons of a possible conservation easement on the property	Town Forest Steering Committee /Conservation Commission	Long-term	Upper Valley Land Trust/Vermont Land Trust		\$		



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.

Vermont Town Forest Recreation Planning

Existing Trail Review and Redesign

Key Attribute #:

1.a

2.a

2.c.1

Need #:

1

5

Estimated Cost:

\$\$\$

Timing:

Ongoing

The Town, working with the Upper Valley Trails Alliance, completed a review and assessment of the existing trails to evaluate for potential ecological harm and mitigate the site through necessary means.

Based on the results of the existing trail conditions assessment and review, the Town will continue to assess the need to reroute, redesign, or replace trails to enhance experiences for all user groups, improve drainage, and limit erosion.



Responsibility:

Town Forest
Steering Committee/
Conservation
Commission

Partners Involved:

UVTA, UVMBA,
local builder/users

Planning Required:

Trail reroute &
redesign

Funding

Opportunities:

RTP, RTC, VHCP,
ERG

Toolkit Resources

Trail Assessment Forms

Natural Resource Guidance Toolkit

Sustainable Trail Standards



Vermont Town Forest Recreation Planning



Example of drainage issues on old logging road



Example of a trail that needs further analysis of natural resource impacts



Vermont Town Forest Recreation Planning

Signage and Wayfinding

Key Attribute #:

2.c

2.e.ii

Need #:

2

5

7

Estimated Cost:

\$\$

Timing:

Short-Term

Enhancing the signage and wayfinding system is important to the accessibility of the forest. Proper signage can ensure that the forest is welcoming to visitors and all user groups concurrently.

In many places, the trail system in the Hartford Town Forest is difficult to follow. At some trail intersections, there is often no signage, leaving trail users, especially those new to the forest, confused about which way to go. Signage or intersection numbers should be added at these junctions to point trail users in the proper direction and discourage/prohibit use of closed trails. This should go hand in hand with the existing trail assessments and review.

Additional signage should be placed at trailhead kiosks to encourage proper trail etiquette. Signage should instruct trail users about when to yield to other users and policy around hunting in the forest.

Signage should also alert trail users of Conservation Commission management, especially as the adjoining wildlife refuge is managed by the Hartford Parks and Recreation Department. This builds awareness around the Conservation Commission and tells trail users who to contact in the event of down trees in the forest or other maintenance issues.

Responsibility:

Town Forest
Steering
Committee/
Conservation
Commission

Partners Involved

UVTA, UVMBA,
local builder/users

Planning Required:

Signage and
wayfinding plan

Funding

Opportunities:

RTP, RTC

Toolkit Resources

Trail Markers and Wayfinding Toolkit

Interpretation Guidance Toolkit



Vermont Town Forest Recreation Planning

Pause Places

Key Attribute #:

2.b.i

3

Need #:

4

Estimated Cost:

\$\$

Timing:

Medium-Term

Pause places could be developed throughout the forest to provide forest users likely stopping points and opportunities to learn about the forest.

Pause places can be a rest stop, an informational stop, or both. All pause places should include a bench or appropriate rocks/boulders for seating. The suggested locations for the pause places, as shown on the attached bubble diagram, are in locations with interesting natural features, historic structures, or views. Prime locations for birding and wildlife viewing are also ideal pause places. Recommended pause places include the vernal pools, the historic foundation, the old tower, old reservoirs, and the viewpoint to Mt. Ascutney.

At the historical sites, the interpretive signage should give a history of the property and previous uses of the forest.

Responsibility:

Town Forest Steering
Committee/ Conservation
Commission

Partners Involved:

Program and educational
partners

Planning Required:

Historical and natural
resource research, pause
place design

Funding Opportunities:

LWCF, RTC, RTP, RFG,
AIG



Toolkit Resources

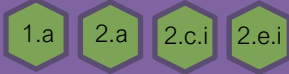
Pause Places Toolkit
Bench Volunteer Designs
Interpretation Guidance
Toolkit



Vermont Town Forest Recreation Planning

Trails Collaborative & Maintenance Program

Key Attribute #:



Need #:



Estimated Cost:

\$

Timing:

Short-Term

A Hartford Trails Collaborative, to bring all forest users to the table and recruit volunteers for trail maintenance, is a top priority.

This group should consist of mountain bikers, hikers, ATVers, and forest neighbors. The Upper Valley Trail Alliance (UVTA) could help serve as a facilitator and a source for members. Other groups to involve include Upper Valley Mountain Bike Association (UVMBA) and the Green Mountain Club – Ottaquechee Section. The Upper Valley Land Trust should also be engaged.

In the past, there have been difficulties with various user groups feeling excluded from the recreational planning/decision-making process. The Hartford Trails Collaborative will ensure that all user groups are heard and play an active role in the planning and management of the recreational use of the town forest.

Improving trail maintenance is a major need for the forest. An engaged Trail Collaborative will create ownership around the forest and encourage those trail users and their groups to volunteer to maintain the forest's trails. Other potential groups for trail maintenance include Hartford Career and Tech Center, school groups, and Boy Scouts. The trail maintenance program should draw from the entire town.

Responsibility:

Upper Valley Trails Alliance, Town Forest Steering Committee/ Conservation Commission

Parks and Recreation Department

Partners Involved:

UVMBA, GMC, UVLT, etc.

Planning Required:



Toolkit Resources

Volunteer Development and Recruitment Toolkit



Vermont Town Forest Recreation Planning

Improve Maps of the Forest

Key Attribute #:

2.e

Need #:

2 7

Estimated Cost:

\$-\$\$

Timing:

Medium-Term

Although maps of the forest and its trails do exist, it is important keep these maps up to date and readily available. After the existing trail conditions assessment and review, the forest maps should be redone to show all sanctioned trails in the forest.

The maps should be available both online and in print. Hard copy maps should be available at the Town Hall, libraries, in local businesses and recreation facilities. Links and/or QR codes to the online map should be posted at trailhead kiosks as well.

The map should communicate town ownership and/or Conservation Commission management of the forest.

Responsibility:

Town Forest
Steering
Committee/
Conservation
Commission

Partners Involved:

UVTA, Trails
Collaborative

Planning Required:

GIS and Map
Design

Toolkit Resources

Mapping and Promotion Toolkit



Vermont Town Forest Recreation Planning

Formal Process for Proposing and Reviewing New Trails and Facilities

Key Attribute #:



Need #:



Estimated Cost:



Timing:

Short-Term

By adopting a formal process for proposing and reviewing new trails and facilities, the Hartford Conservation Commission will ensure that the development of the forest proceeds in such a way that protects and balances the function of the forest and human uses.

In the past, forest users have constructed trails on the forest without the permission of the Hartford Conservation Commission. A formalized process will create a clear, straightforward mechanism for proposing trails that all the user groups have the same access to. The formal proposal process also provides transparency and objectivity in the management of the forest and ensures careful public decision based on the community's shared values for the land. The process can also give user groups a strong sense of whether a project is likely to get approved, and if not the necessary modifications in order to receive approval.

A project model proposal form and a committee review questionnaire are included in the Vermont Town Forest Recreation Planning Toolkit.

Responsibility:

Town Forest
Steering
Committee/
Conservation
Commission

Parks and
Recreation
Department

Partners Involved:

Hartford Trails
Collaborative

Planning Required:

Toolkit Resources

Model Proposal Process

Natural Resource Guidance Toolkit



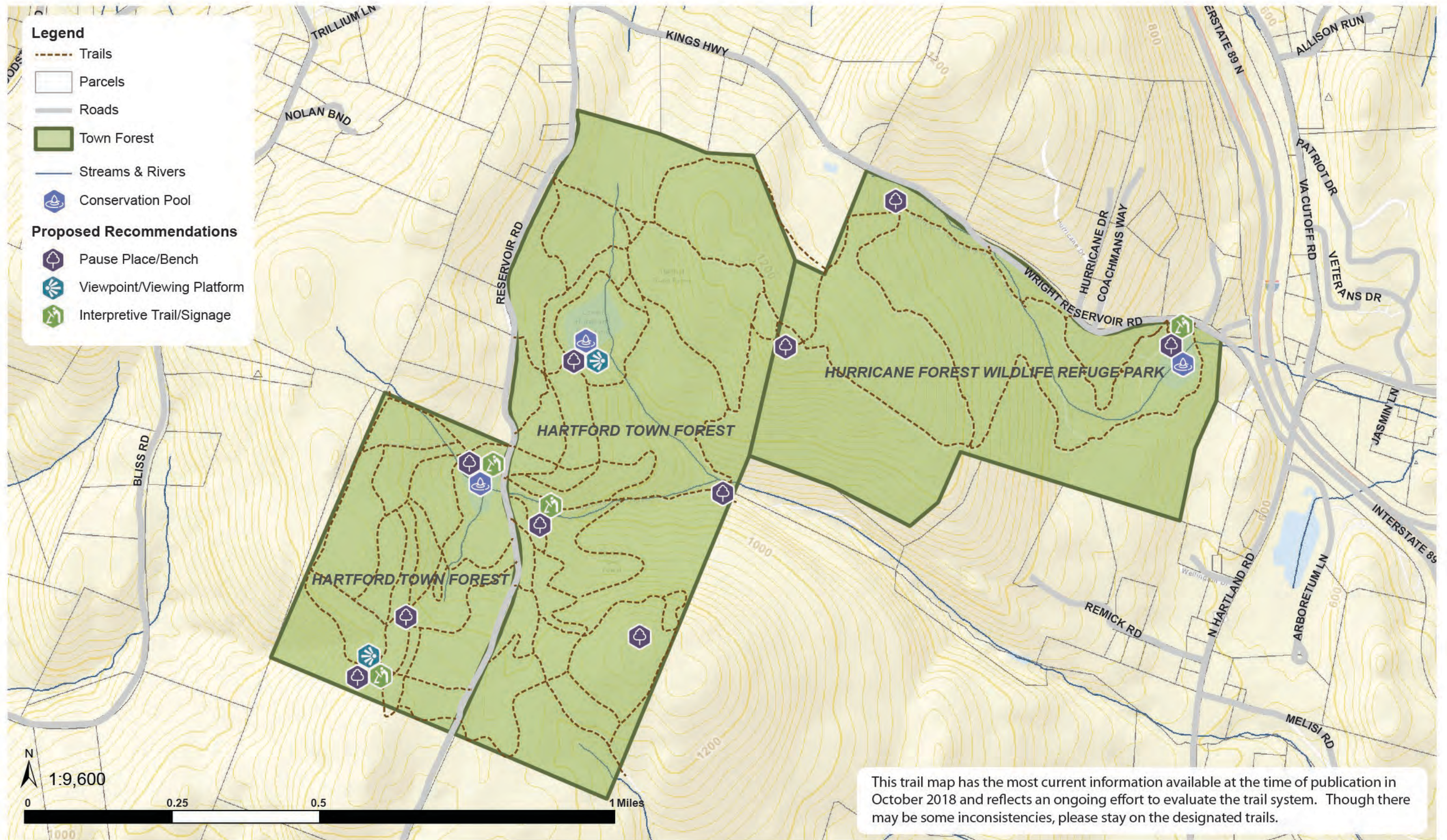
Vermont Town Forest

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.





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 Hartford is one, and for other towns to do their own recreation plans after this project has ended.

Perhaps more importantly for Hartford, 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 forest 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

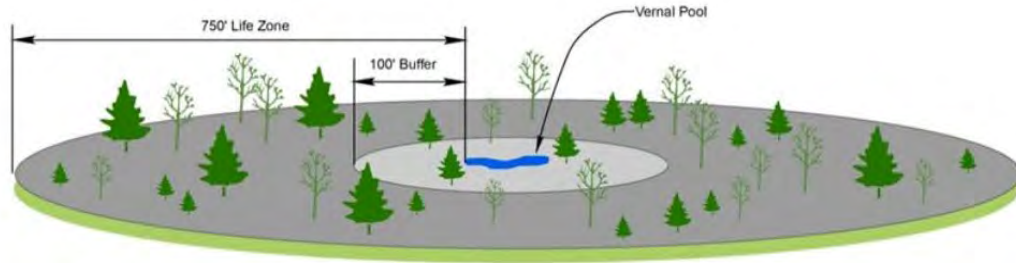


Figure 1. Vernal Pool management zones

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, Hartford 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



Vermont Town Forest Recreation Planning

<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>

Federal Highway Administration 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 Vermont Agency of Transportation 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>



Vermont Town Forest Recreation Planning

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 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>



Vermont Town Forest Recreation Planning

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>

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



Vermont Town Forest Recreation Planning

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 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 Town Forest Recreation Planning

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>

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>



Vermont Town Forest

Recreation Planning

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 Hartford Intends on Using this Plan

In 2002, the Hartford Selectboard approved and adopted the first Recreation Management Plan for the Town Forest. Since that plan was adopted, there have been significant changes in the Town Forest including the drawdown of the two former water supply reservoirs and increased mountain biking in the Town Forest, resulting in a proliferation of new trails. Participation in this planning grant presented an opportunity to access recreation and environmental professionals to address current and projected future recreational use and its impact on the Town Forest. An additional grant funded a contract with the Upper Valley Trails Alliance to evaluate the condition of all trails in the Town Forest. The mountain bike community and Conservation Commission can now work together to ensure improved management and sustainable trails in the town forest into the future.

This planning process has incorporated community input through public forums and an on-line survey into the overall management and recreational use of the Town Forest which has not been done since 2002. The next step is to study both this report and the 2002 Recreation Management Plan to ensure that the two plans are adequately correlated into a comprehensive strategy. This will be a major focus of the work of the Conservation Commission and the Town Forest Steering Committee in 2019. The Plan also provides a toolkit and other resources that will be utilized to manage this important community resource and balance recreation with natural resources. The toolkit together with the existing Forest Management Plan, Wildlife Habitat Assessment, Bird Habitat Assessment and Amphibian Inventory will help guide the delicate balance. The project also noted ways in which the Hartford Parks and Recreation Department and the Conservation Commission can work together to improve management of the Town Forest.

