



Town of Marshfield, Vermont

TOWN FOREST RECREATION PLANNING GRANT REPORT



Vermont Town Forest
Recreation Planning

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Acknowledgements

All plans are the result of a collective effort. In the development of this document, 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

- ❖ Sarah Fowler, Grant Administration Lead
- ❖ Rich Phillips, Chairperson
- ❖ Jenny Warshow
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- ❖ Brett Engstrom
- ❖ Ellen Cooke
- ❖ Michael Sabourin

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 FRP'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.

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 Marshfield 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.



The project encompasses four key areas:

1. Developing the Vermont 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

Project Process

Over the past year, Marshfield 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. This process has resulted in a plan that provides actionable strategies to assist the community in taking the next steps. This process has led to the Vermont 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 or facilities (as allowed by the conservation easement)—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 toolkit and 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.



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.

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

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 forest.

Summary

Marshfield is a small, rural town in Northern Vermont with a strong connection with neighboring Plainfield, as the two towns share a school and often residents shop at businesses and recreate in the neighboring town.

Marshfield's median age and median household income are right around the statewide average. The town does have 17% of its population living below the poverty level, compared to 11% statewide. The local economy is only moderately influenced by tourism, but the region is home to many outdoor recreation opportunities for residents. Beyond the Virginia Stranahan Memorial Town Forest, the Groton State Forest is 26,000+ acres, 3,800 of which are in Marshfield, for forest, lake, and mountain-based recreation. Private land recreation is also an important part of the town's recreational landscape.



Martin Covered Bridge. Credit Bil Bowden



Population: 1,650



Median Age: 41.0



of School Age Children: 349



47 % Male 53% Female



Household Median Income: \$55,515



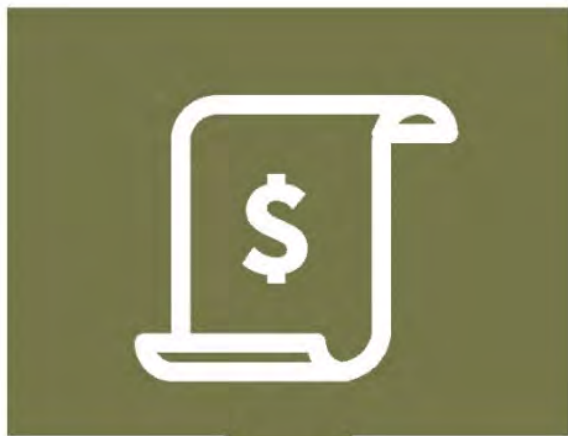
Residents Below Poverty Level: 17 %



6 % Residential Units in Seasonal/Recreational Use



16 % County Employment in Travel & Tourism



Grand List Assessed Value: \$13,087,900



Number of Parks and Open Spaces: 6



Miles of Trails: 8.5



of Playgrounds: 1



Vermont Town Forest Recreation Planning

Town Forest Profile

Forest Overview

The Virginia Stranahan Memorial Town Forest is a 620-acre forest with diverse landscapes on the western edge of Marshfield. The forest has 500+ acres of forest and the remaining acres are a mix of agricultural soils and pasture land. Prior to town acquisition and since Marshfield's founding, the parcel was a private farm and forest with logging operations, homesteads, and agriculture. Many of the former logging roads are now used as trails. The forest has 7+ miles of recreational trails which includes 2.7 miles of multi-use trail, 3.3 miles of hiking trails, 1.3 miles of VAST snowmobile trail, and 1.0 miles of mountain biking trails with more biking trails currently being built. The property also has an apple orchard and historic foundations and stone walls. As to natural features, the forest has vernal pools, beaver ponds, rich hardwood forests, streams, wildflowers and is a habitat for many species. Recently, a maple sugarer has begun tapping trees in the forest and Riders in Plainfield and Marshfield (RIPM) have constructed bike optimized multi-use trails in the forest. The fields are being hayed and bush-hogged to keep open.



Land Ownership and Conservation Background

The Virginia Stranahan Memorial Town Forest was given to the Town in 2007. The land was previously held by the Stranahan Trust who sold it at a reduced price. Through over 100 private donations, a grant from the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board, the Vermont Land Trust acquired the forest and then gave it to the town. The land is subject to a conservation easement co-held by the Vermont Land Trust and the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board. The conservation easement purpose, or the guiding principles to management of the forest is as follows:

To conserve forestry values, agricultural values, wildlife habitats, biological diversity, natural communities, riparian buffers, aquatic habitats, wetlands, soil productivity, water quality, and native flora and fauna on the Protected Property, and the ecological processes that sustain these natural resource values as these values exist on the date of this instrument and as they may evolve in the future, and non-motorized, non-commercial recreational



Vermont Town Forest Recreation Planning

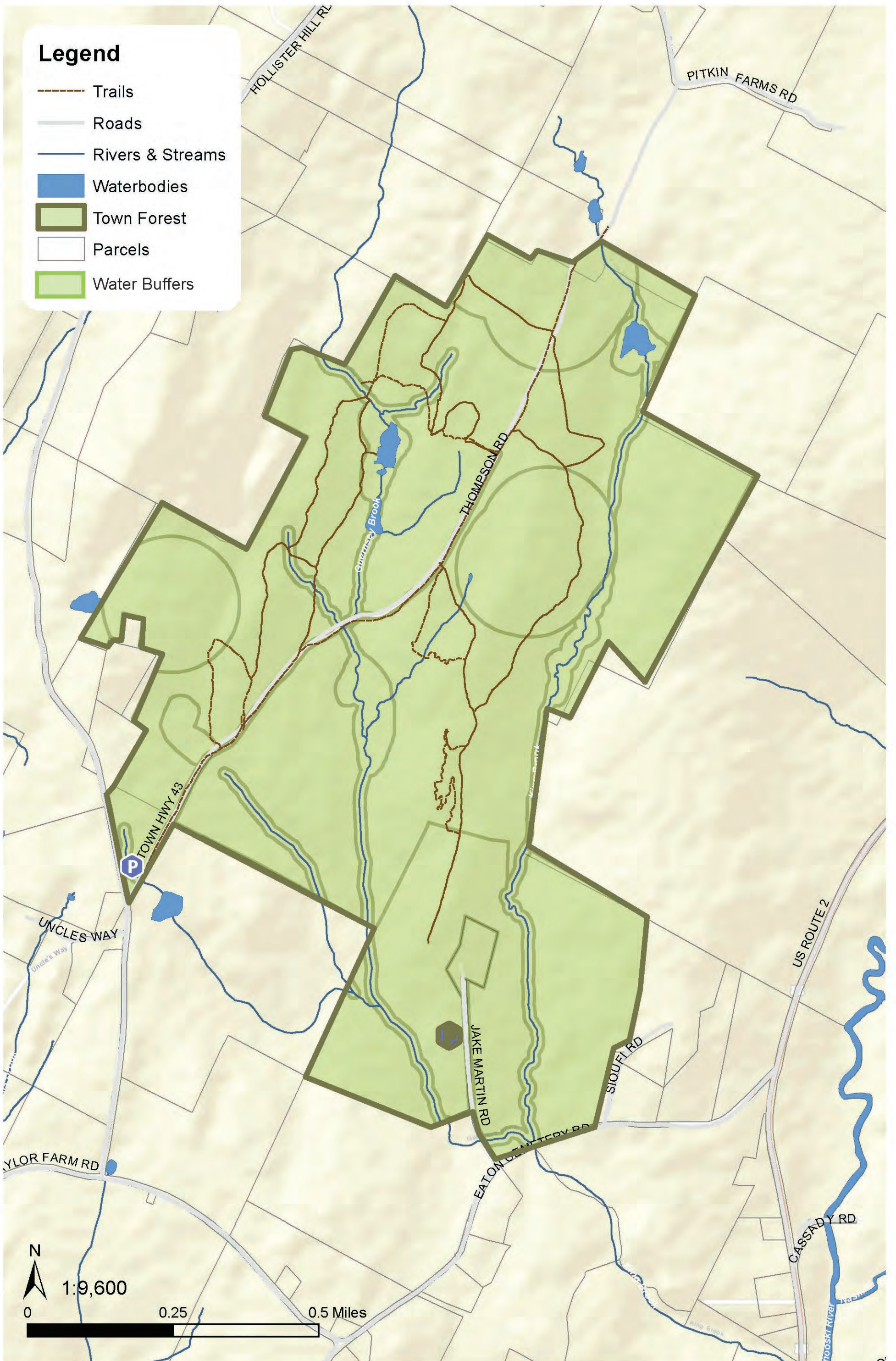
opportunities, open space values, and scenic resources associated with the Protected Property for present and future generations.

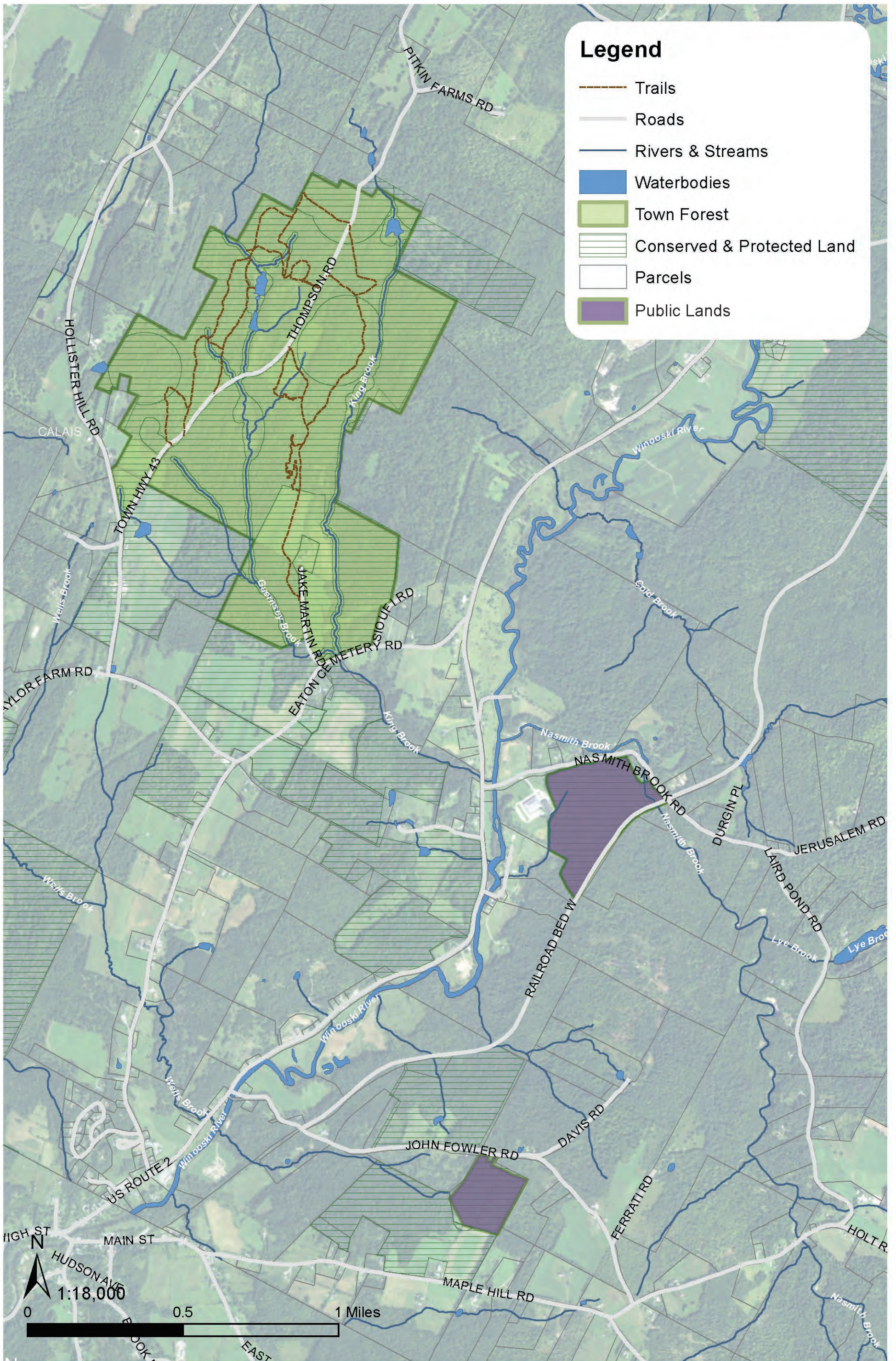
Relevant to recreation planning on the forest, the easement restricts residential, commercial, industrial, or mining activities; the construction or moving of buildings and structures; the construction of roads, driveways, or easements sans permission of the grantees; operation of motor vehicles except for specified uses (including trail grooming, agriculture, wildlife and forest management, maintenance, and handicap access), with snowmobiling left up to the town; manipulation of natural watercourses or activities that could be detrimental to water purity or water level and flow. The conservation easement also limits the forest to two six-car parking lots.

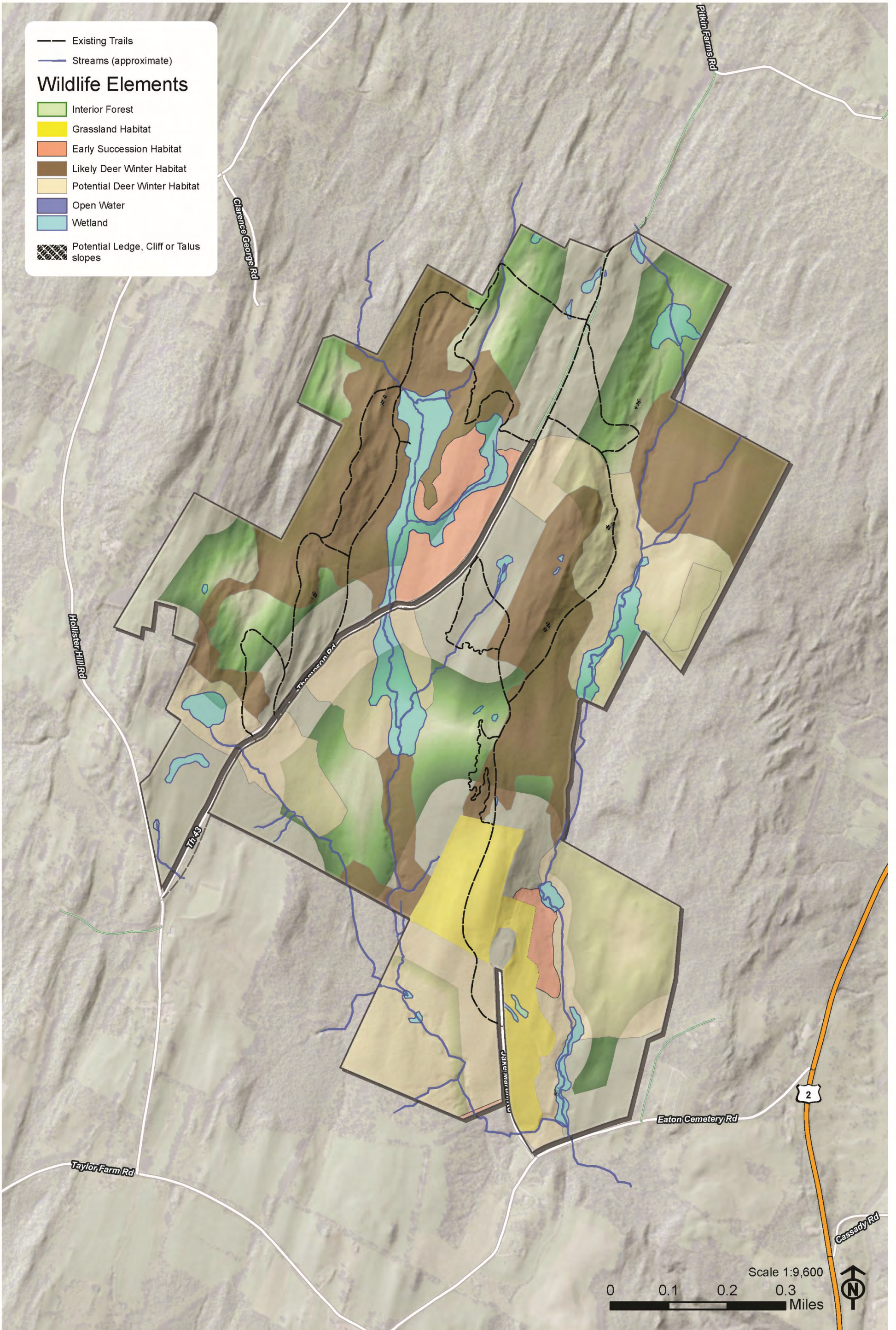
The conservation easement also mandates the town prepare a forest management plan, to be approved by the Vermont Land Trust and Vermont Housing and Conservation Board. The town has prepared such a plan and updates it on a five-year cycle. The management plan establishes the management

structure of the forest, with the Stranahan Stewardship Committee responsible for day-to-day operational and maintenance activities and decisions on the forest and the Town Selectboard making all big picture management decisions. Recent discussions around timber management have been controversial.







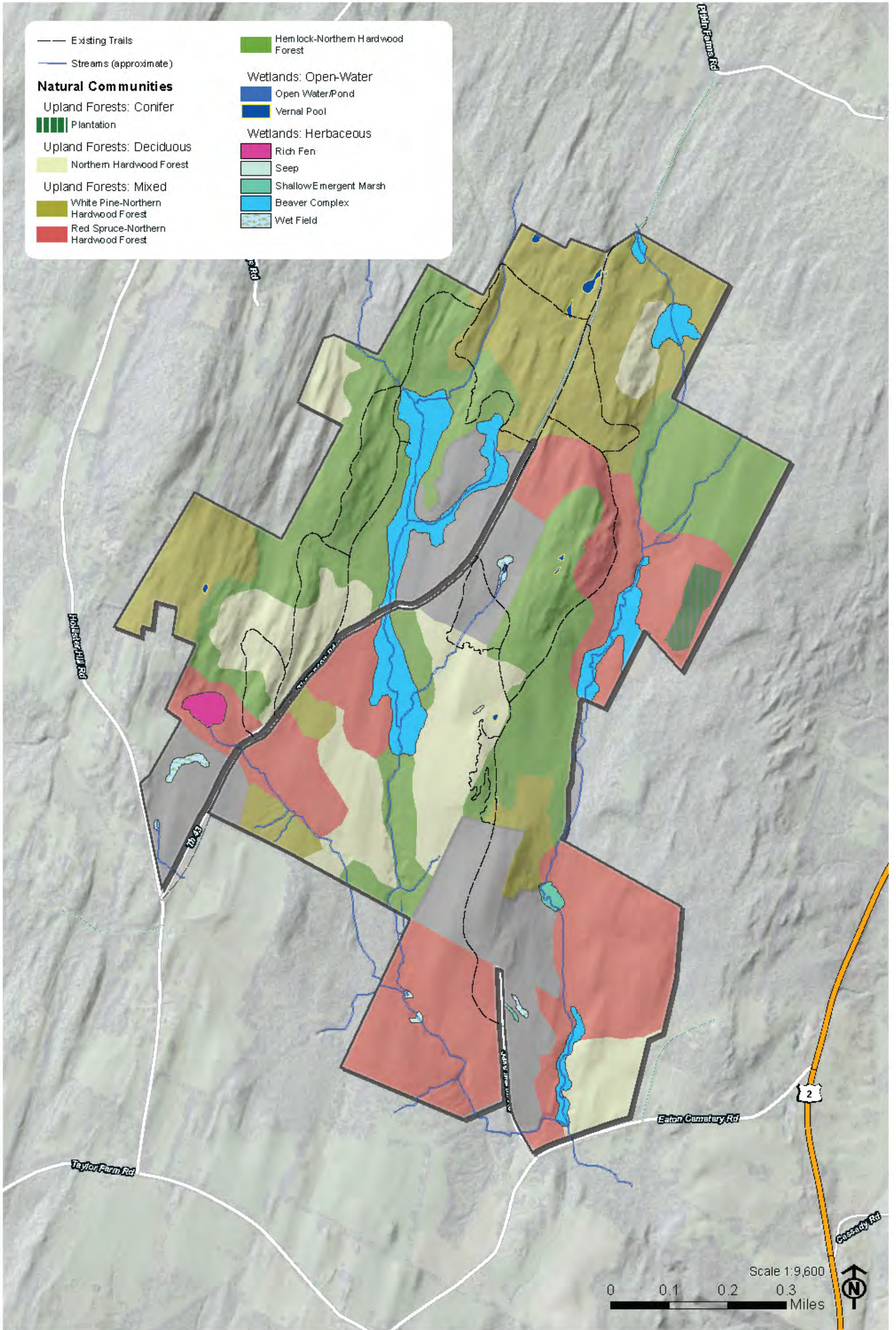


— Existing Trails
 — Streams (approximate)

Wildlife Elements

- Interior Forest
- Grassland Habitat
- Early Succession Habitat
- Lively Deer Winter Habitat
- Potential Deer Winter Habitat
- Open Water
- Wetland
- 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 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 Marshfield, five people were in attendance.



Steering Committee Process

The steering committee, made up of the Stranahan Stewardship Committee and additional interested community members, 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.

Vermont Town Forest Recreation Planning

Visioning Workshop

A Visioning Workshop for the Virginia Stranahan Memorial Town Forest was held at Old Schoolhouse Common on January 22, 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. 28 people signed in and an estimated 40-50 people were in attendance. Seven of these attendees were Stranahan Stewardship members.



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 22, 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 133 responses—100 online and 33 hard copy.

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



Vermont Town Forest Recreation Planning

Strategies Workshop

A Strategies Workshop for the Virginia Stranahan Memorial Town Forest was held at the Old Schoolhouse Common on July 24, 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 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 strategies on a large map. An estimated 20-25 people were in attendance.

Please see Appendix 2 for the Strategies Workshop Results.



Plan Presentation Workshop

The Committee will present the draft document to the public at a regularly scheduled meeting of the Stewardship Committee that will be well advertised. The Select Board, the Conservation Commission, the Planning Commission and the Recreation Committee will be invited. In the presentation, the steering committee will explain the project purpose and process and share the vision framework and top priority strategies they developed. Representatives from Urban and Community Forestry and/or the Department of Forests Parks and Recreation will be 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.



Vermont Town Forest

Recreation Planning

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. Timber management impacts
2. Some trails, particularly old logging roads, have poor drainage
3. Balancing uses
4. Potential for overuse
5. Potential conflicts with private landowners
6. Confusion around forest vs. private land boundary
7. Drainage and condition of Thompson Road
8. Lack of data on forest use
9. Limited accessibility for elders and persons with disabilities
10. Sap lines through the forest
11. In need of additional funding sources
12. Need for collaborative community dialogue around forest use



Chapter 4: Town Forest Vision Framework

A vision framework is a critically important tool that informs the goals and direction of recreation in the town forest. 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.



Vermont Town Forest Recreation Planning

Existing Experience

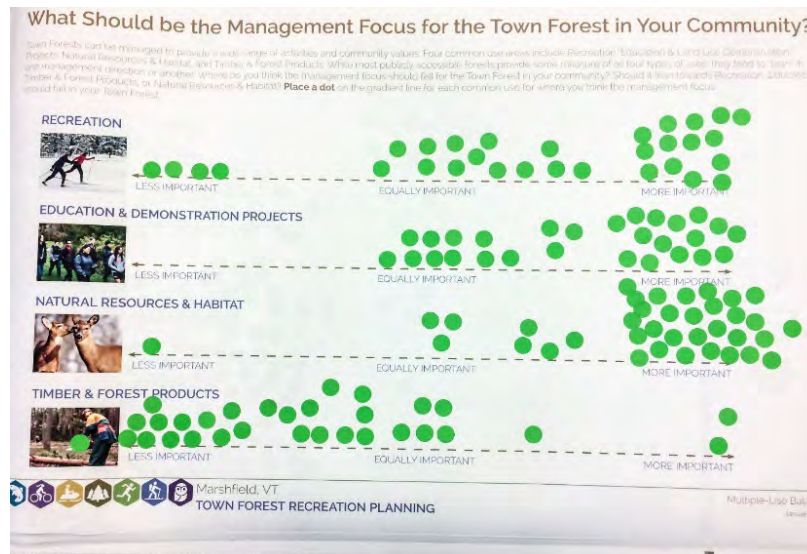
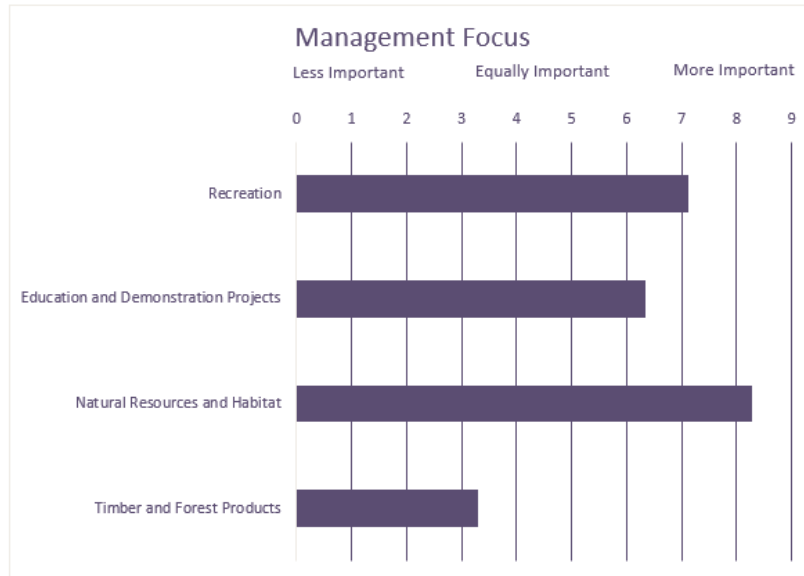


Based on the community’s responses, the Stranahan is a well-known and cherished community resource. Popular descriptions of the existing experience include “peaceful,” “hiking,” “natural,” “pleasant,” and “quiet.” Some expressed concerns about accessibility and openness of the forest for all.



Vermont Town Forest Recreation Planning

Education, Recreation, Natural Resources and Habitat or Timber & Forest Products?” The responses are below:



Through these interactions, the Marshfield community expressed that Natural Resources & Habitat, Education & Demonstration Projects, and Recreation are more important uses in the management of the forest than Timber & Forest Products. Both survey respondents and workshop participants felt that Natural Resources & Habitat were most important.

The management balance of the forest is determined in part by existing factors such as generating income (sugaring, haying, logging), limited parking, and other guidelines of the conservation easement. As the meeting attendees and survey respondents were older on average than the population, this balance may not fully reflect the community’s view.



Vermont Town Forest

Recreation Planning

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.

1. Multi-dimensional (haying, sugaring, habitat, conservation, recreation, etc.)
2. Peaceful and quiet
3. Sustainable and well-maintained trail system
4. Protection of wildlife habitat
5. Protection of vernal pools, wetlands, and other water resources
6. Inclusive of a variety of users and community perspectives
7. Year-round recreation (snowshoeing, biking, hiking, cross country skiing)
8. A piece of a larger conserved forest block
9. Connectivity to other forested areas
10. Maintain healthy balance between stewardship and human uses
11. Low key and low intensity use
12. Place to appreciate the natural world
13. Multi-generational
14. Preserve and interpret cultural and historical resources
15. Solitude, rest, and rejuvenation
16. Opportunities for learning about stewardship, history and the forest
17. Community utilized and maintained
18. Well managed with the Forest Committee, Select Board, and input from the community
19. Beautiful views
20. Engaged and appreciated volunteer group
21. Well-located and accessible
22. Remarkable biodiversity



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 most 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 goal 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 #:



Need #:



Estimated Cost:

\$\$\$

Timing:

Short-Term

Many of the trails in the Virginia Stranahan Memorial Town Forest are former logging roads. These logging roads were not constructed according to today's best practices around sustainable trail construction. Some of these trails have drainage issues, particularly Thompson Road, the main route through the forest. Portions of the road are frequently muddy and wet, creating an unpleasant experience for the trail user and leading them to frequently walk off trail and damage surrounding soils. The trail assessment form, included in the town forest recreation planning toolkit, provides a tool for the committee and other volunteers to use to review trail conditions in the forest and record areas in need of mitigation.

Based on the results of the existing trail review, the committee could reroute, redesign, or replace trails to enhance experiences for all user groups, improve drainage, and limit erosion. Some trails will require maintenance and small repairs to improve drainage and short reroutings may be necessary at some locations. During this process, the trail needs of each user group should be evaluated to plan for the forest's trail system.

A rehabilitated trail system can provide the desired experience for all user groups. It would be a mix of traditional walking footpaths, natural surface multi-use trails, ADA accessible paths, and "bike optimized" trails open to all users. Strategic connecting trails are also vital for enhancing the user experience and limiting trail density.

Responsibility
Forest Stewardship
Committee

Partners Involved
Conservation
Commission, RIPM,
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 Thompson Road



Vermont Town Forest Recreation Planning

Jake Martin Road Access

Key Attribute #:

3 21

Need #:

6 11

Estimated Cost:

\$\$

Timing:

Ongoing

The forest stewardship committee has been hard at work improving the access to the forest from Jake Martin Road. Although the plans are in place, this recommendation relates to the potential partnerships and funding for future stages of this project. The Jake Martin Road access is important as a convenient access to the Moonfield without having to cross private property.

So far, the committee has constructed a new parking area and trailhead kiosk along Jake Martin Road, roughly 0.1 miles from the Moonfield. Trail maps and additional forest information about the history, natural features, and trail etiquette in the forest should be posted at the kiosk.

To complete this project, the committee needs to construct a short connecting trail from the parking lot to the Moonfield through the woods. The committee should work with local partners and trail builders such as Riders in Plainfield Marshfield (RIPM) for the design and construction of the trail. Funding opportunities are listed on the right as well.



Responsibility
Stewardship
Committee

Partners Involved
RIPM, local trail
builders

Planning Required
Trail route

Funding
Opportunities
RTP, RD, VCDP,
RFG, VCF, LF,
PBCG, RWJF,
TCPN

Toolkit
Resources

Land Conservation
and Recreational
Access Toolkit

Parking
Considerations
Toolkit

Sustainable Trail
Standards



Vermont Town Forest Recreation Planning

Local Partnerships and Engagement

Key Attribute #:



Need #:



Estimated Cost:

\$

Timing:

Ongoing

From its founding, the Virginia Stranahan Memorial Town Forest, has been a community resource. Many community members donated to help the town purchase the forest. The community must remain at the core of this forest: making decisions about its future, maintaining its trails, and enjoying and providing programming. In order to do so, the stewardship committee must engage the community and partner with local organizations.

The stewardship committee should call an annual meeting of users to get feedback on current use management, suggestions for improvement in use management, and identification of volunteers for the annual list of physical improvements. This meeting should include mountain bikers, hikers, hunters, snowmobilers, sugarers and other forest users.

The stewardship committee should continue to engage the full community on the forest, collecting input and encouraging them to visit and maintain the forest. Many in the community also have a knowledge or skillset that would be useful for the forest. For example, community members who are extremely knowledgeable about botany could lead wildflower and tree identification walks in the forest and those experienced in construction should lead trail building efforts.

There are many other organizations in the area who are potential partners for programming: Conservation Commission, Twinfield School, Goddard College, Earthwalk, Riders in Plainfield and Marshfield, VAST, and Friends of the Winooski River.

Responsibility
Stewardship
Committee

Partners Involved
All

Planning Required
Meeting
Facilitation

Funding
Opportunities
RTB, NPCB

Toolkit
Resources

Programming
Partnerships
Toolkit

Volunteer
Development and
Recruitment
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 Stranahan Stewardship Committee 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.

As the Stranahan is a relatively new forest, there has been and will continue to be significant interest in new trails and facilities. So far, the new trails and facilities have been added in such a way that protects the resources of the forest. Yet going forward, it is important there is a consistent and transparent process to rely upon.

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
Stewardship
Committee

Partners Involved
Stranahan User
Collaborative

Planning Required
Review, adjustment,
and adoption of
model process

Toolkit Resources

Model Proposal
Process

Natural Resource
Guidance Toolkit



Vermont Town Forest Recreation Planning

Pause Places

Key Attribute #:



Need #:



Estimated Cost:

\$\$

Timing:

Medium-Term

The Virginia Stranahan Memorial Town Forest has many interesting natural and historical features that merit interpretation and appreciation. Pause places should be developed throughout the forest to encourage forest users to stop and 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 viewing areas for the cellar holes and the waterfall.

The pause places should also include natural and historical interpretation. For example, at the vernal pools, interpretive signage should convey background information about vernal pools, the species that rely on them, and instructions on how trail users should best appreciate them. At the historical sites, the interpretive signage should give a history of the property, previous uses of the forest, and Virginia Stranahan.

Responsibility
Stewardship Committee

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

Enhance Homestead Area

Key Attribute #:



Need #:



Estimated Cost:

\$\$\$

Timing:

Medium-Term

The Stranahan Memorial Forest is rich with historic structures – cellar holes and stone walls are scattered throughout the property. At the Thompson Homestead Farm, there is an impressive barn foundation in a clearing and the site is close to forest trailheads. Therefore, the Thompson Homestead should be a destination in the forest, a place to gather the community that is accessible to young and old.

The stewardship committee has started to make the site welcoming to visitors. Volunteers have cleaned around the foundation, opened up the views by selectively cutting brush and trees and brought in a picnic table. These enhancements should continue and happen concurrently with improvements to Thompson Road. Long-term, the stewardship committee should consider creating an ADA accessible path to the homestead. An ADA accessible path starting at the entrance of the property is not feasible due to road grades and the poor road bed. A path at the level of the center of the property would be possible but delivery would be necessary to access the trail.

The Thompson Homestead Farm should also be the center for historical interpretation in the forest, with signage about the historic barn and the Thompson family who lived on the site.

The Thompson Homestead Farm would be used for events and educational offerings. Classes visiting the forest could use the picnic tables to gather or for instruction. The stewardship committee is interested in holding community events at the homestead as well. For example, large bonfires in the winter and an annual “Celebrate Marshfield” or “Heritage Days” event that brings the community to the forest.

Responsibility
Stewardship
Committee

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

Sustainable Facility
Standards



Vermont Town Forest Recreation Planning



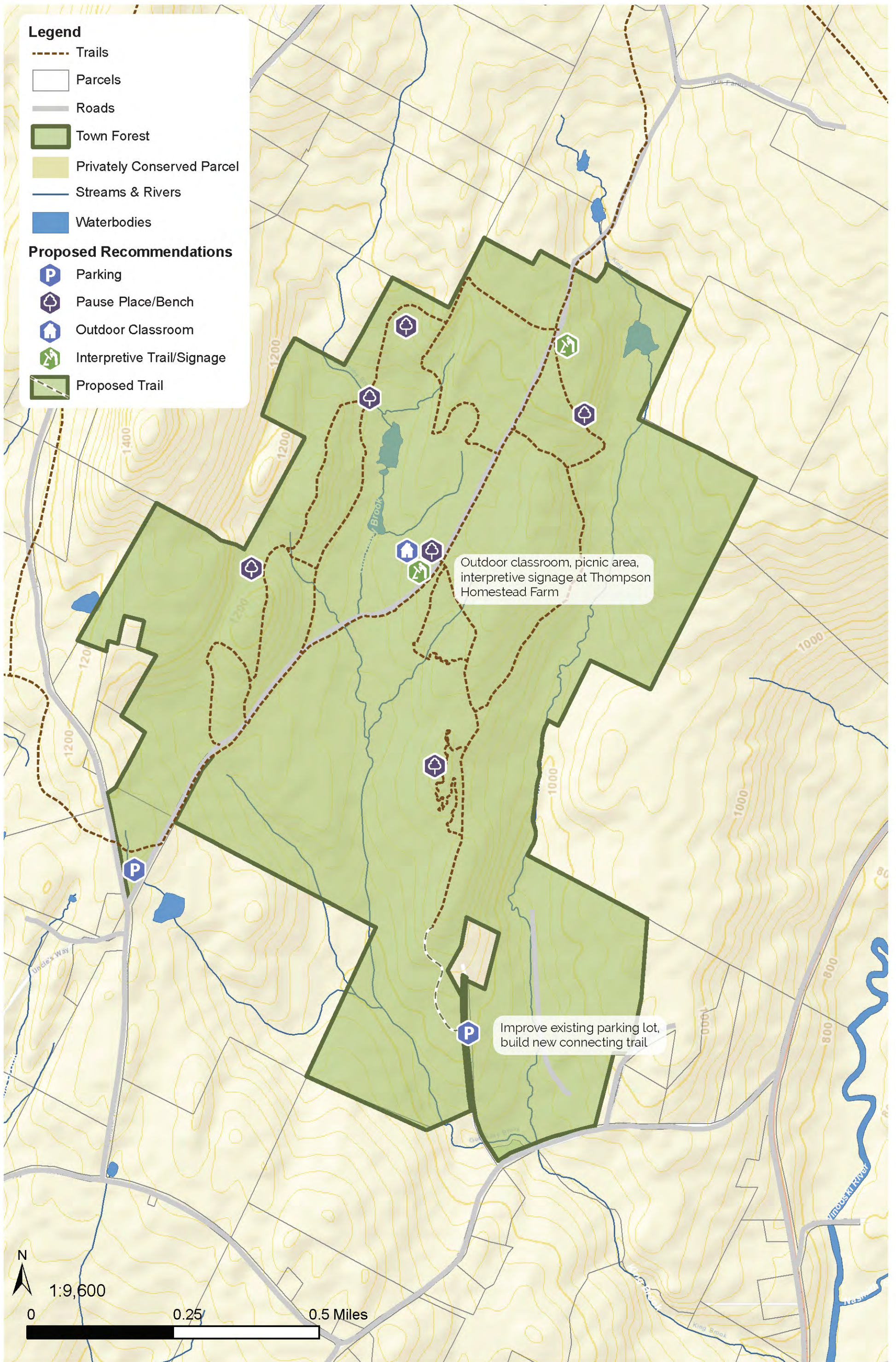
Vermont Town Forest

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.





Vermont Town Forest Recreation Planning

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								
Jake Martin Road Access	Complete the Jake Martin Road Access project by constructing a trail from the parking area to the Moonfield to avoid the private property by the forest. Maps should also be posted at the trailhead kiosk.	Stewardship Committee	Ongoing	RIPM, local trail builders	trail design	\$\$	RTP, RD, VCDP, RFG, VCF, LF, PBCG, RWJF, TCPN	-Parking Considerations Toolkit -Land Conservation and Recreational Access Toolkit -Sustainable Trail Standards
2. Trails								
Existing trail conditions assessment and review	Continue to study existing trails, especially those following former logging roads, and evaluate for potential ecological harm and mitigate the site through necessary means. Decommission or reroute trails as needed.	Stewardship Committee	Short-Term	RIPM, Conservation Commission, local trail builders and users	trail reroute and redesign	\$	RTP, RTC, VHCP, ERG	-Trail assessment forms -Natural Resource Guidance Toolkit -Sustainable Trail Standards
New Trail Connections	Improve the existing trail system with strategic connections to enhance experiences for all user groups. Ensure system includes a mix of traditional footpaths and "bike-optimized" multi-use natural surface trails to provide desired experiences. Consider rebuild or replacement of existing logging roads or unsustainable trails to improve drainage, limit erosion, and limit trail density. New connections could include an apple picking trail (that leads to the orchard) or connections for an interpretive history trail.	Stewardship Committee	Medium-Term	RIPM, Conservation Commission, local trail builders and users	trail design	\$\$	RTP, RD, VCDP, RFG, VCF, LF, PBCG, RWJF, TCPN	-Sustainable Trail Standards
New accessible path or interpretive trail	Build a graded, ADA accessible path for all ages and abilities to enjoy the forest. Such paths are typically short (~1 mile) and provide ample opportunities for rest and education with stations or stops next to points of natural or cultural interest. Coordinate with educational programming.	Stewardship Committee	Long-Term	Local trail builders	trail design	\$\$\$	RTP, RD, TAP, BPP, VCDP, RFG, VCF, LF, PBCG, RWJF, TCPN	-Sustainable Trail Standards -Interpretation Guidance Toolkit
Trail markers and signage	Continue to add signage in the forest for wayfinding, information, and trail etiquette. Ensure it communicates town ownership and/or stewardship committee management.	Stewardship Committee	Short-Term	Conservation Commission, RIPM	Signage design	\$\$	RTP, RTC	-Trail Markers and Wayfinding Toolkit -Interpretation Guidance Toolkit
Marshfield User Meeting	Convene all forest user groups annually to continue the dialogue around trails and to establish a framework for collaboration in the future.	Stewardship Committee	Short-Term	RIPM, VAST	Meeting facilitation	\$	RTP, NPCB	-Volunteer Development and Recruitment 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, wildlife observation, rest, and rejuvenation. Opportunities for natural and historical interpretation should also be explored.	Stewardship Committee	Medium-Term	Program and educational partners	historical and natural resource research, pause place design	\$\$	LWCF, RTC, RTP, RFG, AIG	- Pause Places Toolkit -Bench Volunteer Designs -Interpretation Guidance Toolkit

Restore Apple Orchard	Restore trail to apple orchard to open up access. Improve the orchard itself to become a community resource.	Stewardship Committee	Medium-Term	--	--	\$	LWCF, RTC, RTP, LF, VCF, BJB	-Sustainable Trail Standards
Develop an outdoor classroom	Create a small gathering space with picnic tables, benches, earthen mounds etc. for schools and other groups.	Stewardship Committee	Medium-Term	Earthwalk, Twinfield School	outdoor classroom design	\$	LWCF, RTC, RTP, RFG, AIG	- Sustainable Facility Standards -Natural Resource Guidance toolkit
4. Education & Programs								
Educational Programs/Outdoor Program	Continue holding educational programs in the forest about the history and ecology of the forest.	Stewardship Committee	Ongoing	Program and educational partners	--	\$	VCF, VHCB, LF, BJB	-Programming Partnerships Toolkit
Ecology tours	Continue offering ecology tours (birdwatching, plant identification, etc.) for children and adults.	Stewardship Committee	Ongoing	Program and educational partners	--	\$	VCF, VHCB, LF, BJB	-Programming Partnerships Toolkit
Land management education	Create awareness and education programs around the land management of the forest. Consider interpretive signage.	Stewardship Committee	Medium-Term	County Forester, VLT, Program and educational partners	--	\$	CCG, ERG, VCF, VHCP, BJB	- Interpretation Guidance Toolkit
Interpretive signage	Develop interpretive signage that support educational programs and self-guided learning. Coordinate with development of pause places.	Stewardship Committee	Medium-Term	Program and educational partners	historical and natural resource research, pause place design	\$	LWCF, RTC, RTP, RFG, AIG	-Interpretation Guidance 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.	Stewardship Committee	Short-Term	Program and educational partners	--	\$	VCF, VHCB, LF, BJB	-Programming Partnerships Toolkit
5. Events								
6. Maps, Outreach, & Promotion								
Community Engagement	Continue to engage the community about the forest. Identify community members who have a useful skill to offer.	Stewardship Committee	Ongoing	All	--	\$	--	-Volunteer Development and Recruitment Toolkit
Measure forest use	Use trail counters or volunteer trail counts to gather data about the number of users of the forest.	Stewardship Committee	Short-Term	RIPM	--	/\$/\$	RTP, RTC	- Volunteer Trail Counting Forms
Improve maps of the forest	Create maps that show all trails in the forest and make these maps readily available both online and in print. Add QR codes to the maps.	Stewardship Committee	Medium-Term	RIPM, Conservation Commission	Cartography, Graphic Design	-\$-\$	RTP	-Mapping and Promotion Toolkit
7. Administrative Actions								
Remove invasives	Remove invasive plants that are growing in the forest.	Stewardship Committee	Medium-Term	Conservation Commission	--	\$	LF, VHCP, BJB	-Natural Resource Guidance Toolkit
Management zones	Expand use of management zones in town forest management plan to consider and plan for all uses. Designate areas more suitable for wildlife habitat, hunting, or mountain biking, for example. As this is a long-term process, in the interim, the committee should depend on approval process that balances uses and environmental concerns. The approval process needs to be robust and would be used with the management zones when adopted.	Stewardship Committee	Long-Term	Town, Conservation Commission, VLT	--	\$	CCG, MPG, ERG, VCF, VHCP, BJB	-Management Zones Toolkit
Partner with local groups interested in recreation, conservation, and programming.	Partner with the Conservation Commission, Twinfield School, and other local conservation and recreation groups such as VAST and RIPM.	Stewardship Committee	Short-Term	All	Meeting facilitation	\$	RTP, NPCB	-Programming Partnerships 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.	Stewardship Committee	Short-Term	Town, Conservation Commission, VLT	Review, adjustment, and adoption of model process	\$	RTP, RTC, VHCP, ERG	-Model Proposal Process -Natural Resource Guidance 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 Marshfield is one, and for other towns to do their own recreation plans after this project has ended.

Perhaps more importantly for Marshfield, 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

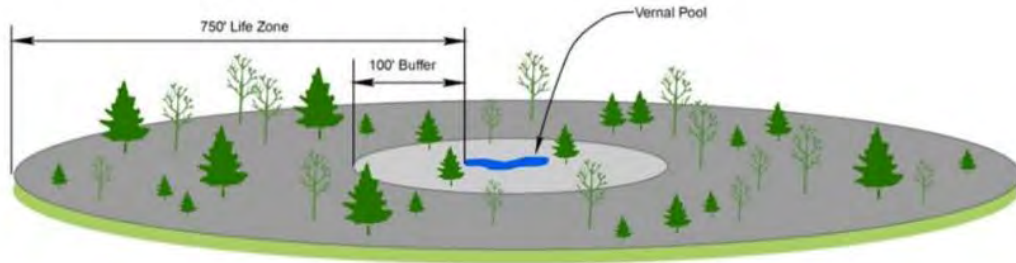


Figure 1. Vernal Pool management zones

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, Marshfield 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>

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>



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 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>



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>

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 Marshfield Intends on Using this Report

This recreation planning report will be integrated into the Stranahan Memorial Town Forest Management Plan as it is updated. The public input and proposed action sections will be particularly valuable for the future management of the forest.

