



FORESTS, PARKS & RECREATION
VERMONT



AGENCY OF NATURAL RESOURCES

TOWN FORESTS – FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Community Forest and Open Space Program & Forest Legacy Program

WELCOME



PRESENTERS



Kate Sudhoff: Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation
Forest Legacy Program Manager

Neal Bungard: USDA Forest Service, Eastern Region
Community Forest and Open Space Conservation Program Manager

Joanne Garton: Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation
Urban and Community Forest Program, Technical Assistance Coordinator

Julie Frost: University of Vermont
Graduate Student – Vermont Town Forest Census

OVERVIEW

- Project Examples
- Community Forest Program
- Forest Legacy Program
- Town Forest Resources and Technical Assistance - Urban & Community Forestry Program
- Town Forest Census Project
- Questions



Photo by Bob Heiser – Vermont Land Trust,
courtesy of Trust for Public Land

A BIT OF HISTORY

- In 1915 – Town Forest concept made official when the Vermont Legislature passed the Municipal Forest Law, authorizing towns to purchase lands for growing timber
- Current statute defines a “municipal forest” as being:
 - *“...a tract of land primarily devoted to producing wood products, maintaining wildlife habitat, protecting water supplies, providing forest recreation and conservation education.”*
- 1950s – 70 towns had municipal forests. Department of Forests and Parks had two staff foresters providing technical assistance to municipalities
- Today – over 67,000 acres of forestland is owned by 168 municipalities. Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation continues to serve a role in technical assistance



Photo by Neal Bungard, Forest Service

See also, “A Forest in Every Town: Vermont’s History of Communal Woodlands” by Robert McCullough

BARRE TOWN FOREST



- Owner: Town of Barre
- Project facilitated by Trust for Public Land
- 355 acres
- Acquisition Completed 2013
- Funding total \$1,030,000
 - Federal - CFP: \$400k
 - State – VHCB: \$310k
 - Open Space Institute: \$200k
 - Town of Barre: \$100k
 - VT Rec Trails: \$20k

SCRAG MOUNTAIN TOWN FOREST



- Owner: Town of Waitsfield
- Project facilitated by Vermont Land Trust
- 110-acre addition – 750-acre Forest
- Acquisition of “Gateway Parcel” Completed in 2017
- Funding total \$707,000
 - Federal – CFP: \$267k
 - State – VHCB \$125k
 - Town - \$40k
 - Bargain Sale - \$200k
 - Community Fundraising - \$75k +

HUNTINGTON COMMUNITY FOREST



- Owner: Town of Huntington
- Project facilitated by Trust for Public Land
- 245 acres (adjacent to Elementary School)
- Acquisition Completed 2021
- Funding total \$909,000
 - Federal - CFP: \$385k
 - State – VHCB: \$75k
 - Town of Huntington: \$140k
 - VT Clean Water Revolving Fund: \$309k

MONKTON TOWN FOREST

- Owner will be Town of Monkton
- Project facilitated by: Vermont Land Trust
- Acquisition UNDERWAY!
- Funding total \$1,118,000
 - Federal – CFP: \$400k
 - State – VHCB: \$371k
 - Town: \$195k (ARPA and other town funds)
 - Bargain sale: \$100k
 - Community fundraising: \$52k



Photos from Monkton Town Forest Committee website

(#s from VLT website)

WOLCOTT COMMUNITY FOREST



©Chris Bennett, courtesy of Trust for Public Land

- Owner: Town of Wolcott
- Project facilitated by Trust for Public Land
- 735 acres (adjacent to Elementary School)
- Acquisition Completed Sept 2024
- Funding total \$1,207,000
 - Federal - CFP: \$580k
 - State – VHCB: \$602k
 - Town of Wolcott: \$25k
 - + VOREC - \$198k for trail development

CATAMOUNT COMMUNITY FOREST



- Owner: Town of Williston
- Project facilitated by Trust for Public Land, Vermont Land Trust holds easement
- 393 acres (adjacent to Catamount Outdoor Center)
- Acquisition Completed 2019
- Funding total \$1,900,000
 - Federal – CFP: \$400k
 - Federal - LWCF/National Park Service Stateside: \$280k
 - State – VHCB: \$328k
 - Town of Williston, and many small grants and contributions: \$400k +

COW MOUNTAIN POND FOREST



- Owner: Town of Granby and USFS
- Project facilitated by The Nature Conservancy
- 1660 acres +
- Acquisition Completed 1993
- Funding total \$570,000
 - Federal – Forest Legacy: \$271k
 - State – VHCB: \$180k
 - Town - \$119k (Bake sales and bird houses!)

Photos - FPR

BRUSHWOOD FOREST



- Owner: Town of West Fairlee
- Project facilitated by: Trust for Public Land
- 1,059 acres in 5 parcels
- Acquisition completed in 2 phases, 2008 - 2011
- Funding total \$1,506,000
 - Federal – Forest Legacy: \$1.456M
 - Open Space Conservancy - \$50k
 - State – \$470k (grant match through other conservation projects)



Photos – FPR and TPL



NAVIGATING THE PATH TO A NEW TOWN FOREST

Acquiring land for a Town Forest is typically a long and careful process with a lot of hard work and patience

- Planning – Input from the town residents
- Partners – Partnering with a land conservation organization is a huge benefit
- Land - Finding the right parcel
- **Seeking and Securing Funding** - Putting together the funding puzzle
- Working through the acquisition process – title, appraisal, assessments, map/survey...
- Planning for management and use of the Town Forest



Photo – K. Sudhoff, FPR

ZOOMING IN TO FUNDING

Typically, a mix of funding for purchase of land for a town forest

Federal, state, local, private foundations, small grants, landowner bargain sale, local fundraising, bake sales...





Forest Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



USDA Forest Service Community Forest and Open Space Conservation Program

FY2025 Request for Applications

Neal Bungard

November 1, 2024

Community Forest Program (CFP)

- History
- Purpose
- Projects are for land acquisition, not conservation easement purchases
- Implemented at the local level
- Projects selected through a nationally competitive process

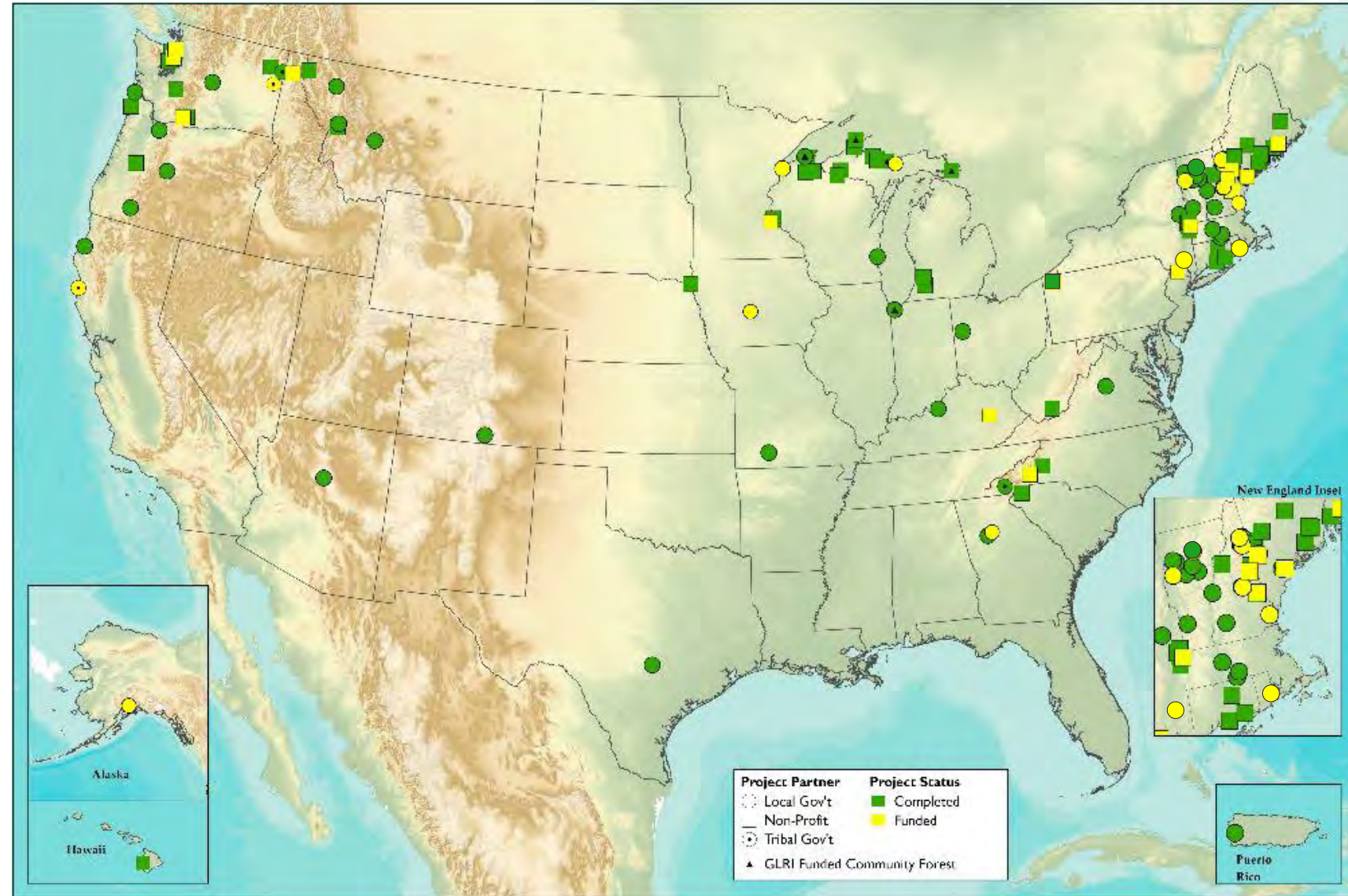
COMMUNITY FOREST



PROGRAM

CFP Projects Across the Country

- 126 projects funded
- Over 38,500 acres conserved to date
- 31 states and territories



Community Forest Program Website and Resources

- <https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/private-land/community-forest>
- Lots of useful reference material:
 - Link to most recent Request for Applications and Guidance documents at Grants.gov
 - USDA-FS-2025-CFP
 - Scoring Guidance (August 2024)
 - Application Guidance (August 2024)
 - CFP Road Map (September 2024)
 - Map Guidance
 - State Forester Contacts
 - Frequently Asked Questions (July 2023)
 - CFP Final Revised Rule (April 2021)



The screenshot shows the USDA Forest Service website page for the Community Forest Program. The navigation bar includes links for 'Visit Us', 'Managing the Land', 'Learn', 'Science and Technology', 'Working with Us', 'About the Agency', and 'Inside the FS'. The breadcrumb trail reads: Home > Managing the Land > Private Land > Community Forest Program > How the Community Forest Program Works.

Related Content

- Conservation Education
- Open Space Conservation
- Urban Forests

Managing the Land

- Fire Management
- Forests and Grasslands
- International Cooperation
- Invasive Species
- Lands and Realty Management
- Natural Resources

Private Land

- Recreation Management
- Sustainability and Climate
- Urban Forests

How the Community Forest Program Works



Photo by Steve Neel.

The Community Forest and Open Space Conservation Program (Community Forest Program) of the Forest offers a unique opportunity for communities to acquire and conserve forests that provide public access and recreational opportunities, protect vital water supplies and wildlife habitat, serve as demonstration sites for private forest landowners, and provide economic benefits from timber and non-timber products.

Program Basics

- Full fee title acquisition is required. Conservation easements are not eligible.
- Community Forests can be owned by local governments, tribal governments, and qualified nonprofit entities.
- The program pays up to 50% of the project costs and requires a 50% non-federal match.
- Public access is required for Community Forest Program projects.



Eligible Land

Private forest lands that:

- At least 75% forested
- At least 5 acres in size
- Are threatened by conversion to nonforest uses
- Are not lands held in trust by the United States
- If acquired by an eligible entity, can provide defined community benefits under the CFP and allow public access



View from Owl's Head Community Forest, Dorset VT
USDA Forest Service photo by Neal Bungard

Eligible Entities

Local governments

- Any municipal government, county government, or other local government with jurisdiction over local land use decisions.

Indian tribes

- Federally recognized Indian tribes and Alaska Native Corporations.

Qualified nonprofit organizations

- An organization that is described in Section 170(h)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code and operates in accordance with one or more of the conservation purposes.



Funded Monkton Community Forest, Monkton VT
USDA Forest Service photo by Neal Bungard

Public Benefits

- Economic
- Educational
- Environmental
- Recreational

- Projects must have Community Engagement





Post-Acquisition Requirements

Within 120 days of closing:

- Final Community Forest plan
- GIS shapefile

Perpetual requirements:

- Self-certification every 5 years
- Periodic Spot checks
- Periodically review and update the Community Forest Plan as needed

CFP Funding



Wolcott Community Forest, Wolcott VT
USDA Forest Service photo by Neal Bungard

- In fiscal year 2024, \$5,500,000 was available for projects and State and Tribal technical assistance
- The maximum request for a project is \$600,000
- 14 projects funded ranging:
 - \$154,000 to \$600,000 awarded
 - 30-1,350 acres in size

CFP Funding

- CFP can provide up to 50% of the total allowable project costs
 - The other 50% must be from non-federal sources



**50%
CFP**

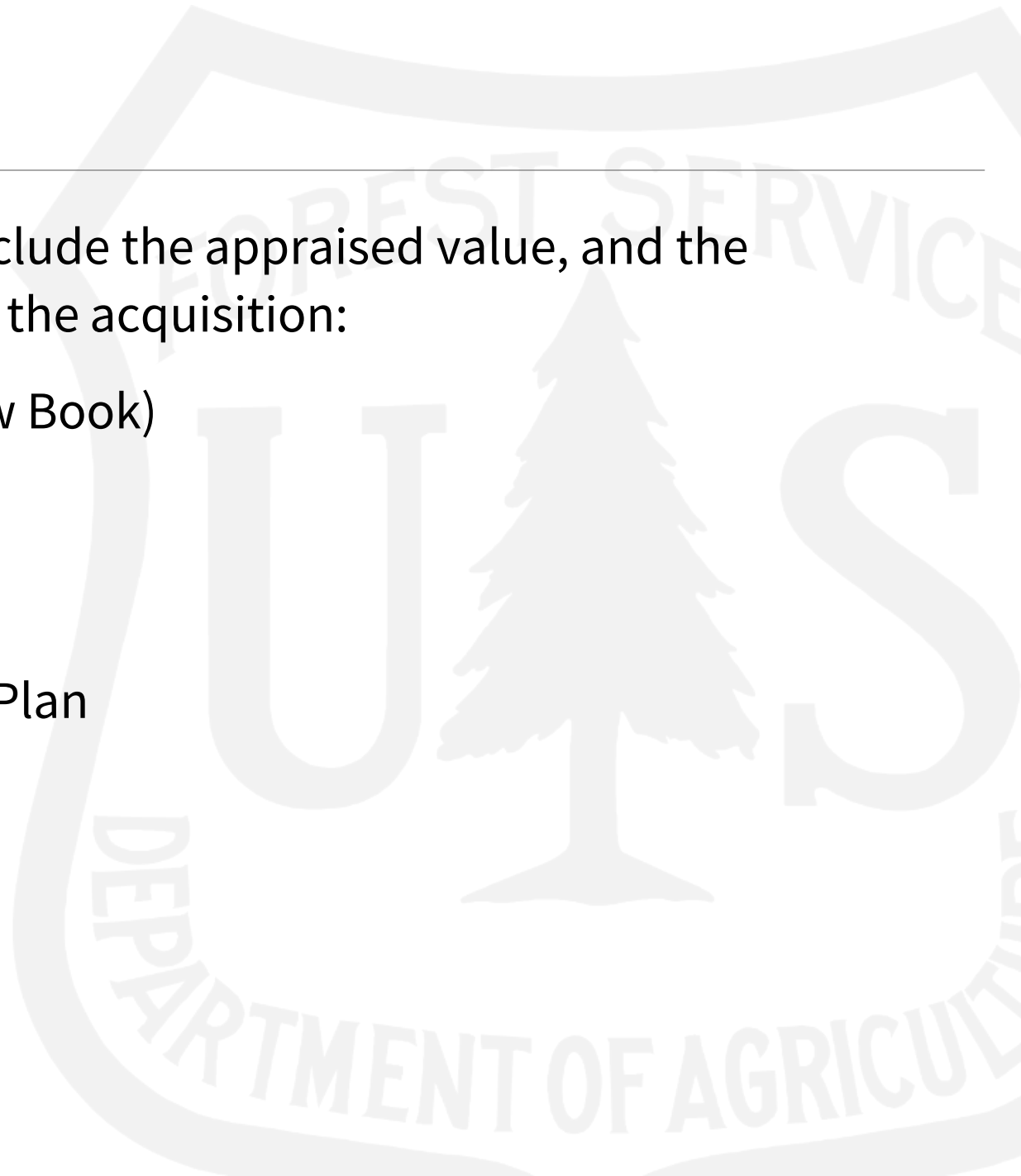


**50%
Non-Federal**

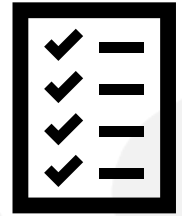
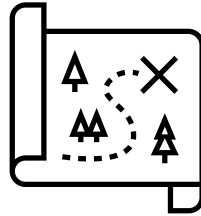
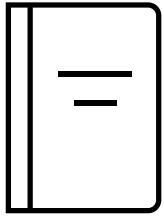
CFP funds allowable costs

Allowable project and cost share costs will include the appraised value, and the following transactional costs associated with the acquisition:

- Appraisals and appraisal reviews (Yellow Book)
- Land surveys
- Legal and closing costs
- Development of the Community Forest Plan
- Title examination



How To Apply



Up to 8 pages describing:

- project
- public benefits
- community engagement
- threat to conversion
- strategic contribution and connection
- Additional application requirements in the CFP Rule and the Request for Applications

2 full page (8.5 x 11)
maps

Any documentation
necessary to confirm
applicant is an eligible
entity

FOREST SERVICE

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

How Projects are Scored


FY2025 Scoring Guidance posted on the National CFP Website

Maximum points: 40

- **20** potential points for the public benefits the proposed Community Forest will provide (Economic, Educational, Environmental, and Recreational)
- **10** potential points for Community Engagement
 - A score of 10 is reserved for projects that show inclusive and meaningful public engagement including underrepresented groups and that is supported by data and/or specific examples
- **5** potential points for Strategic Contribution and Connection
- **5** potential points for likelihood of conversion to a non-forest use

IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation

IAP2's Spectrum of Public Participation was designed to assist with the selection of the level of participation that defines the public's role in any public participation process. The Spectrum is used internationally, and it is found in public participation plans around the world.

INCREASING IMPACT ON THE DECISION 

	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

CFP Application Timeline



Application Tips

- **Use the allotted 8 pages wisely.**
- **Contact the CFP program manager** in your region early in the process.
- **Use the scoring guidance** as a reference as you write your application.
- **Community engagement** is a key component of your application.
- Ask someone to **review your application** before you submit it.

CFP Eastern Region Forest Service contact

Neal Bungard

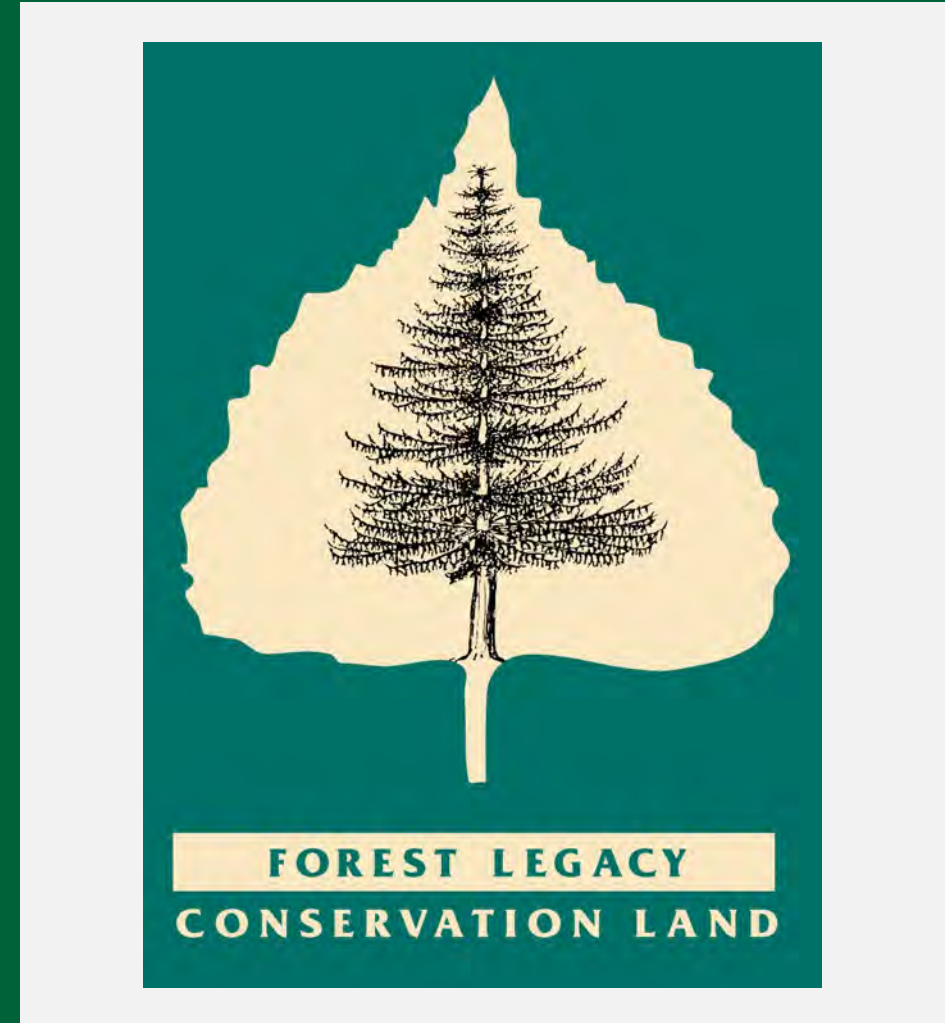
603-833-3287

neal.bungard@usda.gov



FOREST LEGACY PROGRAM

- With Senator Leahy leading the way - the Forest Legacy Program was authorized through the 1990 Farm Bill
- 34 years later, the program has conserved over 3 million acres across the states and US Territories
- Administered by USDA Forest Service in partnership with State agencies
- Purpose is to “protect environmentally important forest areas that are threatened by conversion to non-forest use...”



FOREST LEGACY PROGRAM

- Projects are selected through a nationally competitive process
- For purchase of land or conservation easement
- Grants are to State Lead Agency (FPR) for up to 75% of project costs
- Land acquired may be owned by the state or a municipal government
- Easements are held by FPR
- Land Conservation orgs facilitate projects, but don't hold an interest



FOREST LEGACY PROGRAM

Eligible Land/Requirements

- At least 75% forested
- Located within the designated Forest Legacy Area
- Threatened by conversion to non-forest
- Project must include public access
- To compete well for funding – large acreage is typically necessary
- Multi – resource management plan required



FOREST LEGACY PROGRAM

- Very competitive funding
- Standard funding round is annual
- Special opportunity now with Inflation Reduction Act
- Process overview
 - Pre-applications to FPR in May
 - final applications in September
 - grant funding awards typically 18 months out, after congress passes budget
- Funding maximum - \$20M under standard LWCF funding



QUICK COMPARISON - DIFFERENCES

Community Forest Program:

- Maximum \$600k in federal CFP funds
- Program funds total FY24 \$5.5M
- 50/50 match
- Municipality administers the grant
- Grants awarded more swiftly after application
- Not limited by a designated area
- Small acreage eligible – 5 acre minimum

Forest Legacy Program:

- Maximum grant \$20M
- Program funds LWCF – approx. \$94M annually
- 75/25 match
- State Administers the grant
- Grant award process is very long
- Projects must be located within the designated Forest Legacy Area
- Large acreage projects – 500+ acres is ideal



Town Forest Stewardship Toolkit at VT UCF

[vtcommunityforestry.org/projects/
town-forests](http://vtcommunityforestry.org/projects/town-forests)



TOWN FOREST STEWARDSHIP TOOLKIT



Forests for the People ▶

Town forests have a rich history in Vermont. Find a forest near you.



Protect Land ▶

Learn how towns and cities acquire or conserve land for their town or community forest.



Community Governance ▶

Each municipality steers the future of its own town forest. Pull your community leaders together!



Public Engagement ▶

Discover the best ways to ensure that your town forest balances community interests.



Making a Plan ▶

Discover your town forest's unique traits and roles in your community, then dig into a forest management plan.



Staying Active ▶

County foresters share resources for active management in your town forest.

Resource Hub

EXPLORE THE HUB IN TWO WAYS:

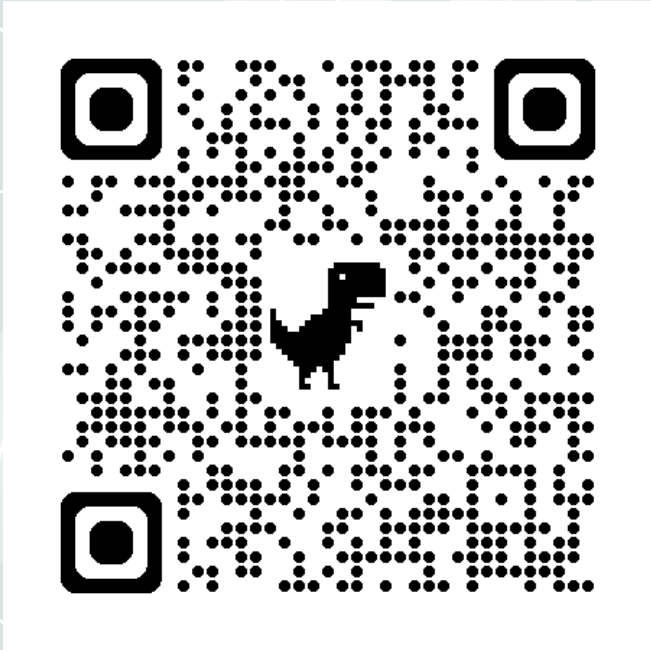
1. 10 STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS
2. TOPICAL "PODS"

Town Forest Recreation Planning Toolkit

Created in 2019, this expansive guide walks you through the best practices to create thoughtful recreation resources in your town forest. Includes replicable presentation templates, checklists, and case studies.

[VIEW TOOLKIT](#)





Contact details

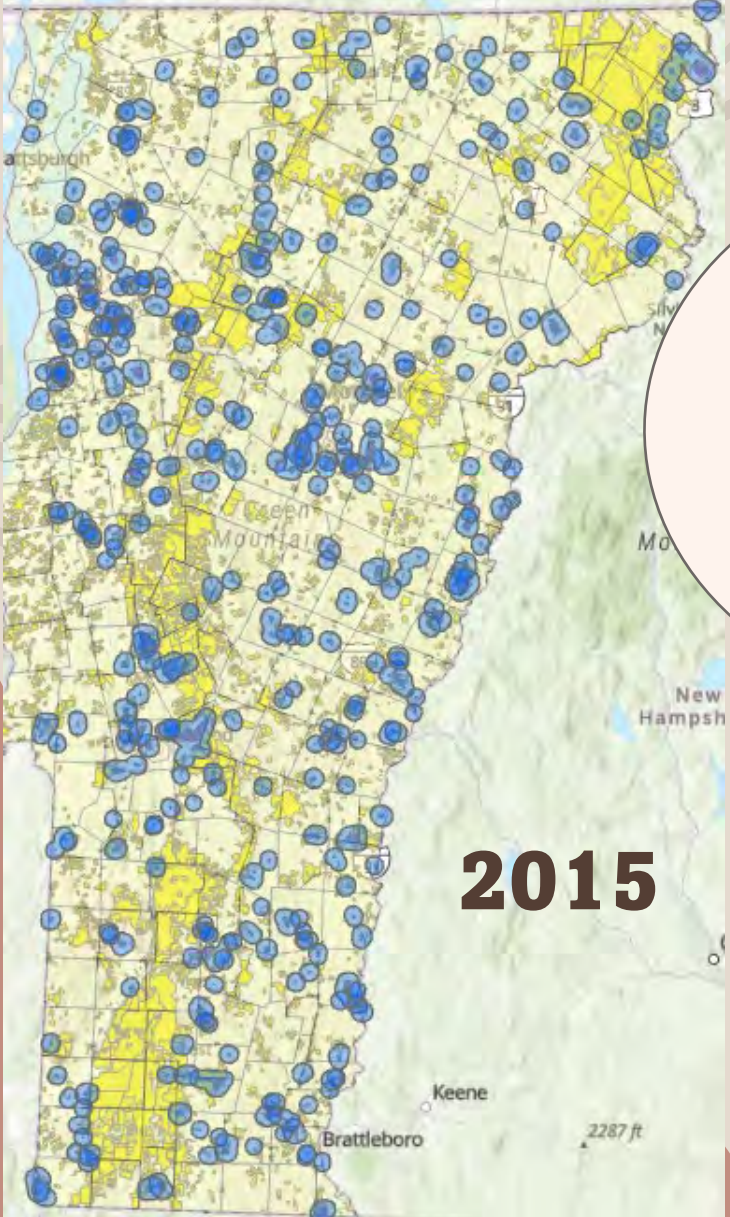
Joanne Garton

802-249-4217

joanne.garton@vermont.gov

[vtcommunityforestry.org/projects
/town-forests](https://vtcommunityforestry.org/projects/town-forests)

Vermont Town Forest Census



Conservation Commission became **inactive** and not much has been done since.

Only one of our forest areas is designated a Town Forest. **What is the procedure** for designating a Town Forest?

The forest area is being eyed for a **much-needed housing** development.

Currently working with VOREC funding to create **better access** to this conserved municipal land!

Our town is lucky to have two Town Forests. **Towns could learn a lot from each other!**

<https://site.uvm.edu/vermonttownforestcensus/>



CONTACT INFO



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