



1. Introduction

Vermont's landscape features expansive swaths of forests that are an integral part of Vermont's identity. From sugar making to leaf peeping, hiking, hunting, watching wildlife, or managing a woodlot, the opportunities to use and enjoy Vermont's forests are endless.

Since approximately three quarters of Vermont is forested, it can be easy to take our forests for granted. Forests are easily accessible and Vermonters rely on them as places of recreation and scenic beauty. Tourists and many businesses rely on them too, which means that Vermont's economy depends, in part, on the continued existence of large forest blocks.

Keeping Vermont's forests healthy and intact requires attention since daily decisions at the local level can negatively or positively affect their overall wellbeing. For example, a landowner may decide to subdivide his or her forestland, a local selectboard may approve road upgrades to allow for more development, a local land trust may purchase a property to conserve public access, or a group of citizens may vote to approve the creation of a municipal forest.

This publication is a guide for communities to take local action to ensure the future of their forests and wildlife. It is designed to provide planning and conservation commissions with concrete strategies (both regulatory and non-regulatory) to keep forests intact. The strategies described below, presented as a series of topic papers, are intended to assist local government bodies with crafting municipal policies – and more importantly – implementing those policies through concrete action. It is hoped that landowners and community organizations will also act on the strategies in this publication.

Please select the strategies that are a good fit for your community, but keep in mind that before enacting a specific strategy – especially a regulatory one – it is important to seek input from the town attorney. Depending upon the strategy, the staff at state or federal agencies, regional planning commissions, Vermont Natural Resources Council (VNRC), or private planning consultants can also advise on planning and zoning decisions or provide guidance on development, conservation and land management issues.

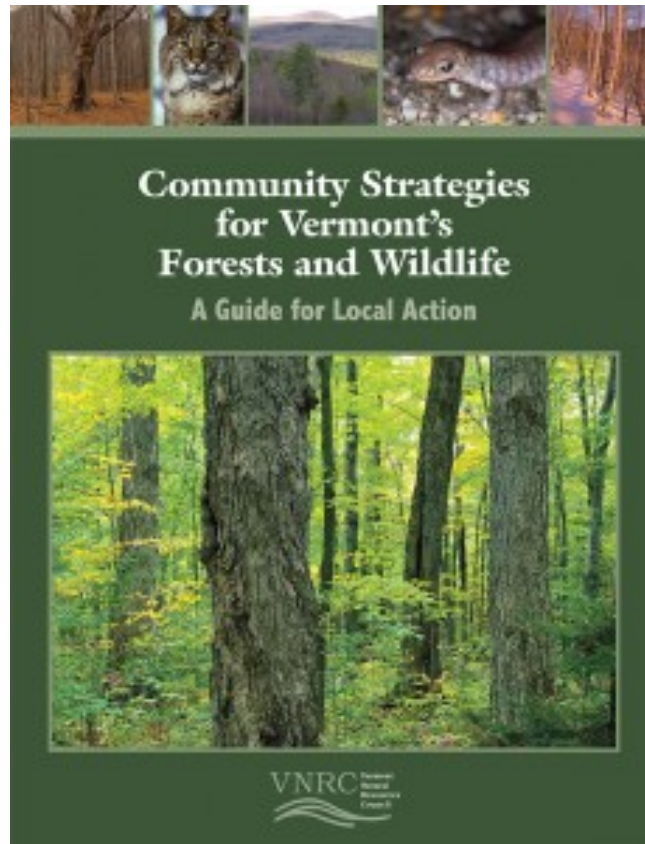


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This chapter is part of a larger publication called ***Community Strategies for Vermont's Forests and Wildlife: A Guide for Local Action***. You can download the entire publication or individual chapters (including the endnotes, resources, and credits page) for FREE at:

www.vnrc.org/programs/forests-wildlife/guide/



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