

Forestland Loss, Fragmentation and Parcelization

Jamey Fidel

General Counsel, Forest & Wildlife Program Director





Forest Loss

- While 74% of the state is covered by forests, a closer look reveals that our forests are being converted and fragmented by rural sprawl.
- We are also outright losing our forests due to development and forestland conversion.
- According to the Forest Service's Forest Inventory Analysis, 12,649 acres of forestland are converted on average to nonforest every year.*

* Source: USDA Forest Service. 2021. Forests of Vermont, 2020. Resource Update FS-227. Madison, WI: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service. <https://doi.org/10.2737/FS-RU-337>

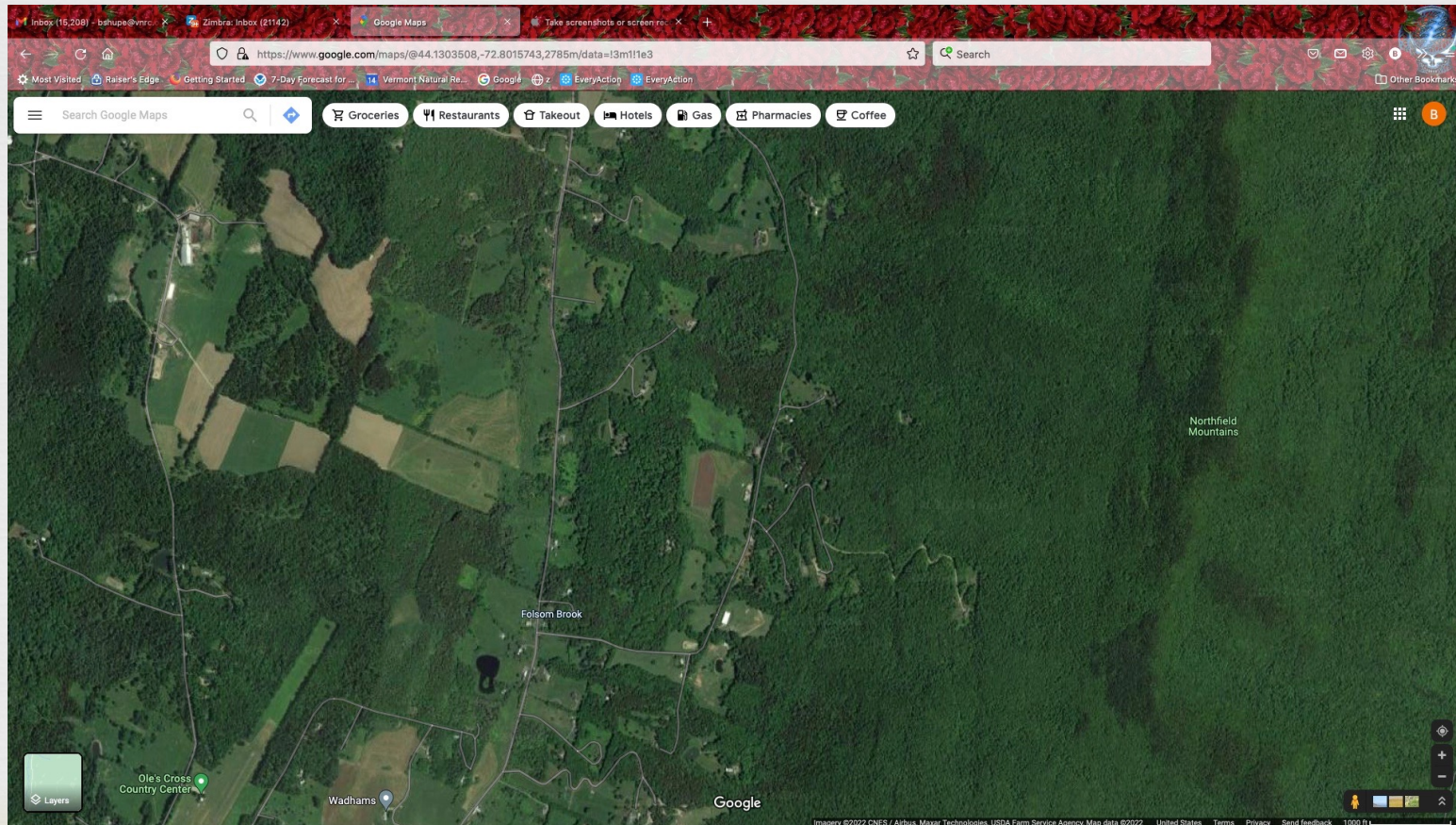


A. Blake Gardner

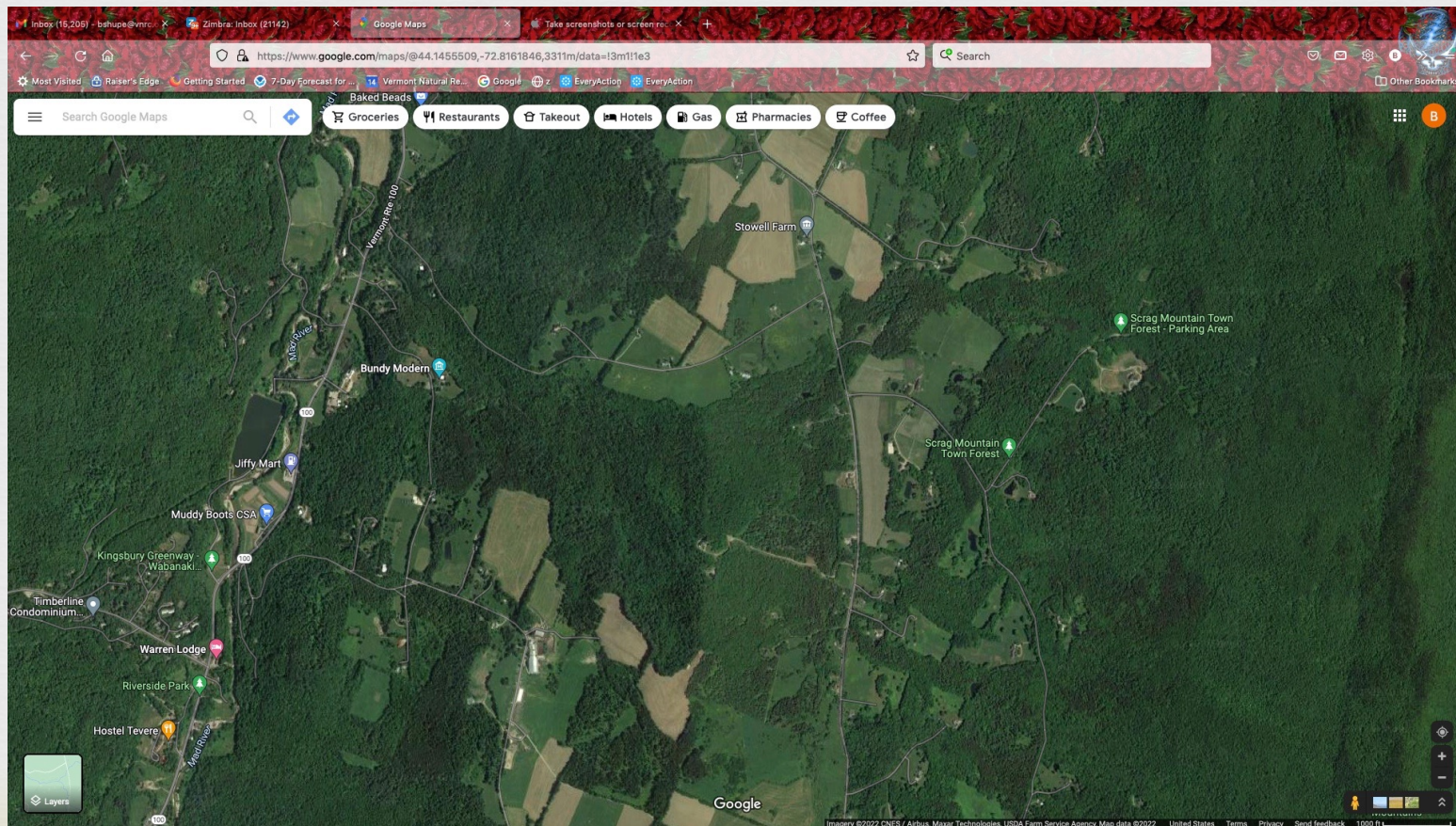
Forest Fragmentation



Examples of Forest Fragmentation



Examples of Forest Fragmentation



Examples of Forest Fragmentation



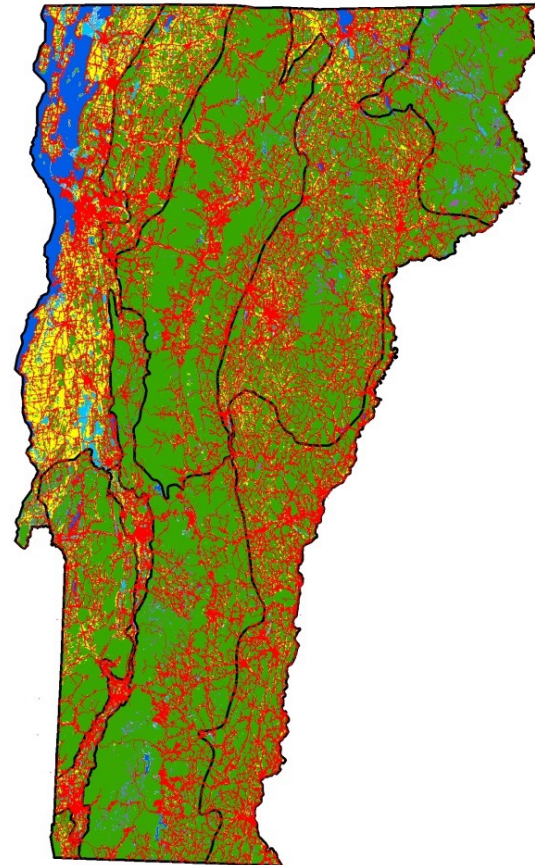
Intact Blocks and Fragmentation

Vermont Habitat Blocks and Habitat Connectivity: An Analysis using Geographic Information Systems



Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department
April 2014

Eric Sorenson, Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department
Jon Osborne, Vermont Land Trust



Parcelization

The breaking up of land into smaller and smaller parcels, usually through subdivision.

- Increased, potentially disjointed ownership of parent parcel;
- Step toward new development, housing and infrastructure that may fragment natural resources and intact forests depending on how it occurs;
- Less viable tracts for forestry; and
- Potential negative ecological impacts.



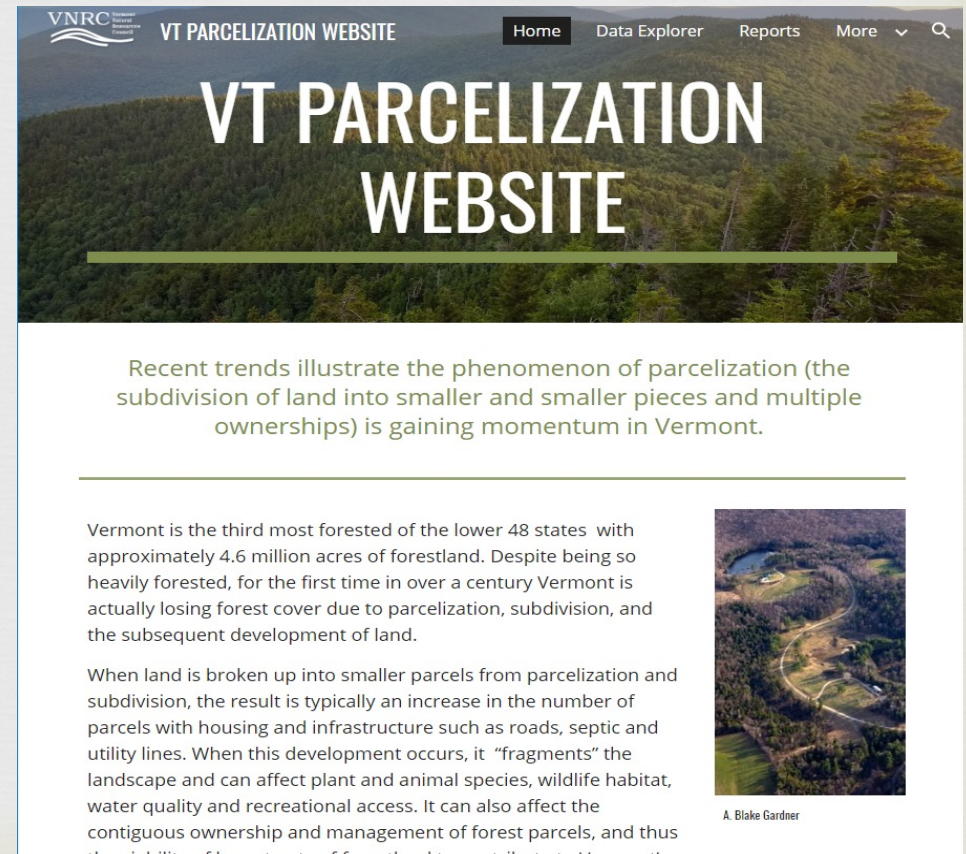
A. Blake Gardner

VNRC Parcelization Website

- To make parcelization data more accessible
- To visualize change spatially.
- To generate geographically-specific reports

Available at:

www.vtforesttrends.vnrc.org



VNRC Vermont Natural Resources Council
VT PARCELIZATION WEBSITE


Home Data Explorer Reports More

VT PARCELIZATION WEBSITE

Recent trends illustrate the phenomenon of parcelization (the subdivision of land into smaller and smaller pieces and multiple ownerships) is gaining momentum in Vermont.

Vermont is the third most forested of the lower 48 states with approximately 4.6 million acres of forestland. Despite being so heavily forested, for the first time in over a century Vermont is actually losing forest cover due to parcelization, subdivision, and the subsequent development of land.

When land is broken up into smaller parcels from parcelization and subdivision, the result is typically an increase in the number of parcels with housing and infrastructure such as roads, septic and utility lines. When this development occurs, it "fragments" the landscape and can affect plant and animal species, wildlife habitat, water quality and recreational access. It can also affect the contiguous ownership and management of forest parcels, and thus the viability of large tracts of forestland to contribute to Vermont's



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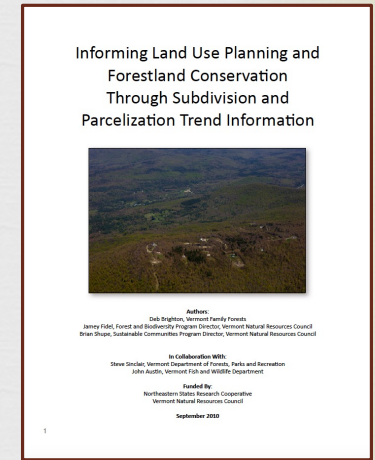
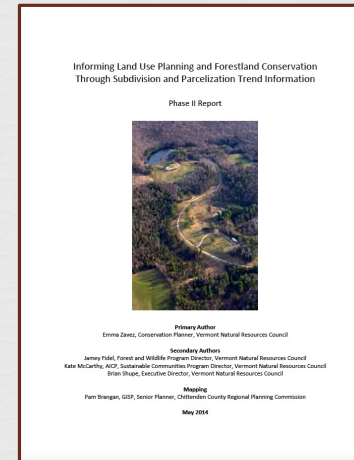
Background on VNRC Research

Phase 1 (2010) Statewide parcelization trends based on Grand List data, 2003-2009.

Phase 2 (2014) Subdivisions in 22 case study towns.

Phase 3 (2018) Parcelization trends, 2004-2016
(state, regional planning commission, county, & town levels).

Phase 4 (2023) In progress to update trends through 2020, and examine new data sets such as property transfer tax returns.



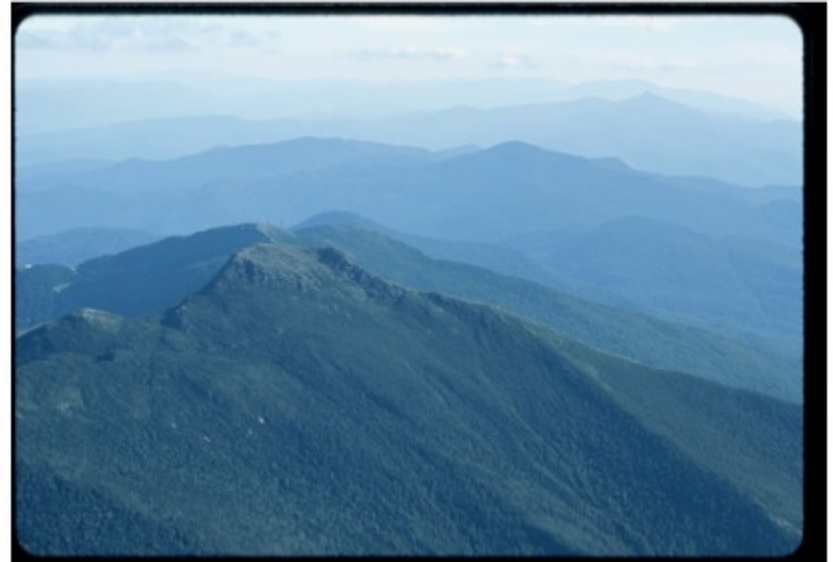
Funded by the Forest Ecosystem Monitoring Cooperative, the Northeastern States Research Cooperative (NSRC), a partnership of Northern Forest states (New Hampshire, Vermont, Maine, and New York) in coordination with the USDA Forest Service, and other partners

Private Land Trends - Phase 3

In 2016, roughly 3,350,000 acres (70.4% of the land) were in parcels 50 acres or larger.*

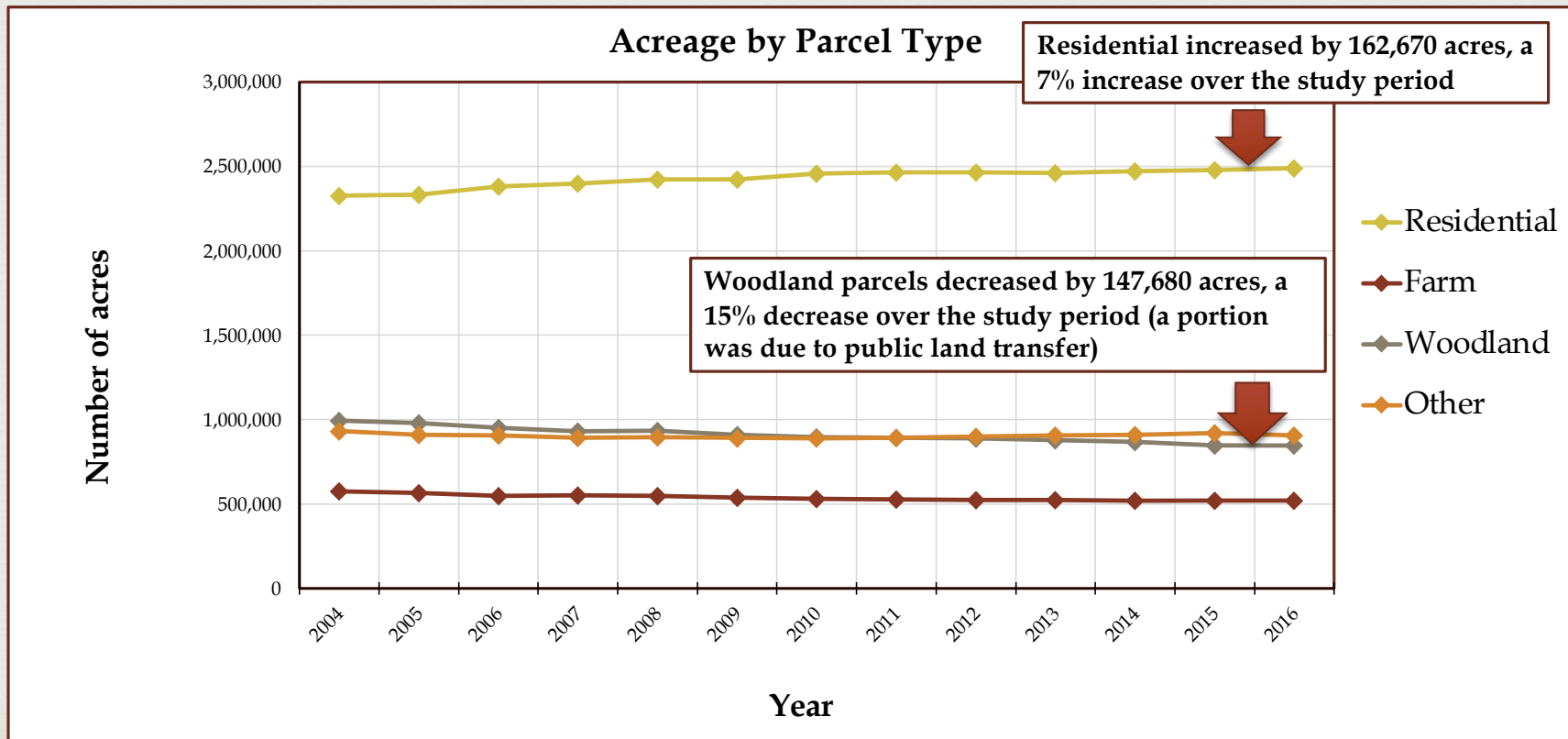
*residential 40.0%

*woodland 25.7%



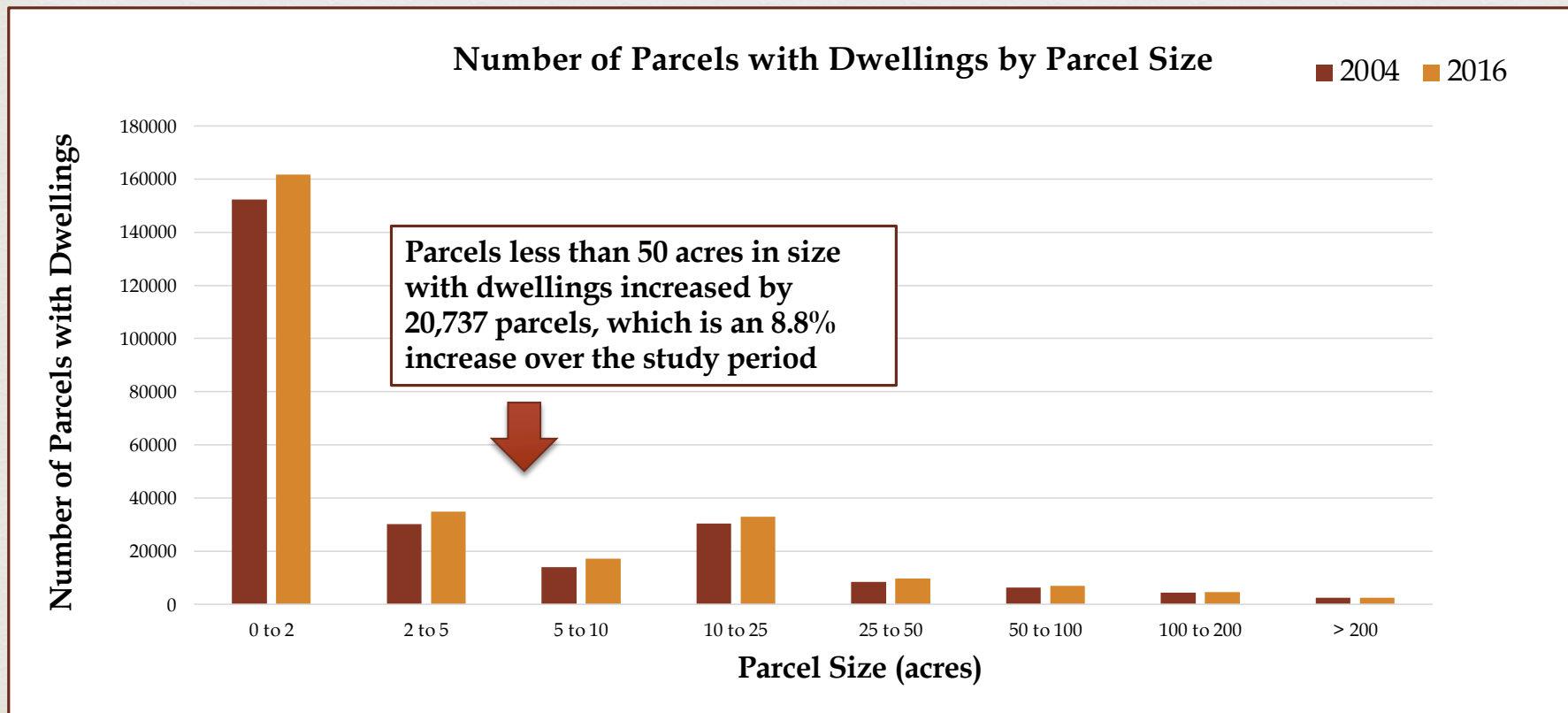
Acreeage by Parcel Type

The number of acres in the “residential” category is increasing, while “farm” and “woodland” acreage is decreasing, with “woodland” acreage decreasing the fastest.



Number of Parcels with Dwellings by Parcel Size

Growth in dwellings on smaller parcels compared to larger parcels.



VNRC Subdivision Study – Phase 2

- Reviewed records of subdivisions in 22 case study towns
- Total subdivision activity, by zoning district, from 2002 through 2009
- When land is subdivided...
 - How *many* lots were created?
 - What *size* were the lots?

Informing Land Use Planning and Forestland Conservation Through Subdivision and Parcelization Trend Information



Authors:

Deb Brighton, Vermont Family Forests
Jamey Fidel, Forest and Biodiversity Program Director, Vermont Natural Resources Council
Brian Shupe, Sustainable Communities Program Director, Vermont Natural Resources Council

In Collaboration/ on With:

Steve Sindlar, Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation
John Austin, Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department

Funded By:

Northeastern States Research Cooperative
Vermont Natural Resources Council

September 2010

How many lots were created?

Findings:

- 2,749 lots created from 925 subdivisions affecting a total of 70,827 acres of land.
- On average, each subdivision resulted in 2-4 lots.
- Based on spatial analysis in four Phase II communities, between 50% and 68.8% of the subdivided acres were located within forest blocks mapped by the Agency of Natural Resources.

Relevance to Act 250?

- The majority of subdivision is not triggering Act 250.
- Only 1% - 2% of subdivisions in the case study towns were large enough to trigger Act 250.
- A small number of subdivisions, but a larger amount acreage, was subject to Act 250 under amendment jurisdiction, meaning the land was already under Act 250.

What Were The Lot Sizes?

Findings

- Median lot sizes: 2.4 – 12.15 acres
- Size of original lot (“parent parcel”) matters

Size of original parcel	Subdivisions resulting in at least one 50+ acre parcel
100+ acres	97%
50-100 acres	57%

What does this mean?

- Resulting parcels may be too small to support long-term forest management goals.
- Multiple owners can lead to fragmented land management.

Where Were The Lots Created?

Finding:

Most land subdivision is taking place in rural residential districts versus conservation districts.

	In Rural Res. districts	In Natural Resource districts
% of total subdivisions	79%	15%
% of total acres	84%	22%

What does this mean?

- Natural resources in “default” districts – where most subdivision is happening – may be more vulnerable to fragmentation unless these districts include standards.
- Opportunity for improved site design and subdivision configuration in these areas.

VNRC Subdivision Study – Phase 4

- In progress to update trends through 2020 using Grand List data. We expect similar trends to previous studies, but we are interested in measuring the effects of Covid migration and increased land sales/transfers.
- Also examining new data sets such as property transfer tax return information in addition to Grand List.

Case Study using Property Transfer Tax Returns – Captures Majority of Subdivisions

Addison County Subdivided Parcels Analysis

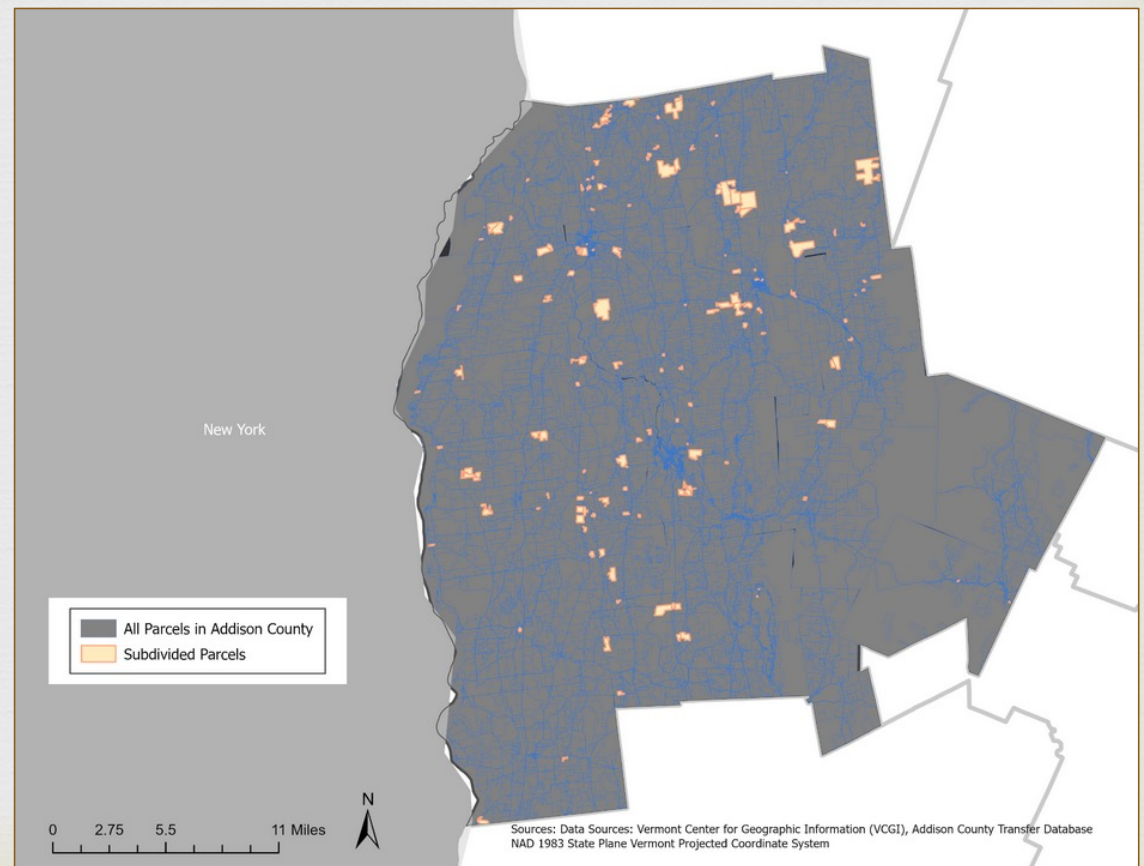
Potential spatial analyses of land use and land cover of subdivided parcels in Addison County from 2018-2021.

kpatel19 Patel
August 6, 2022

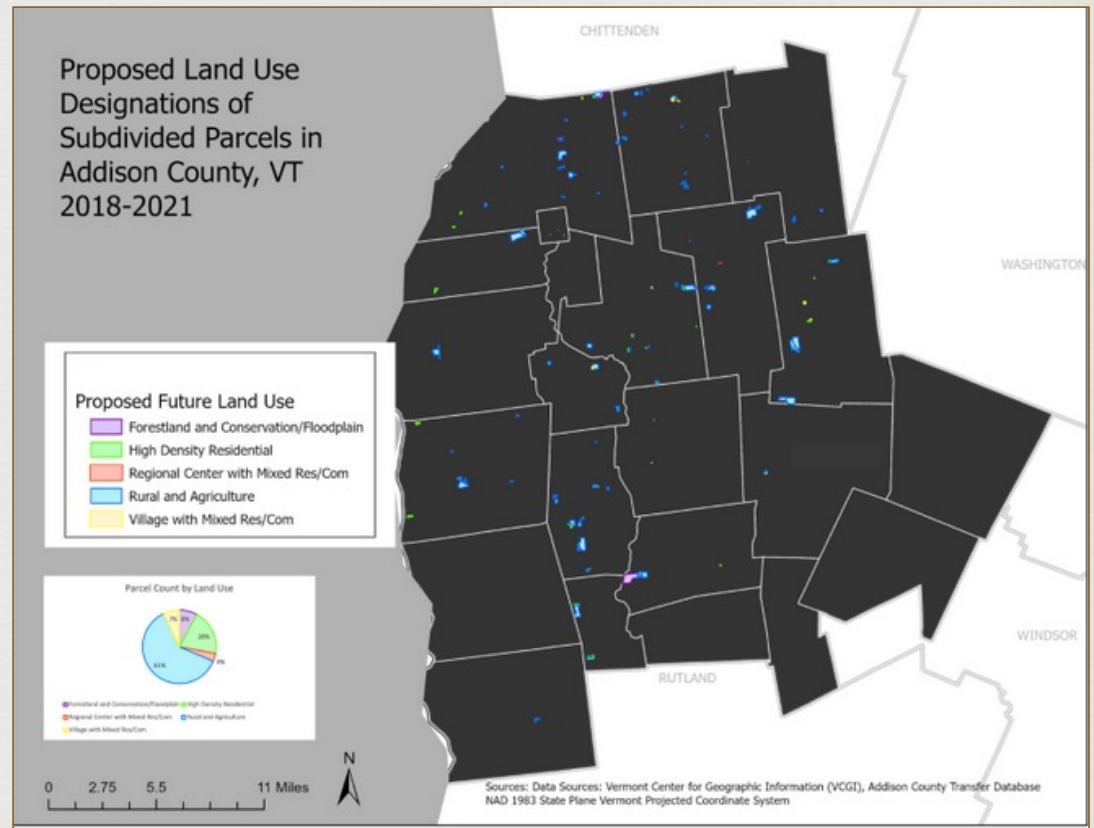
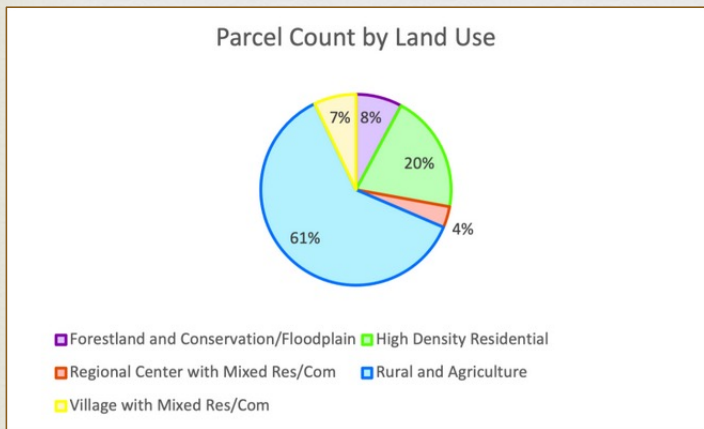
Understanding where parcel subdivisions are occurring can help address housing and conservation challenges in Vermont. Using Vermont Property Transfer Tax data for 2018-2021 to indicate subdivisions, this analysis describes land use and land cover characteristics of those areas to support planning and conservation efforts. Methods for this analysis are documented [here](#).

VNRC Subdivision Study – Phase 4

There are 18,678 Parcels in Addison County and 125 parcels subdivided from 2018 through 2021 (about 0.5% Parcels).

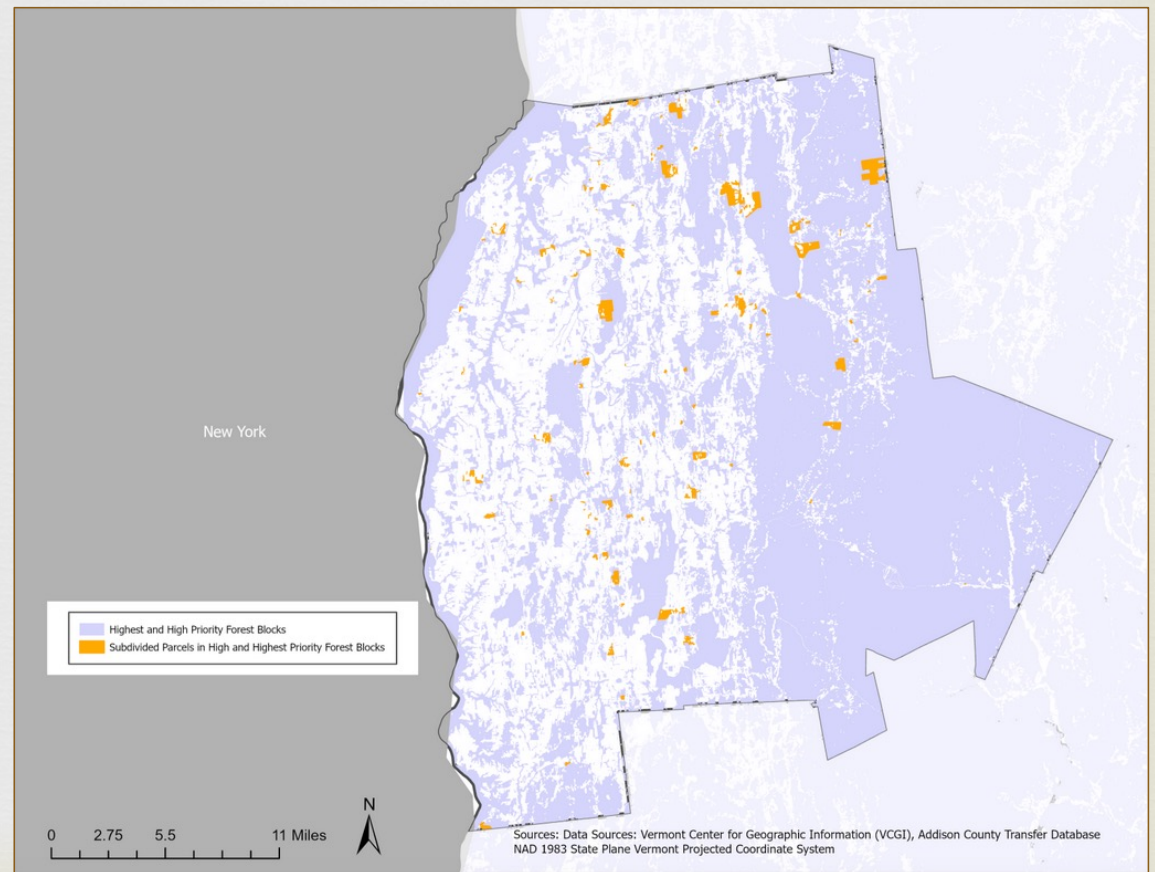


VNRC Subdivision Study – Phase 4

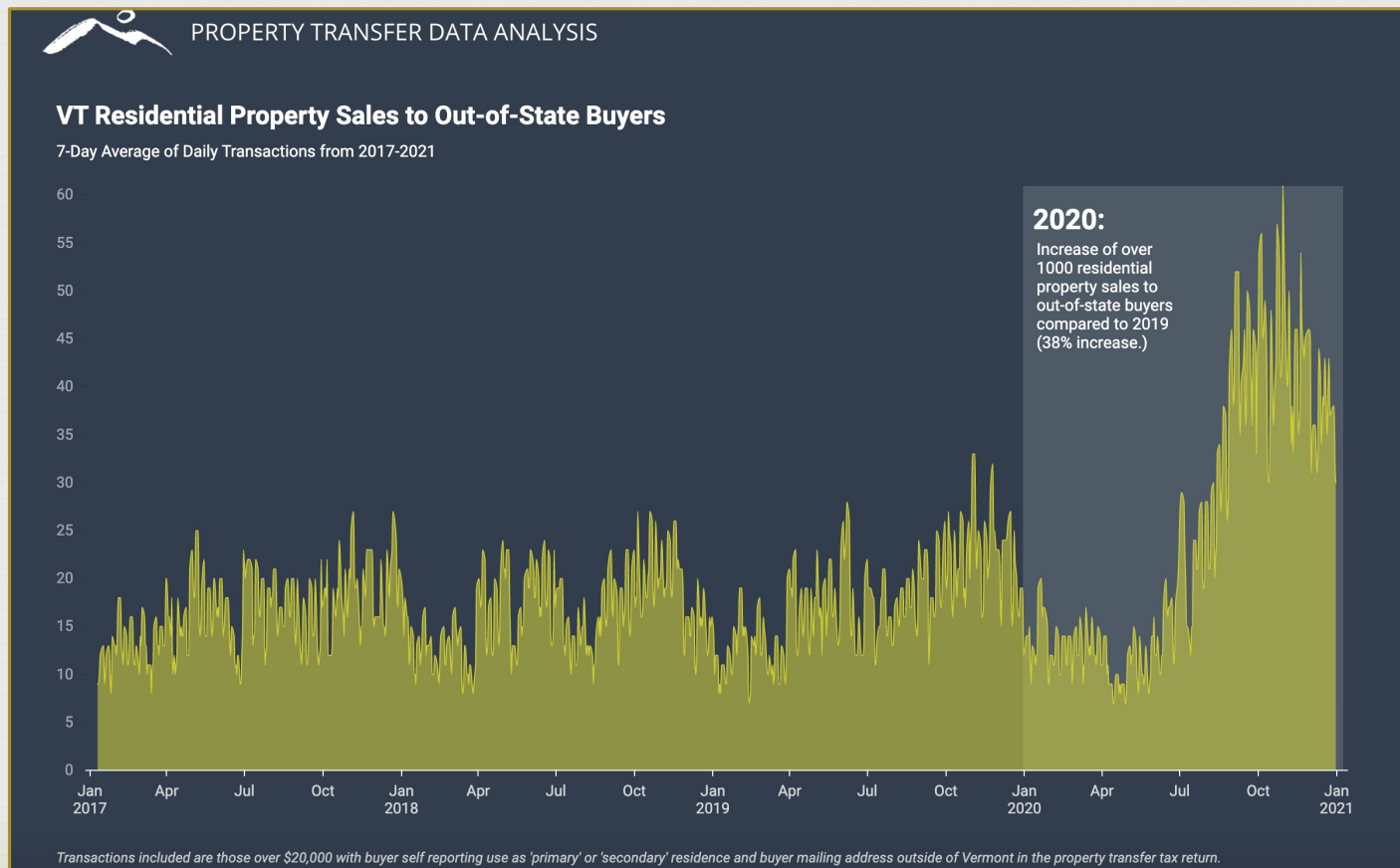


VNRC Subdivision Study – Phase 4

This map shows that 114 of 125 subdivided parcels (91%) intersect with areas designated as forest blocks.



Property Sales & Covid-19 Migration

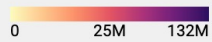


Property Sales & Covid-19 Migration

VT Residential Property Sales to Out-of-State Buyers

Search in table

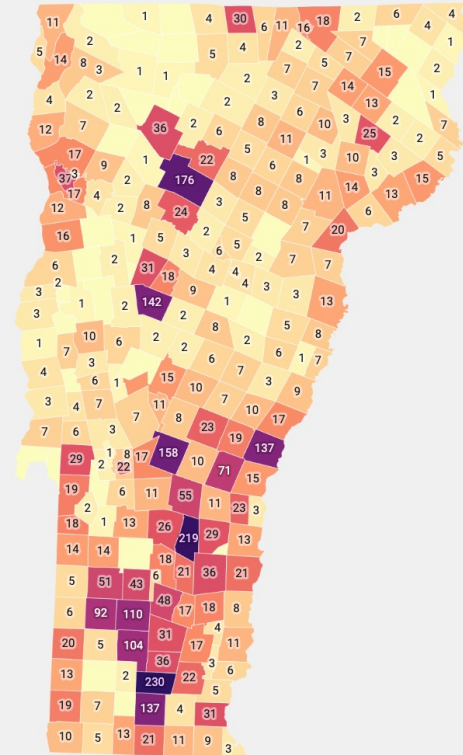
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Town	Sales	2017	2018	2019	2020
1 Stowe	156 176	84.7M	104.2M	66.8M	132.1M
2 Ludlow	142 219	44.7M	65.4M	75M	97.9M
3 Dover	126 230	38M	37M	32.6M	72.7M
4 Stratton	63 104	31.4M	29.9M	31.5M	65.4M
5 Wilmington	96 137	37.6M	19.4M	21.3M	53.8M
6 Woodstock	48 71	37.9M	21.8M	28.7M	53M
7 Warren	104 142	23.2M	25M	29M	49.3M
8 Winhall	48 110	20.1M	23.8M	24.8M	49.2M
9 Manchester	39 92	16.1M	22.9M	25.3M	46M
10 Killington	140 158	27.5M	31.8M	43.5M	43.9M
11 Hartford	85 137	20.1M	27.7M	29.5M	41.8M
12 Dorset	20 51	9.2M	11.8M	15.7M	37M
13 Plymouth	25 55	5.7M	11M	11M	20.4M
14 Burlington	32 37	12.4M	10.4M	6.7M	17.6M
15 Pomfret	5 19	2.1M	7M	1.6M	17.4M

Residential Property Sold to Out-of-State Buyers in 2020

of transactions where buyer listed out of state mailing address



Property Sales Data

Go to website

VNRC New Project – Landowner Outreach

- A joint project with the Agency of Natural Resources (FPR and FWD), Vermont Coverts, Vermont Woodlands Association, and other partners including Deb Brighton.
- Funded by the Forest Service, Landscape Scale Restoration Program.
- Database of new land transfers – over 6,000 transfers a year of parcels over ten acres in recent years.
- Identify new landowners in priority forest areas.
- Develop landowner decision making roadmap and guide for stewardship and conservation opportunities.
- Provide direct technical assistance to approximately 100 landowners over two years.
- Webinars and other outreach.



Strategies to Address Parcelization & Fragmentation - Forest Roundtable

- An ongoing policy discussion on forest policy with a focus on parcelization and forest fragmentation.
- Convened by VNRC since 2006, has brought diverse stakeholders together to work on a common issue of concern.
- Information sharing and networking.
- Testing new ideas.



2007 Forest Roundtable Report

ROUNDTABLE ON PARCELIZATION AND FOREST FRAGMENTATION

FINAL REPORT



MAY 2007

Recommendations from a roundtable of diverse participants.

*Primary Author: Jamey Fidel, Forest and Biodiversity Program Director,
Vermont Natural Resources Council*

Includes 27 strategies to address parcelization and fragmentation.

- Tax Policy
- Land Use and Conservation Planning
- Valuation of Ecosystem Services
- Long-term Sustainability of the Forest Products Industry

Available at vnrc.org

Roundtable Report Recommendations

ROUNDTABLE RECOMMENDATIONS CHECKLIST

RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING TAX POLICY

The following recommendations focus on tax policies that influence the way forestland is managed and conserved in Vermont.

- The Forest Roundtable strongly endorses Vermont's Use Value Appraisal Program (UVA) including continued funding.
- Educate municipal officials regarding the lack of impact of the UVA Program on municipal tax rates.
- Provide the UVA Program with adequate resources to administer the program. The Agency of Natural Resources, The Department of Taxes, and the Legislature should study ways to improve the overall efficiency and administration of the Program.
- Conduct an independent legislative study of the UVA Program which examines the statutory goals of the program and assesses the program's effectiveness with respect to the original goals. For example, is the goal of conserving natural ecological systems adequately addressed? This study should also assess ways to expand landowner enrollment in the program, and assess the effectiveness of the land use change tax.
- Assess property with perpetual conservation easements at a lower value.
- Disburse property transfer tax revenue according to the formula set in statute.
- Strengthen the collection of the land gains tax on timber sales on land subject to the land gains tax, and develop better mechanisms to track timber sales and assess taxes from these sales.

RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING CONSERVATION PLANNING

The following recommendations focus on conservation planning as a broad theme encompassing state, regional, municipal, and estate planning mechanisms to reduce the rate of parcelization and forest fragmentation in Vermont.

- Educate landowners about programs for keeping forestland intact across multiple generations.
- Track annual rates of parcelization in Vermont.

- Utilize existing data and develop maps to identify and prioritize forest blocks for conservation.
- Track and analyze rates and degree of forest fragmentation in Vermont.
- Integrate existing planning efforts at the local, regional and state level to better address parcelization and forest fragmentation.
- Identify and correct gaps in Act 250 and other land use regulations to attenuate the rate of parcelization and forest fragmentation in Vermont.
- Implement planning efforts that reflect the public values of forests.

RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING THE CONSERVATION, STEWARDSHIP, AND VALUATION OF ECOSYSTEM SERVICES

The following recommendations focus on conservation, stewardship, and in particular, the recognition of the value of healthy functioning forested ecosystems in Vermont.

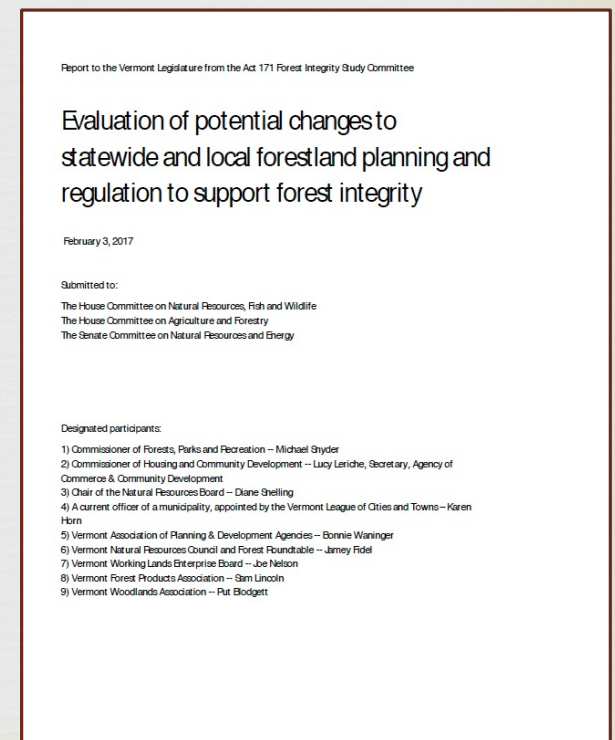
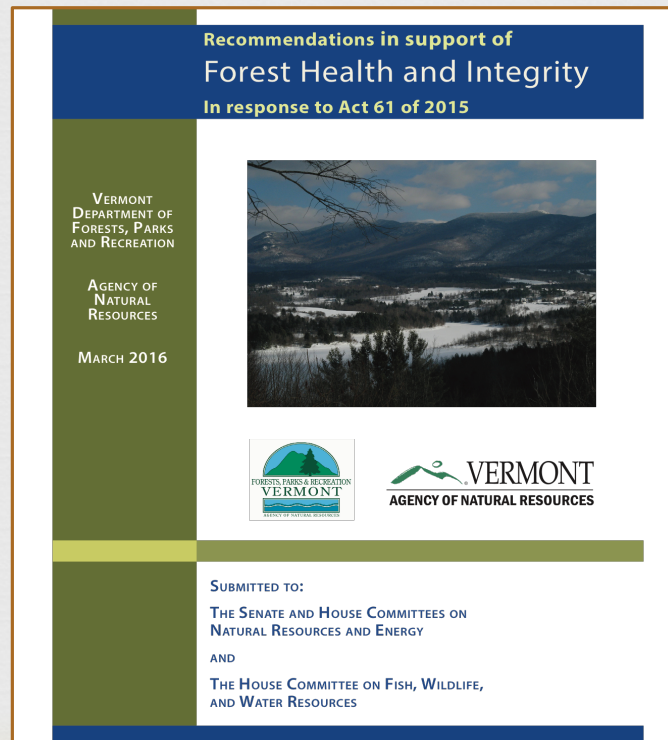
- Develop a system to consistently quantify, recognize, and compensate landowners for the value of ecosystem services provided by forestland in Vermont.
- Communicate the value of forests to the public in everyday terms, including the ecological benefits that the public is receiving for free from healthy functioning forests.
- Convene a forum on how to manage for ecosystem services at the regional scale, paying attention to property rights, alternative models of ownership and management, and to required policies and distribution of costs and benefits.
- Create an annual award for ecosystem service stewardship to increase awareness and showcase forest ethics role models in the state.
- Fund the development of build-out models and case studies to show projected impacts on ecosystem services in order to assist planning, conservation, and stewardship activities.
- Create a model for community based Timberland Investment Management Organizations (TIMO's) that can buy and manage forestland collectively.
- Support the establishment of landowner cooperatives that foster conservation, forest stewardship, ecosystem services and forest product marketing efficiencies.

RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING THE LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY OF THE FOREST PRODUCTS INDUSTRY

The following recommendations focus on supporting the forest products industry as a way to strengthen the viability of working forestland, which makes up a considerable percentage of the Vermont landscape.

- Bolster development of strong, effective, cooperative statewide organizations that bring together forest products industry representatives, landowners and manufacturers to promote the forest products economy.
- Increase the visibility of the contribution of a working forest to the state, including the economic, ecological and social benefits of forestland.
- Increase the professionalism of logging. Invest in programs to support youth who are interested in becoming loggers. Develop loan programs, a worker's compensation pool, and better access to health insurance. Promote the use of low-impact equipment and natural resource management programs.
- Continue and strengthen state promotion for the forest products manufacturing sector.
- Promote the use of Vermont wood in Vermont and in Vermont-sponsored development. Support buying local as a concept and encourage architects and builders to support the use of local wood.
- Increase weight limits on Vermont Interstates to make Vermont competitive in the region.

ANR Forest Fragmentation Reports for the Legislature



Commission on Act 250 Report (2019)



STATE OF VERMONT
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON ACT 250:
THE NEXT 50 YEARS
PURSUANT TO 2017 ACTS AND RESOLVES NO. 47

January 11, 2019

Rep. Amy Sheldon, Chair
Sen. Chris Pearson, Vice Chair
Sen. Brian Camplon
Rep. David Deen
Rep. Paul Lefebvre
Sen. Richard McCormack

3. Discussion and Recommendation

In 2017, the House passed H.233, entitled an act relating to protecting working forests and habitats. The bill proposed to amend the Act 250 criteria in order to protect forest resources and support the forest economy, water quality, and habitat connectivity. It proposed adding criteria B(B) and (C), which would require projects subject to the Act to avoid, minimize, or mitigate fragmentation of, respectively, forest blocks and habitat connectors. The Commission recommends that the changes to Act 250 contained in H.233 be adopted in order to protect against further fragmentation of Vermont's shrinking forests and habitat.⁸⁴

3. Discussion and Recommendation

As discussed in Section V.B., above, the goal of maintaining a settlement pattern of compact centers surrounded by rural countryside has been a long-standing policy of the State of Vermont, and the data indicate that, while the State has had some success, it is not achieving this goal. Similarly, as discussed in Section V.C., above, the fragmentation of forests and habitat threatens Vermont's ecosystems and natural resources.

Commission on Act 250 Report (2019)



STATE OF VERMONT
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON ACT 250:
THE NEXT 50 YEARS
PURSUANT TO 2017 ACTS AND RESOLVES NO. 47

January 11, 2019

Rep. Amy Sheldon, Chair
Sen. Chris Pearson, Vice Chair
Sen. Brian Campion
Rep. David Deen
Rep. Paul Lefebvre
Sen. Richard McCormack

As part of an overall balancing of interests to support economic development in compact centers while promoting a rural countryside and protecting important natural resources, the Commission recommends establishing a multitiered approach toward Act 250 jurisdiction over commercial and industrial development, subdivisions, and housing units. This approach would include the following tiers, with jurisdictional thresholds running from lowest to highest:

- A tier of "critical resource areas" containing ecosystems, natural resources, and habitat that are priorities for protection. These areas could include river corridors, elevations above 2,000 feet, significant wetlands, and areas characterized by steep slopes and shallow soils. Act 250's jurisdiction would be increased by lowering the existing jurisdictional thresholds for critical resource areas. Regional and municipal planning processes could assist in identifying critical resource areas. This tier would include protection of these areas even if they are located within existing settlements.
- A "rural and working lands" tier, consisting of lands that are neither critical resource areas nor existing settlements as currently defined in Act 250. Jurisdictional thresholds would be higher in this tier than the critical resource areas tier but, in order to protect forests, connecting habitat, and agricultural soils, potentially lower than they are today.

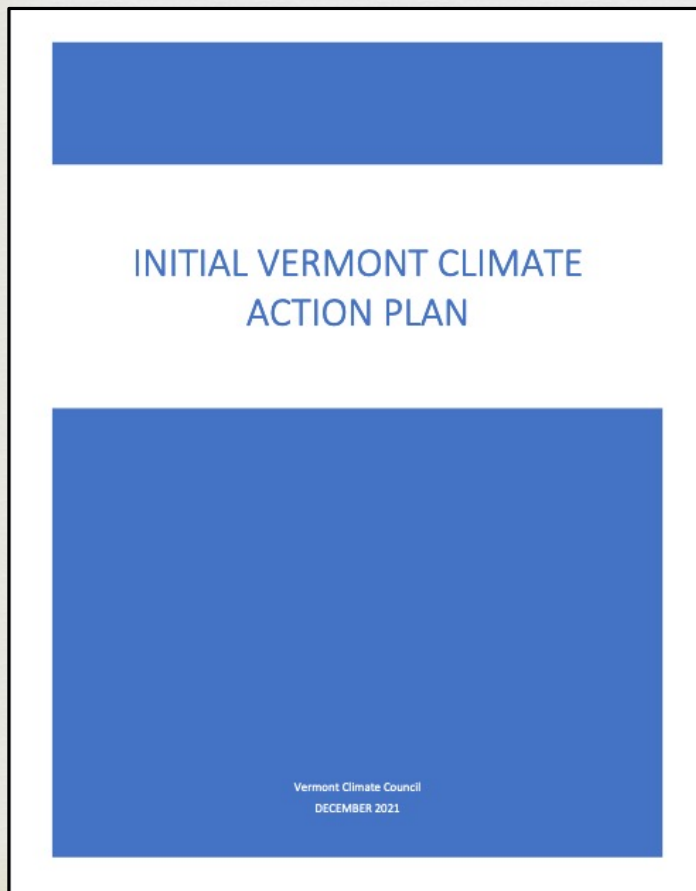
¹¹⁷Act 250 Rule 2(C)(6).

VT LEG #335768 v.14

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- A tier for "existing settlements" as defined under current law, which includes not only existing compact centers, but also areas designated under the State designation program. This tier would include multiple sub-tiers and jurisdictional thresholds that might be increased from where they are today for some of these sub-tiers. One sub-tier might be for areas receiving an enhanced designation created within the State designation program. Under the enhanced designation process, the municipality would require compliance with the Act 250 criteria instead of application review by the District Commission. Because of the implications for Act 250 jurisdiction, designation decisions would become appealable.

Initial VT Climate Action Plan (2021)



Vermont's forests, which support a range of ecological services critical for climate resilience and adaptation and provide the single largest source of carbon sequestration and storage in the state.

Analysis conducted for the Council by Cadmus indicates that Vermont has seen a steady decline in sequestration. If that historic trend continues the state will not meet the GWSA's 2050 net zero target, even if the 2025 and 2030 emission reduction targets are achieved.

CAP, page. 203.

Initial VT Climate Action Plan (2021)



INITIAL VERMONT CLIMATE ACTION PLAN

Vermont Climate Council
DECEMBER 2021

KEY STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

Strategy 1: Promote and incentivize compact settlement and reduce forest fragmentation:

Effective land use in Vermont requires understanding both sides of the land use coin – Vermonters need walkable and livable communities with sufficient housing and places to work and shop. We also need healthy forests, farms, fields, and waters. Our challenge is to plan for and guide development to the places where we already have or want to construct the necessary infrastructure for transportation, energy, communications, and human services, and away from the open spaces so critical to both our ecological and economic health. The Agriculture & Ecosystems subcommittee recognizes the value and importance of investing in and planning for compact settlement as a key strategy for conserving Vermont's natural and working lands and waters. Given the cross-cutting nature of compact settlement, which supports not only conservation, but also resilient, affordable housing, efficient transportation networks that reduce emissions, and more, the actions developed by this subcommittee that are specific to compact settlement have been captured in Section 15, under Compact Settlement.

- a. Provide enhanced technical assistance and support to municipalities and regions, including outreach and education for landowners and community members, to develop and implement town plans intended to maintain forest blocks and connecting habitat as authorized by Act 171, and effective zoning and subdivision bylaws to maintain forest blocks and connecting habitat.
- b. Develop required climate-based framework and/or criteria for state grant and regulatory programs.

Initial VT Climate Action Plan (2021)



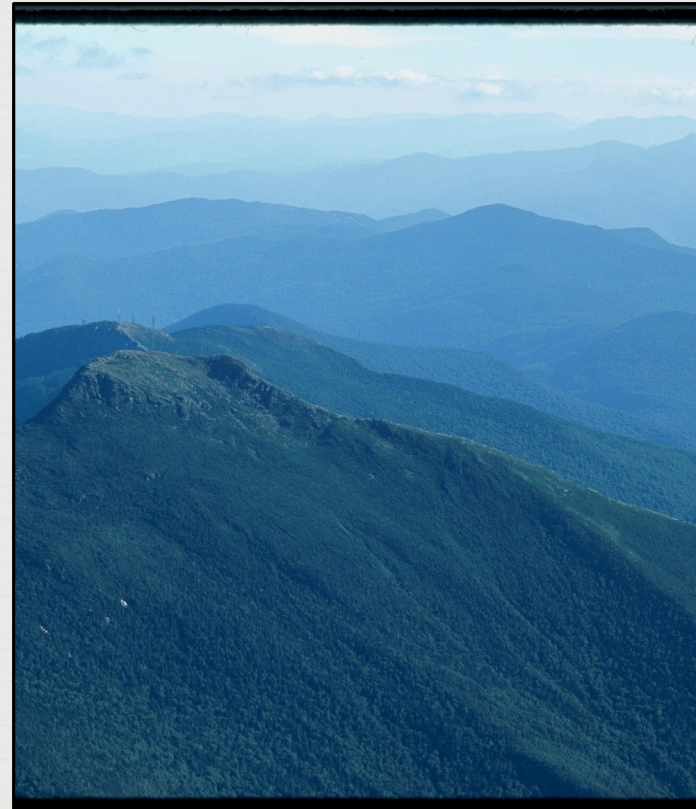
INITIAL VERMONT CLIMATE ACTION PLAN

Vermont Climate Council
DECEMBER 2021

- g. Update Act 250 to promote compact settlement by:
 - i. waiving the mitigation fees for prime agricultural soils²³³ for alternative or community wastewater systems that will serve a state designated center.
 - ii. removing the population-based caps on the Act 250 exemption for priority housing projects
 - iii. including criteria that better address climate change, forest fragmentation and forest loss, to incentivize growth in the state's designated centers and better address the specific challenges to working lands enterprises;
 - iv. updating its governance, staffing, public engagement, and the role of State Agency permits in the Act 250 process to create the enterprise capacity necessary to implement new climate related criteria and respond to future land use pressure from climate change and in-migration of climate refugees.
 - v. removing Act 250 jurisdictional thresholds for housing development within and immediately adjacent to certain state designated centers to incentivize compact, dense settlement in areas with adequate local land use laws and existing infrastructure, reducing development pressures on open spaces such as greenfields and forested locations. These centers should grow in a manner by which walking and biking are preferred means of mobility, and mobility infrastructure should be designed for universal accessibility.

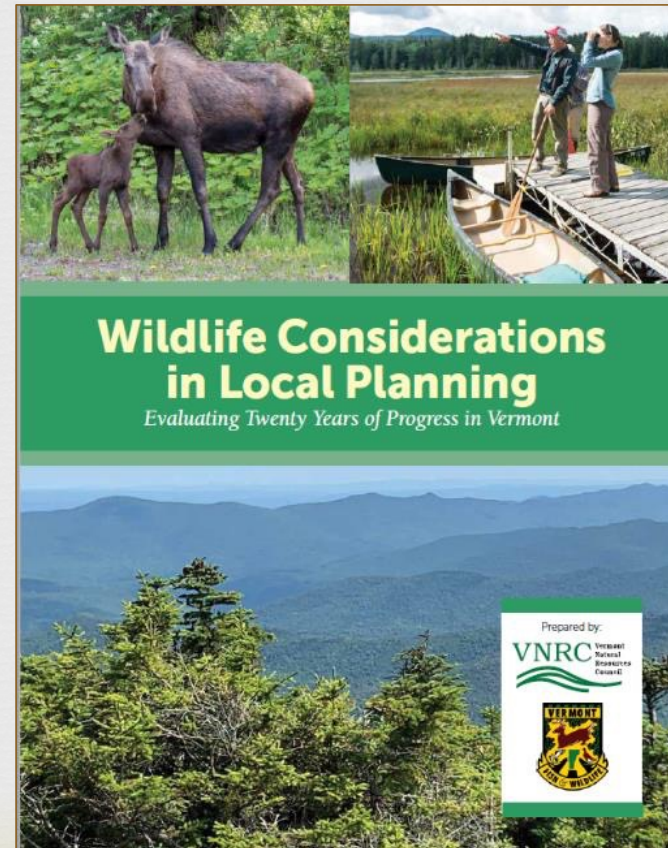
Planning - Act 171 (Effective in 2018)

- New state land use planning goal to manage Vermont's forestlands so as to maintain and improve forest blocks and habitat connectors.
- Requires town and regional plans to indicate those areas that each town or region deems to be important or require special consideration as forest blocks and habitat connectors.
- Plan for land development in those areas to minimize forest fragmentation and promote the health, viability, and ecological function of forests.

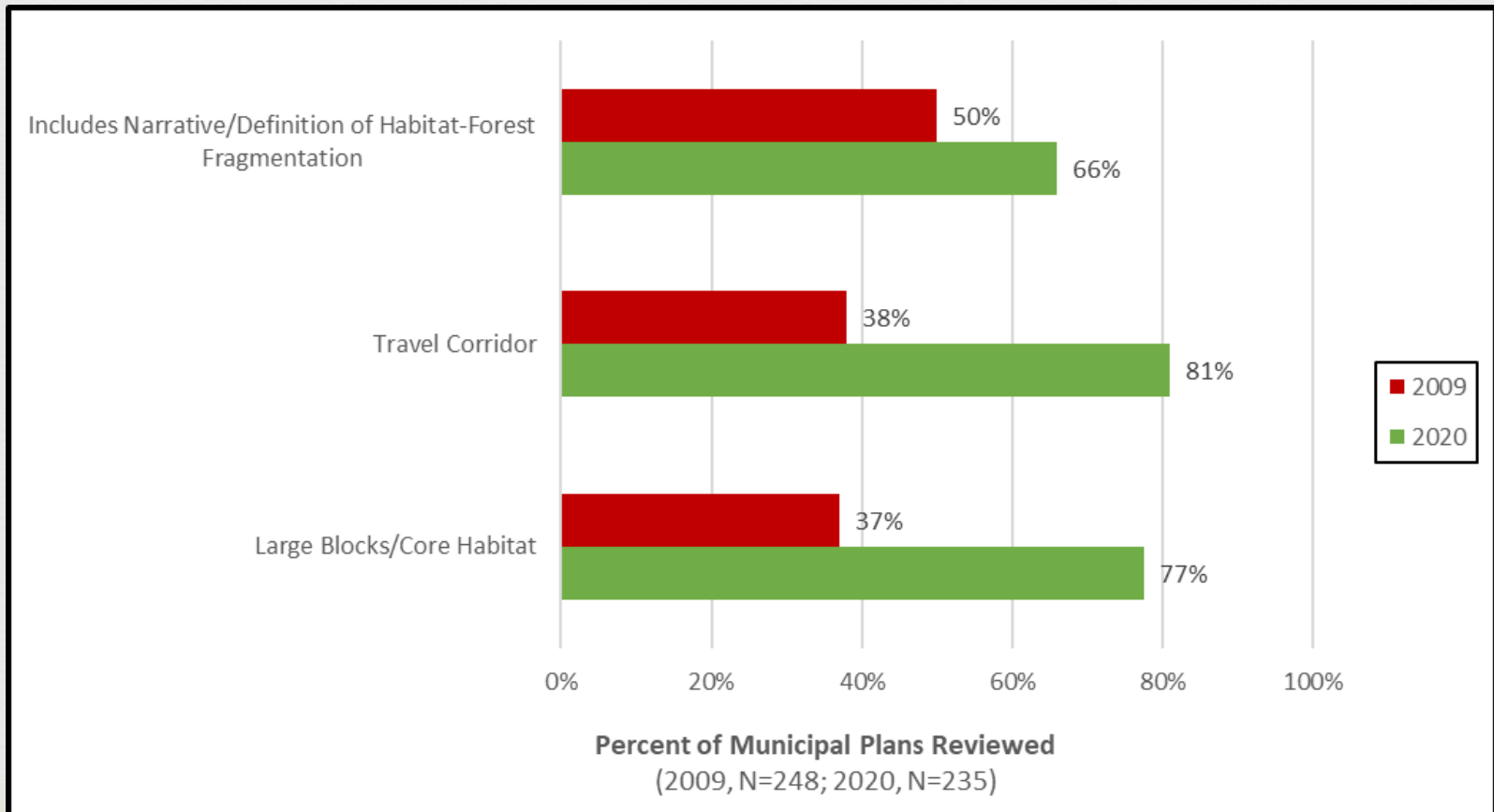


Measuring Progress in Planning

- Statewide review every 10 years: 2000, 2011, 2021
- Complete Review of Town Plans, Zoning, and Subdivision Bylaws
- Sets direction for technical assistance and land use planning efforts
- Includes a comprehensive set of recommendations for municipal and regional planning
- Available at vnrc.org



Measuring Progress on Act 171



Measuring Progress on Addressing Fragmentation

	Conservation District	Forest Reserve District	Water Resource District	Natural Resources Overlay District	Wildlife Overlay District	Fluvial Erosion/ River Hazard District	Rural / Ag. / Resource / Res. District	Residential District	Open Space District
Percentage of towns where district exists*	44%	25%	11%	3%	4%	14%	82%	80%	16%
District has specific wildlife review**	19%	23%	9%	83%	63%	0%	6%	4%	15%
District has fragmentation standards**	10%	31%	0%	50%	50%	0%	4%	4%	15%

*Percent of Towns with Zoning Regulations

**Percent of Towns with District

Observations

- Planning is occurring for wildlife conservation.
- Nearly every town has a planning commission, and a growing number have conservation commissions.
- The public benefits associated with wildlife habitat are increasingly being recognized.
- Town plans strongly recognize the value of non-regulatory and regulatory strategies.
- There are an increasing number of municipalities that now identify important forest blocks and connectivity areas.

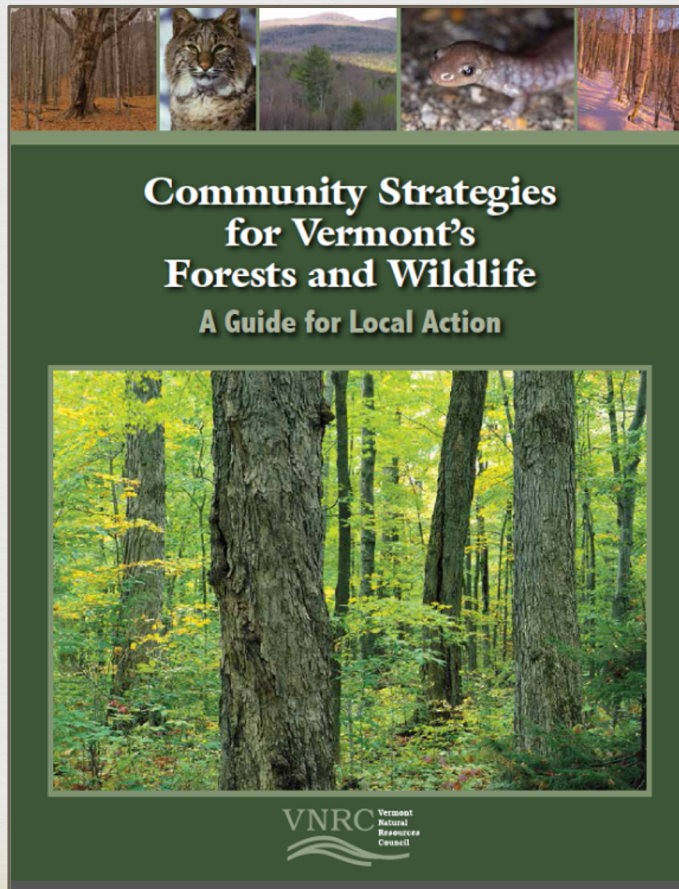


Observations

- Municipalities see the benefit in shaping where development occurs, but regulations that influence land use often do not sync up with the stated intentions in town plans.
- For example, 74% of municipalities recommend subdivision regulations, only 55% of municipalities have implemented them.
- In general, municipalities support the use of siting and development review standards.
- Conservation districts" are popular and many mention wildlife; however
 - only 19% specifically address wildlife impacts; and
 - many conservation related zoning districts lack specific standards to address habitat or forest fragmentation.
- In residential-oriented districts, only 9% of towns mention wildlife, and only 4% of residential districts have fragmentation standards, even though this is where the majority of residential development occurs.



Other VNRC Resources – Available at vnrc.org



The cover has a green background. On the left, the title 'Forest Fragmentation' is written vertically in white, with 'ACTION PLAN' in blue below it. On the right is an aerial photograph of a forest with a winding road and a small pond. Below the photo is the text 'Photo: A. Blake Gordon'.

**Forest
Fragmentation**
ACTION PLAN

**Why Vermont Needs a
Forest Fragmentation Action
Plan**

While close to 80% of the state is forested, for the first time in over a century, forests are declining in Vermont. Development is responsible for this trend and forests are increasingly becoming fragmented across Vermont.

Fragmentation doesn't happen all at once - in fact, it's incremental, which is why it's so hard to notice on a day-to-day basis. It usually starts with subdivision, the division of a parcel into two or more smaller lots. The result is typically an increase in parcel owners, which leads to new housing and infrastructure development (roads, septic, utility lines, etc.). When this development occurs, it "fragments" the landscape and diminishes the economic and ecological viability of forests.

Subdivision activity in Vermont does not look like that commonly seen in other parts of the country and usually portrayed by the media. Indeed, the term "subdivision" usually conjures up images of suburban neighborhoods with identical houses situated side-by-side. Because of the discrepancy between how the public collectively imagines subdivision and the reality, Vermonters are susceptible to thinking that subdivision is not a problem.

But subdivision and other types of land development are cumulatively impacting the viability of Vermont's forests. This is why we need a coordinated land use plan to reduce forest fragmentation, and it needs to occur at the local, regional, and state levels.

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Planning Process

This plan was developed by the Vermont Natural Resources Council (VNRC) with input from many partners including local planning and conservation commissions, subboards, regional planning commissions, the VT Dept. of Forests, Parks and Recreation, the VT Fish and Wildlife Dept., the VT Dept. of Housing and Community Development, the VT Planners Association, and UVM Extension.

More than 36 individuals participated in a statewide workshop in Randolph, and more than 63 individuals participated in three regional workshops that took place in Craftsbury, Brandon, and Westminster. VNRC gathered feedback on different conservation strategies from the participants through discussion, ranking exercises, voting, and comment cards.

Recommendations for State Policy

Recommendations for state policy and investments

- Support diversified strategies to reduce the pressures on landowners to subdivide land.
- Provide full statutory funding for the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB), and robust funding for the Working Lands Enterprise Initiative.
- Consider potential new state revenue sources to boost investment in land conservation and land use planning.
- Support the implementation of international 30 x 30 efforts and President Biden's America the Beautiful initiative to promote accelerated forestland conservation planning to sustain native biodiversity and a range of co-benefits.
- Investigate potential new state tax incentives to promote voluntary forest conservation by private landowners, such as a JFO study of the feasibility of establishing a tax credit or deduction for donations of conservation easements or fee title on forestland.
- Support public policy to encourage the aggregation of land for conservation purposes.
- Support implementation of recommendations from the *Vermont Forest Carbon Sequestration Working Group*.
- Support technical assistance and outreach programs (such as VHCB's Forest Viability Program, Vermont Woodlands Association and VT Coverts programs, etc.) that assist landowners with successional planning to promote maintaining large intact forestland parcels.
- Support the implementation of the Intergenerational Transfer of Forestland Working Group's Recommendations in response to Act 171 of 2016.
- Support the implementation of the Forest Roundtable and ANR Forest Fragmentation Report Recommendations.

Recommendations for State Policy

Recommendations for state policy and investments

- Continue to support working forests, including funding the Current Use Program, and the administration of new forestland enrollment, including new enrollment opportunities for old forest characteristics.
- Examine assessing property with perpetual conservation easements at a lower value, or determine how to better assist landowners with the carrying cost of permanently conserved land, especially if they can't enroll in the Current Use Program.
- Address the gaps in Act 250 and strengthen it to play a more meaningful role in reviewing the impacts of development on forestland. Add criteria to Act 250 to avoid or minimize the fragmentation of intact forest blocks and connectivity areas; and (2) modify Act 250 jurisdiction to review projects that have a high probability of fragmenting forests.
- Support and enhance RPC capacity and technical assistance to municipalities to implement Act 171 planning to reduce the fragmentation of intact forest blocks, working forests, and habitat connectivity areas.
- Support greater implementation of zoning and subdivision strategies and standards to encourage proactive site design in forests to reduce forest fragmentation and conversion.
- Support policies that concentrate new development in settled areas and reduce development pressures on undeveloped forestland – e.g., boost funding for water supply and wastewater infrastructure in downtowns and village centers.
- Consistent with the CAP, explore how to implement a no net loss policy for forestland in Vermont.
- Support and fund efforts to track the rate of forest fragmentation, parcelization, and conversion in Vermont through updates to LIDAR mapping, maintenance of the VT Parcelization website, and other new spatial analysis tools, etc.