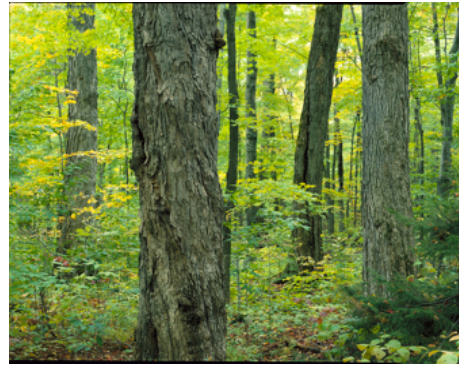


Dear Vermont Legislator:

Forests define the Green Mountain State!

**Forests encompass 75% of the state
and are vitally important for our
economic and ecological wellbeing.**



Our forests are a major driver of our economy. Forest based manufacturing, recreation, and tourism employ approximately 13,000 Vermonters and contribute about \$1.5 billion in revenue to the state every year.

Our forests also provide a rich array of important ecological functions. They support wildlife habitat, protect water quality and help insulate communities from the effects of extreme weather, such as flooding. According to the Gund Institute every acre of forestland provides approximately \$318.50 worth of benefits for services like rainfall regulation and flood control on an annual basis.

In addition, Vermont's forests remove an estimated 75,000 metric tons of carbon and 1,610 metric tons of other pollutants from the atmosphere each year – a function that would be worth about \$16 million if we paid for these pollution control services out-of-pocket.

Vermont's forests are productive in many respects. From supporting forest products, including maple syrup, to the leaf-peeping economy, to providing ecosystem services and recreational opportunities like hiking, skiing, hunting, and wildlife watching, forests contribute to the health and wellbeing of our state.

It is important to note that in recent decades, we have improved how our forests are managed. Because of the Current Use Program and technical assistance efforts, more forests are being managed in accordance with management plans. The utilization of Acceptable Management Practices helps maintain water quality on logging jobs. More landowners are managing their woodlands for wildlife and biodiversity, and every year more forestland is conserved due to landowners working proactively with conservation groups.

Yet the continuation of these successes cannot be taken for granted, especially since for the first time in over a century our forests are actually declining in extent. While it is hard to pin down the exact amount of acreage that has been lost, between 1982 and 1997, 51,000 acres were converted to other land uses. A more recent Forest Service report suggests that Vermont may have lost up to 75,000 acres of forestland from 2007 to 2013, although the Forest Service does not report this as a statistically significant change due to the margin of error in the analysis. Regardless of the actual number of forest acres lost in recent years, there are certainly reasons to be concerned about the impacts of forestland conversion.

From above, the Vermont landscape has an appearance of densely forested lands; however a closer look at the surface reveals that our forests are being compromised and fragmented by rural sprawl. Data from the Forest Service demonstrates that we lost five percent of forests over 100 acres in size between 2001 and 2006. Other research indicates the amount of forested parcels larger than 50 acres that were undeveloped decreased by about 34,000 acres between 2003 and 2009.

In Vermont, we value well-planned development and a growth pattern of supporting downtowns and village centers surrounded by rural countryside. If we are smart about our future, we can continue to accommodate new housing while ensuring that our forests provide for diverse forest products, modern and efficient wood energy, intact wildlife habitat and clean, healthy water.

Vermonters overwhelmingly value our working lands, our rural character, natural environment, and forested hills and iconic mountains. We have an incredible opportunity to be proactive and develop lasting policies that will keep our forests intact.

With this in mind, it is important for policy makers to play a positive role in maintaining or increasing the contribution of our forests to the state's economic, ecological, and cultural wellbeing. Therefore, the undersigned organizations and individuals call on the Vermont Legislature to support a stakeholder process to develop legislative recommendations to maintain the integrity of Vermont's forests into the future.

Vermont Natural Resources Council
The Nature Conservancy of Vermont
Vermont Land Trust
Vermont Woodlands Association
Vermont Audubon
The Trust for Public Land /Vermont Office
Upper Valley Land Trust
The Lyme Timber Company
National Wildlife Federation, Northeast Regional Center
Green Mountain Division Society of American Foresters
Forest Guild
Vermont Coverts
Vermont Conservation Voters
Vermont Council of Trout Unlimited
Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund
The Vermont Chapter of the Sierra Club
North Woods Forestry
Meadowsend Timberlands Ltd.
Green Mountain Club
The Working Lands Coalition
Rural Vermont
The Conservation Fund
Conservation Law Foundation
NorthWoods Stewardship Center
Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences
Northeast Master Logger Certification
The Trust to Conserve Northeast Forestlands
Conservation Collaboratives
Two Countries, One Forest
Northern Forest Center
New England Forestry Foundation

Wildlife Management Institute
Little Hogback Community Forest
Cold Hollow to Canada, Inc.
Green Mountain Conservancy
New England Backcountry Hunters & Anglers
Vermont Center for Ecostudies
Highstead
William Keeton on behalf of the UVM Rubenstein School Forestry Program
Robert Moses, President of Britton Lumber Company
Doug Britton, Britton Lumber Company
Jeffrey Smith, Butternut Hollow Forestry
Rodney Elmer, Mountain Deer Taxidermy
Eric Zencey, Fellow of the Gund Institute for Ecological Economics*
Bob Lloyd, Forest landowner and President Emeritus of Vermont Coverts
Steve Faccio, Conservation Biologist, Vermont Center for Ecostudies
Rosalind Renfrew, Vermont Center for Ecostudies
Marc Lapin, Faculty, Program in Environmental Studies, Middlebury College
Beverley Wemple, Associate Professor, Geography and Natural Resources, University of Vermont
Eric Palola, Guanacaste Dry Forest Conservation Fund*
Leo Laferriere, Retired consulting forester
Farley Brown, Faculty at Sterling College*
Kathy Doyle, Doyle Ecological Services and Visiting Instructor, Middlebury College
Lynn Levine, Consulting forester, Forest*Care and Heartwood Press
John M. Fogarty, Fogarty Forestry, LLC
John McNerny Forest landowner, and Past President of Vermont Coverts
Leon Whitcomb and Rhoda Bedell, Forest landowners
Leslie and Jim Morey, Forest Landowners
Hugo Liepmann, Forest Landowner
Don Dickson, Member of Forest Roundtable

**Reflects the support of the individual and not necessarily the organization.*