

## Forest Stewardship

A statewide project focusing on Vermont's forests recently wrapped up Phase 2 of its multi-year effort. Managed by the Lamoille County Planning Commission, the Forest Stewardship project is a collaborative effort between eight Regional Planning Commissions (RPCs) and the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation funded through a United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service grant.

"The Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation is pleased to partner with the US Forest Service and several Regional Planning Commissions", said Director of Forests, Steven Sinclair. "We all recognize the ecological, economic and societal values of Vermont's forest and need to plan for the future". Forests in one form or another dominate the Vermont landscape. These forest lands have been important to the historical development of the area, continue to provide important resources today, and will be critical assets in the development of prosperous and sustainable communities in the future.

For additional information about this project, contact:

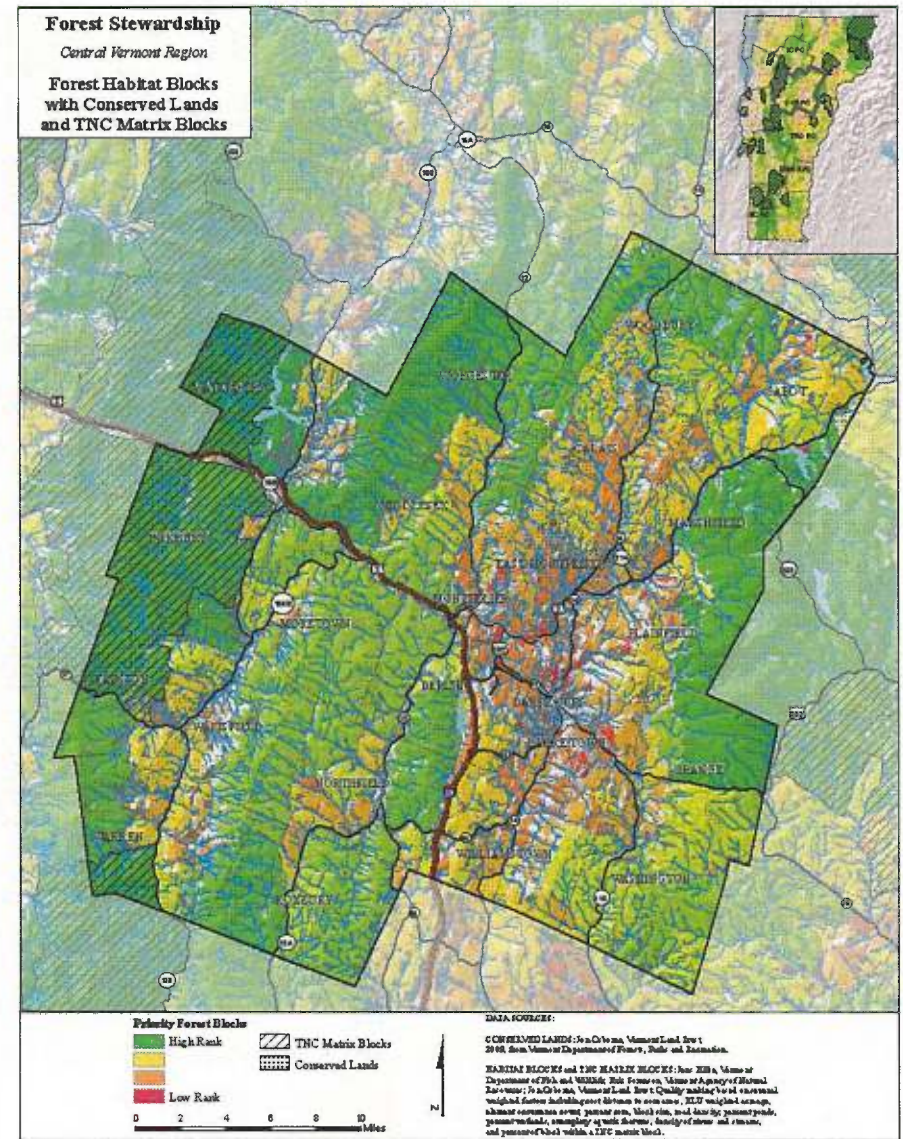
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According to the Vermont Forest Resource Fact Sheet, more than 70% of Vermont's 4.6 million acres of forest can be characterized as nonindustrial private forest land (NPIF). This land is divided among an estimated 88,000 landowners, independently managing their properties with unique private interests. The fragmented nature of Vermont's NPIF ownership means that forest resource planning occurs parcel by parcel. Rather than looking at forest management on an individual parcel-by-parcel basis, this project employs a regionally-based landscape approach, allowing for more integrated planning of private and public forest lands in Vermont, with the ultimate goal of keeping forests as forests.

The first phase of the multi-year project used a geographic information system (GIS) technology and a stakeholder engagement process to identify specific forest values, uses, types, and strategies across the state. Forest resources were mapped and Regional Forest Stewardship Plans were developed for each participating region. Phase 2 brought the development and launch of a Forest Stewardship Atlas, an interactive web mapping tool available to the public. You can find the Atlas at <http://anrmaps.vermont.gov/websites/foreststewardship/>. RPC staff are available to demonstrate using the platform.

"The Forest Stewardship project allows each Regional Planning Commission to inventory and assess forest resources and the impacts of human change on those resources. Working together, we're developing tools and strategies for sustainable statewide planning of forest resources," said Taylor Foster, Forest Stewardship project manager for Lamoille County Planning Commission. RPCs serving Lamoille County, Addison County, Bennington County, and the Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee regions participated in Phase 1. Central Vermont, Northwest, Southern Windsor County, and Windham RPCs joined in for Phase 2.

Each RPC published unique Regional Reports overseen by a Steering Committee of public and private stakeholders. The RPCs developed a series of maps demonstrating important characteristics of Vermont's forests. The resources developed in this project supported 18



18 municipalities with municipal plan updates, zoning regulations, grant proposals, ridgeline plans, and other projects that strengthen forest protections. A critical component of the project was linking public and private partners by building connections and linkages between the two often disparate groups.