

No. 171. An act relating to timber harvesting.

Effective Jan 1, 2018

**Sec. 15. 24 V.S.A. § 4303 is amended to read:
§ 4303. DEFINITIONS**

The following definitions shall apply throughout this chapter unless the context otherwise requires:

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(10) "Land development" means the division of a parcel into two or more parcels, the construction, reconstruction, conversion, structural alteration, relocation, or enlargement of any building or other structure, or of any mining, excavation, or landfill, and any change in the use of any building or other structure, or land, or extension of use of land.

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(34) "Forest block" means a contiguous area of forest in any stage of succession and not currently developed for nonforest use. A forest block may include recreational trails, wetlands, or other natural features that do not themselves possess tree cover, and uses exempt from regulation under subsection 4413(d) of this title.

(35) "Forest fragmentation" means the division or conversion of a forest block by land development other than by a recreational trail or use exempt from regulation under subsection 4413(d) of this title.

(36) "Habitat connector" means land or water, or both, that links patches of wildlife habitat within a landscape, allowing the movement, migration, and dispersal of animals and plants and the functioning of ecological processes. A habitat connector may include recreational trails and uses exempt from regulation under subsection 4413(d) of this title. In a plan or other document issued pursuant to this chapter, a municipality or regional plan commission may use the phrase "wildlife corridor" in lieu of "habitat connector."

(37) "Recreational trail" means a corridor that is not paved and that is used for hiking, walking, bicycling, cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, all-terrain vehicle riding, horseback riding, and other similar recreational activity.

Sec. 21. EFFECTIVE DATES

(c) Secs. 15 (forest integrity; definitions), 16 (elements of a regional plan) and 17 (plan for municipality) shall take effect on January 1, 2018. Secs. 15–17 shall apply to municipal and regional plans adopted or amended on or after January 1, 2018.

	H.233 (Act 250) [Draft No, 1.1]	A. 171 (Ch. 117) [under §4303]
Development	(xi) The construction of improvements for commercial, industrial or residential use if such an improvement at any point is more than 350 feet within a forest block that is classified as a highest priority interior forest block or a habitat connectivity area that is classified as a highest priority connectivity block by the Vermont Conservation District.	
Forest Block	A contiguous area of forest in any stage of succession and not currently developed for nonforest use. A forest block may include existing recreational trails , wetlands, or other natural features that do not themselves possess tree cover, and improvements constructed for farming, logging, or forestry purposes.	A contiguous area of forest in any stage of succession and not currently developed for nonforest use. A forest block may include recreational trails , wetlands, or other natural features that do not themselves possess tree cover, and uses exempt from regulation under subsection 4413(d) of this title.
Fragmentation	The division or conversion of a forest block or habitat connectivity area by the separation of a parcel into two or more parcels; the construction, reconstruction, conversion, structural alteration, relocation, or enlargement of any building or other structure, or of any mining, excavation, or landfill; and any change in the use of any building or other structure, or land, or extension of use of land. However, fragmentation does not include the division or conversion of a forest block or habitat connectivity area by an existing recreational trail or by improvements constructed for farming, logging, or forestry purposes below the elevation of 2,500 feet.	The division or conversion of a forest block by land development other than by a recreational trail or use exempt from regulation under subsection 4413(d) of this title.
Habitat	The physical or biological environment in which a particular species of plant or animal lives.	N/A

Habitat Connectivity Area	Land or water, or both, that links patches of habitat within a landscape, allowing the movement, migration, and dispersal of animals and plants and the functioning of ecological processes. A habitat connectivity area may include existing or repaired recreational trails and improvements constructed for farming, logging or forestry purposes.	N/A—See below
Habitat Connector	N/A—See above.	Land or water, or both, that links patches of wildlife habitat within a landscape, allowing the movement, migration, and dispersal of animals and plants and the functioning of ecological processes. A habitat connector may include recreational trails and uses exempt from regulation under subsection 4413(d) of this title. In a plan or other document issued pursuant to this chapter, a municipality or regional plan commission may use the phrase “wildlife corridor” in lieu of “habitat connector.”
Vermont Conservation Design	(A) the Vermont Conservation Design published by the Agency of Natural Resources in December 2015; or (B) its successor document and associated equivalent maps published by the Agency of Natural Resources, provided that the classification and mapping of forest blocks and connectivity blocks in the successor document 21 and maps are solely science-based	N/A
Recreation Trail	N/A	A corridor that is not paved and that is used for hiking, walking, bicycling, cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, all-terrain vehicle riding, horseback riding, and other similar recreational activity.

Contiguous habitat Units (Habitat Blocks) are areas of contiguous natural cover separated by roads, developed areas and agricultural lands. Ideally, these areas are connected with other similar areas so that the animals that use them can move freely to other forested areas and habitats. It is important to keep in mind that there is no minimum or maximum number of acres to define contiguous habitat in all cases throughout the state. Rather, it is important to consider the size of the contiguous forest habitat and associated species of plants and animals within the context of the level of fragmentation in the region. In addition, the configuration of the habitat is also an important consideration for identifying contiguous habitat. For instance, an area of forest habitat that is highly irregular in shape, with a high degree of forest edge may be less functional for some species than forest habitat of the same acreage with a regular shape. Contiguous habitat is important because it:

- supports the biological requirements of many plants and animals;
- supports viable populations of wide-ranging animals by allowing access to important, feeding habitat, reproduction, and genetic exchange;
- serves as habitat for source populations of dispersing animals for recolonization of nearby habitats that may have lost their original populations of those species;
- supports public access to and appreciation of Vermont 's forested landscape;
- provides forest management opportunities for sustainable extraction of forest products;
- provides forest management opportunities to yield a mixture of young, intermediate, and older forest habitat;
- helps maintain air and water quality; and
- provides important opportunities for education and research of forest ecosystems.

Wildlife Travel Corridors, also called connecting lands or connecting habitats are land areas that serve to link other patches of important wildlife habitats together. Some species of wildlife rely on a variety of habitat features that are often separated from each other by roads, houses or other impediments to easy movement. Species in this category include many amphibians, bobcat, fisher, and river otter. Others species such as moose, deer and black bear require large tracts of similar landscape that are quite rare in the developed northeastern United States. In order to survive in this region, these wide ranging species must move between several habitat patches of similar makeup. AE assessed wildlife travel corridors in the STA study area in the following ways:

- General wide ranging mammal corridors
- Amphibian road crossing zones

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4/5/2017