



FORESTS, PARKS & RECREATION  
**VERMONT**



AGENCY OF NATURAL RESOURCES

# LEGISLATIVE REPORT: ENROLLMENT OF RESERVE FORESTLAND

Keith Thompson, Private Lands Program Manager

4/22/2026

WELCOME



# WHAT IS RESERVE FORESTLAND?

Act 146 (2022) added Reserve Forestland as a new subcategory within Vermont's Use Value Appraisal (UVA) Program. Its purpose: encourage the development of old forest conditions and functions on private lands — at a scale and pattern currently lacking across Vermont — while preserving working lands as the primary focus of the UVA Managed Forestland category. Standards took effect July 1, 2023. This report, required by Act 146, evaluates enrollment trends, tradeoffs, and strategies for long-term stewardship.



**Forests with a critical mass of old forest characteristics can provide important contributions to:**

- Native biodiversity
- Wildlife habitat
- Hydrologic regulation
- Carbon storage
- Forest resilience
- Localized cooling and climate buffering

**Characteristics include:**

- Large old trees
- Spatial variability in tree density and size
- Abundant downed deadwood
- Multiple canopy layers
- Large standing dead trees
- Regeneration
- Unique plant communities (understory plants, mosses, lichens)

*These contributions are not exclusive to old forest, but the nature of some contributions may be unique to old forest and thus valuable.*

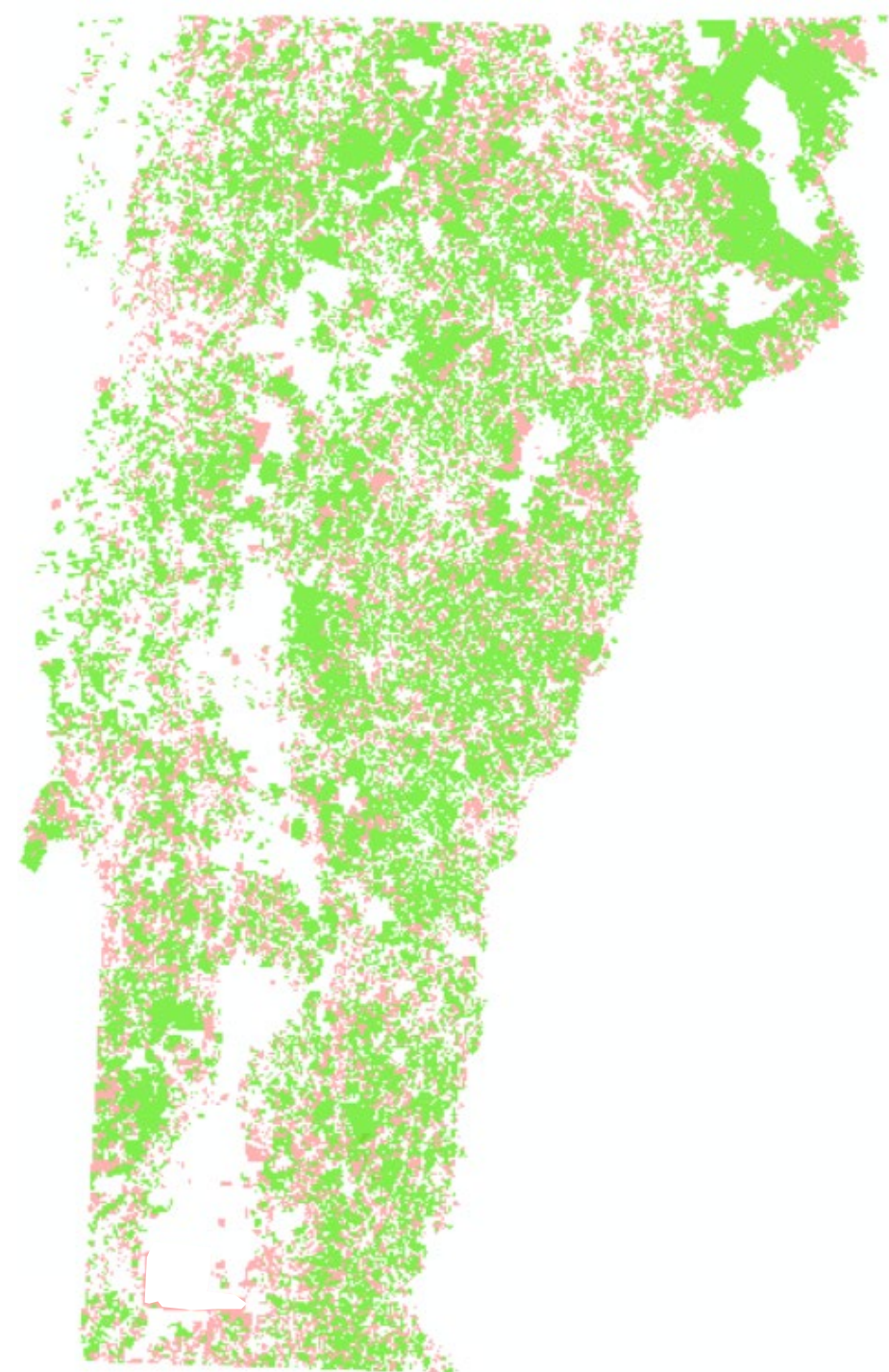
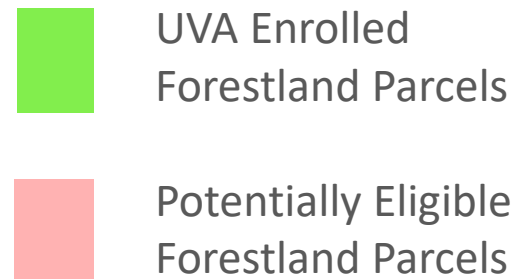
# Parcels Enrolled in UVA

**55%** of eligible forestland parcels are enrolled

- 16,000 parcels enrolled
- 29,000 parcels eligible

**70%** of eligible forest acres are enrolled

- 2 million acres enrolled
- 2.77 million acres eligible



# Reserve Forestland: Objectives

**Objective 1:** Maintain the primary purpose and outcome of the forestland category of UVA as: keep forestland in productive use with oversight by licensed professionals.

**Objective 2:** Increase opportunities to achieve old forests on UVA enrolled forestlands at a scale and pattern that helps Vermont benefit from old forests' values.



# Eligibility

## Baseline eligibility:

- 25 total enrolled forestland acres
- 20 acres are forested productive soils (Site Class I, II, or III) may be eligible for enrollment of Reserve Forestland. Of these parcels, the following eligibility thresholds apply:

**PARCELS WITH  $\geq$  100 ENROLLED ACRES:** 30% or more of the parcel's enrolled acres need to be composed of significant and sensitive conditions, per program standards.

**PARCELS WITH  $<$  100 ENROLLED ACRES:** 50% or more of the parcel's enrolled acres need to be composed of significant and sensitive conditions, per program standards.

## Significant and Sensitive Conditions:

- Ecologically Significant Treatment Areas (ESTAs)
- Steep slopes  $\geq$  35%
- Site IV lands, and
- Special places and sensitive sites



# ENROLLMENT OVERVIEW

---

# CURRENT ENROLLMENT AT A GLANCE



Existing vs. New	# of Parcels	Total Acres
Previously Enrolled in UVA	36	7,933
New to UVA	19	3,445
Grand Total	55	11,378

- Average parcel size: 218 acres — larger than the typical UVA forestland parcel (~125 acres)
- Represents ~0.3% of UVA forestland parcels and ~0.6% of total enrolled UVA acreage

# IMPACT ON WORKING LANDS



	Parcels	Acres	Productive Forestland Tradeoff
<b>Estimated Reserve Forestland Potential (statewide)</b>	4,120	691,183	295,144
<b>Current Reserve Forestland Enrollments</b>	55	11,378	5,308
<b>% Realized</b>	1.30%	1.60%	1.80%

- Not a “no-management” subcategory — invasive control, water quality, and some harvesting are required or allowed
- Productive Forestland Tradeoff: acreage that could be managed for timber but may not be managed actively going forward



# OLD FOREST CONTRIBUTIONS

---

# ACRES MANAGED FOR OLD FOREST



- Nearly 10,100 acres managed for old forest conditions and functions across enrolled parcels
- Parcels are well-suited for old forest management; many already exhibit early old forest structure
- Vermont Conservation Design targets ~419,000 acres (9%) of forestland in old forest condition

# FACTORS LIMITING ENROLLMENT



- Eligibility thresholds: parcels must meet minimum Significant and Sensitive Conditions requirements to qualify
- Awareness and familiarity: a new option in a program where foresters and landowners long expected sawtimber management
- Planning complexity and 10-year plan update cycles limit annual uptake; most landowners only consider Reserve Forestland at renewal
- 28 licensed foresters have prepared Reserve Forestland plans — a growing, capable cohort statewide

# FPR FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS



- Reserve Forestland is functioning as intended — a viable, workable pathway to old forest management within UVA,
- Active management for sawtimber remains the primary eligible condition and management objective on UVA enrolled lands
- Education and outreach to landowners and foresters are the primary near-term strategy for growing enrollment
- FPR recommends a flexible, voluntary approach — mandatory enrollment or management restrictions are not warranted at this stage
- Complementary programs (conservation easements, cost-share, carbon) are critical to long-term stewardship; continued monitoring recommended before any substantial changes

# QUESTIONS?



**Keith Thompson**, Private Lands Program Manager

Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation

[fpr.vermont.gov](http://fpr.vermont.gov)

[Keith.Thompson@vermont.gov](mailto:Keith.Thompson@vermont.gov)



**FORESTS, PARKS & RECREATION**

**VERMONT**



**AGENCY OF NATURAL RESOURCES**

