

2010 Vermont Forest Resources Plan



*A bird's eye view of the Statehouse in Montpelier
accented by Vermont's forested landscape.*

DIVISION OF FORESTS

VERMONT DEPARTMENT OF FORESTS,
PARKS AND RECREATION

AGENCY OF NATURAL RESOURCES

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State Assessment and Resource Strategies

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Executive Summary



The Secretary of the United States Department of Agriculture, through the 2008 Farm Bill, called for a re-examination and assessment of the nation's forests, identification of priority areas for federal assistance, and a description of resources necessary to address statewide and regional strategies. This effort centers around three national priorities: *conserve and manage working forest landscapes for multiple uses and value; protect forests from threats; and enhance the public benefits from trees and forests*, all in support of the sustainability of the nation's forests. The Farm Bill directs states to look at forest sustainability and is the foundation of the **2010 Vermont Forest Resources Plan - State Assessment and Resource Strategies**.

In Vermont, we recognize that sustainable forests begin with healthy forests. And that managing forests sustainably involves the recognition of connections among ecological, social and economic systems to maintain forest health while preserving options for future generations and meeting the needs for the present.

The **Vermont 2010 Forest Resources Plan - State Assessment and Resource Strategies (Plan)** is a proactive, comprehensive and balanced approach to the management of Vermont's forests. The Plan provides an assessment of conditions and trends of the forest resources in the state, discusses threats to them, and identifies priority areas to focus resources. Finally, the Plan identifies long-term strategies for assuring that our forests are healthy and providing ecological services while meeting the economic needs of the citizens of Vermont. For each strategy, the role of the Division of Forests and our various stakeholders, as well as financial resources needed, is identified. The strategies will be the basis of specific actions later identified in annual work plans and federal grant narratives.

The keystone to this effort is our vision statement for the future of forests in Vermont. It embodies the concepts of healthy forests and the sustainable use of all forest services. It should be noted that the use of the term 'forest' is meant to reflect a forest continuum, from urban trees and remnant forests in our cities and towns to woodlots and rural forest blocks in our remote landscapes. Vermont's forests are a mosaic – all have value and provide an important service.

Vision Statement for Vermont's Forests

The forests of Vermont will consist of healthy and sustainable ecosystems, a prosperous and sustainable forest products industry, abundant recreational opportunities and a combination of ownership patterns supporting a working forest landscape and large, unbroken forest tracts. Citizens, government and businesses understand their proper roles, responsibilities and rights, and work together to support the values of forests for this and future generations.

The following five Desired Future Condition statements describe those conditions that are needed if the vision for Vermont's forest is to be realized. These five statements are the basis for long-term goals, strategies and the specific actions needed to achieve them. They also characterize the health and sustainability of Vermont's forests.

Desired Future Condition 1: *Biological Diversity*

Conserve biological diversity across all landscapes.

Desired Future Condition 2: *Forest Health and Productivity*

Maintain and enhance forest ecosystem health and productivity.

Desired Future Condition 3: *Forest Products and Ecosystem Services*

Maintain and enhance forest contribution to ecosystem services.

Desired Future Condition 4: *Land Ethic*

Maintain and enhance an ethic of respect for the land, sustainable use and exemplary management.

Desired Future Condition 5: *Legal, Institutional and Economic Framework*

Vermont has a legal, institutional and economic framework in place for forest conservation and sustainability.

The landscape of Vermont has experienced many changes during our history. As we enter the 21st century, our forests have the potential to provide us with an abundance of ecological, economic and social benefits. However, the sustainability of Vermont's forests depends upon keeping forests forested, which is one aspect of health and productivity. Decisions and actions we make today will influence our forests for years to come. Livable communities, functioning natural systems and our quality of life depend

on healthy, sustainable forests. We must accept and embrace responsibility as stewards of this valuable resource.

Conversion of forests to other uses is the greatest threat to sustainability and the over-arching goal of this Plan is *no net loss of forest cover*. The key priority areas and issues identified through the State Assessment, confirmed during public outreach, and targeted in our resource strategies, are:

- Multi-state landscape scale initiatives; in particular, the Northern Forest Lands, Connecticut River Valley and Lake Champlain Basin.
- State and multi-state priority issues; in particular, invasive species, water quality, forest habitats and diversity, renewable energy and biomass, and maintaining and diversifying markets.
- Communities with less than average urban tree cover (UTC) but more than average population and impervious surfaces; ranking high for UTC enhancements.
- Communities ranking high and medium for UTC enhancements and not attaining US Forest Service criteria for sustainable urban forestry programs.
- Forest buffers along riparian corridors and their associated wetlands.
- Non-conserved forest blocks associated with public water supply, source protection and recharge areas.
- Non-conserved land identified as high priority habitat blocks and travel corridors.
- Forests at risk from invasive or cyclic forest insects, plants and diseases.
- Lands important in maintaining Vermont's statewide recreation trail network.
- Habitats at risk from atmospheric pollution or climate change factors.
- Forest land eligible and not enrolled in the Use Value Appraisal Program.