



# CASTLETON MANAGEMENT UNIT DRAFT LONG RANGE MANAGEMENT PLAN

Public Meeting  
June 12, 2024

# WELCOME



# WHAT IS A LONG-RANGE MANAGEMENT PLAN?



# WHAT IS A LONG-RANGE MANAGEMENT PLAN?

- Document that guides management of state lands
- Generally lasts for 20 years
- Developed by the local land managers
- You may hear us call them “LRMPs”
- It includes (among other things):
  - Assessment of natural resources
  - Management goals for next 20 years
  - Management actions for next 20 years
  - Public involvement

State of Vermont  
Agency of Natural Resources  
Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation  
Department of Fish & Wildlife  
Department of Environmental Conservation

## **Castleton Management Unit** DRAFT Long Range Management Plan

Including:  
*Birdseye Wildlife Management Area*  
*Blueberry Hill Wildlife Management Area*



Castleton, Ira, Poultney, Vermont

4,725 acres



Prepared by: Rutland Stewardship Team



Approved by: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Chris Herrick, Commissioner  
Fish & Wildlife Department

Reviewed by: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Danielle Fitzko, Commissioner  
Department of Forests, Parks & Recreation

Approved by: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Julie Moore, Secretary Agency of Natural Resources

*(Date of LRMP Template: 2/13/2020 TMLT/MAAC)*



# WHY DO WE WRITE LONG-RANGE MANAGEMENT PLANS?

- Understand current conditions
- Understand public desires and opinion
- Thoughtfully consider how to balance multiple uses
- Provide opportunities that the public seeks, and that are consistent with ANR and Department missions
- Ensure management is taking us in the direction we want to go
- Opportunity to think big and “take the long view”
  - At the landscape scale, across state boundaries
  - Across staff, administrations, etc.



# HOW WE PLAN

- Resource assessments – complete
- Public scoping – complete
- Draft management plan – complete
- Public comment on draft plan – June 12-August 31
- Revised management plan – dates TBD

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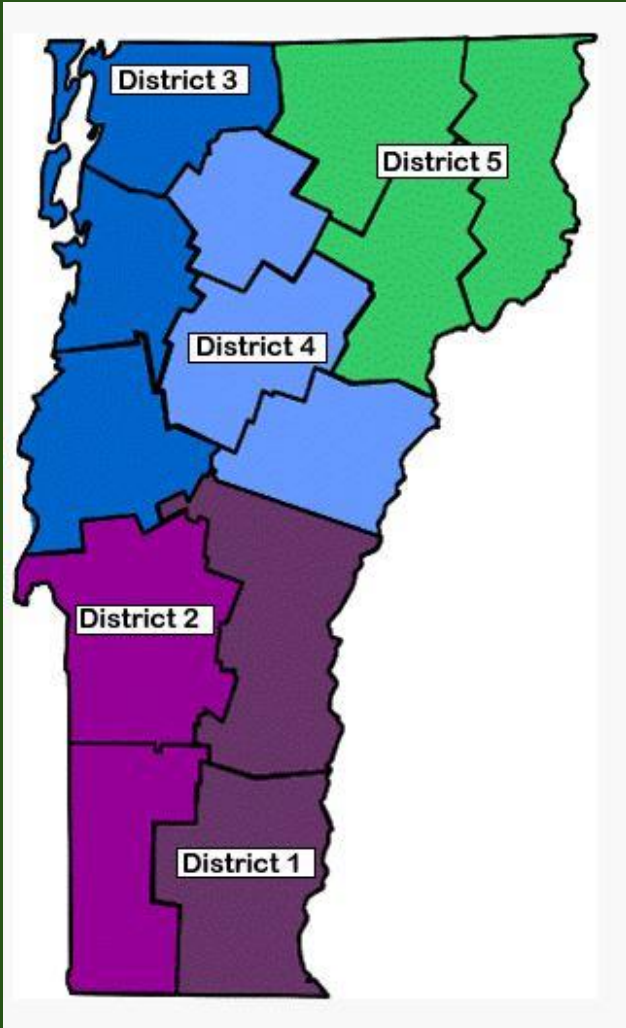
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# WHO DOES THE PLANNING?



## District Stewardship Team

### Department of Fish and Wildlife

- **Travis Hart, Wildlife Biologist**
- Joel Flewelling, Wildlife Specialist
- Luke Groff, Wildlife Biologist
- Danielle Owczarski, State Lands Ecologist

### Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation

- **Lisa Thornton, Stewardship Forester**
- Ethan Crumley, State Lands Forester
- Rick Hedding, Parks Regional Manager
- Kyle Mason, State Lands Forester

### Department of Environmental Conservation

- Angie Allen, Basin Planner



# TIMELINE

- May 21: Draft plan made available
- June 12: Public meeting (recorded)
- June 12 – August 31: public comment period
- After August 31:
  - Review public comments
  - Make plan updates





# TONIGHT'S MEETING



# TONIGHT'S MEETING

## Goals

1. Describe the planning process
2. Give you an overview of the draft management plan
3. Give you an opportunity to ask questions of the District Stewardship Team
4. Make sure you know how to submit comments on the draft plan



# TONIGHT'S MEETING

## Schedule

- 6:00-6:45 pm: informational presentation (full group)
- 6:45-8:00 pm: questions and discussion (open house style, in stations)

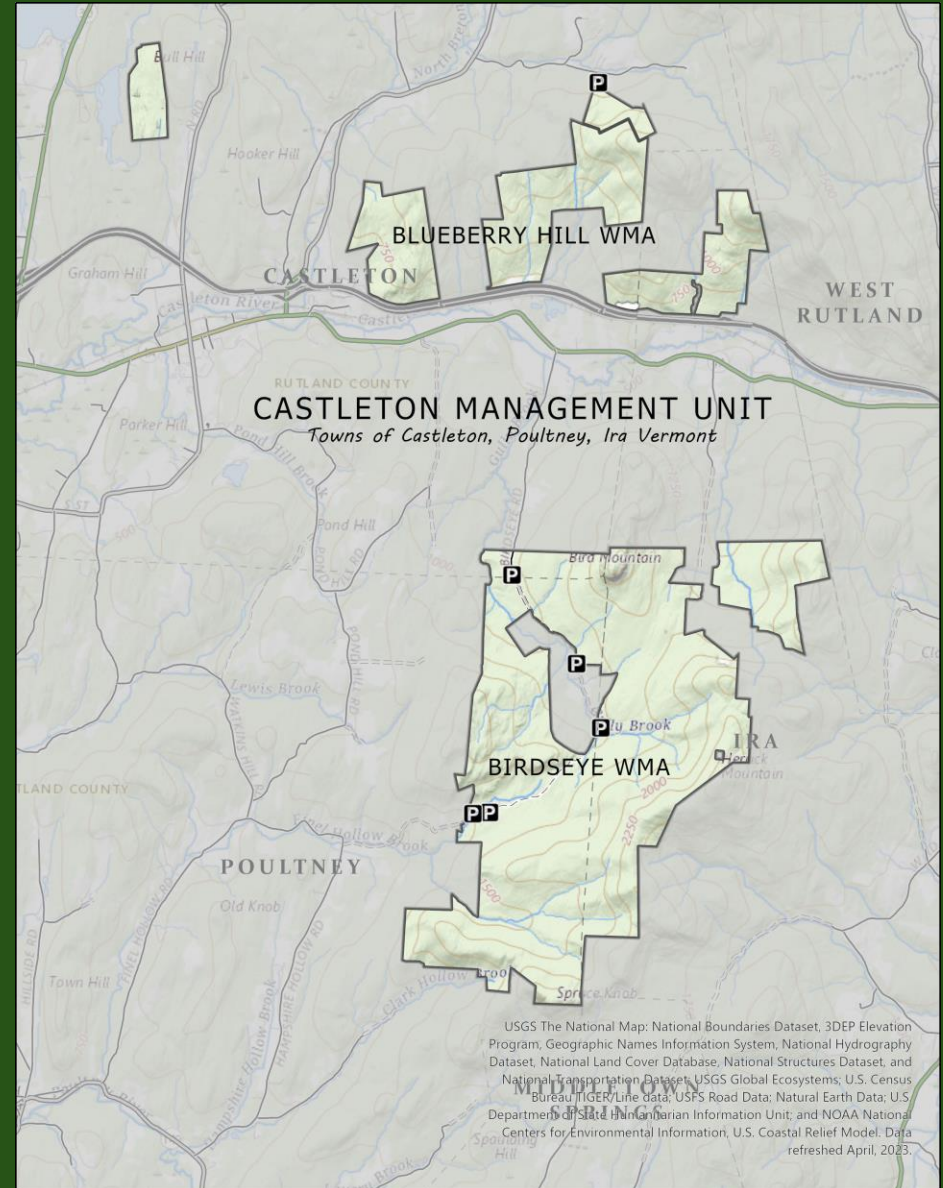


# CMU OVERVIEW



# OVERVIEW OF LAND BASE

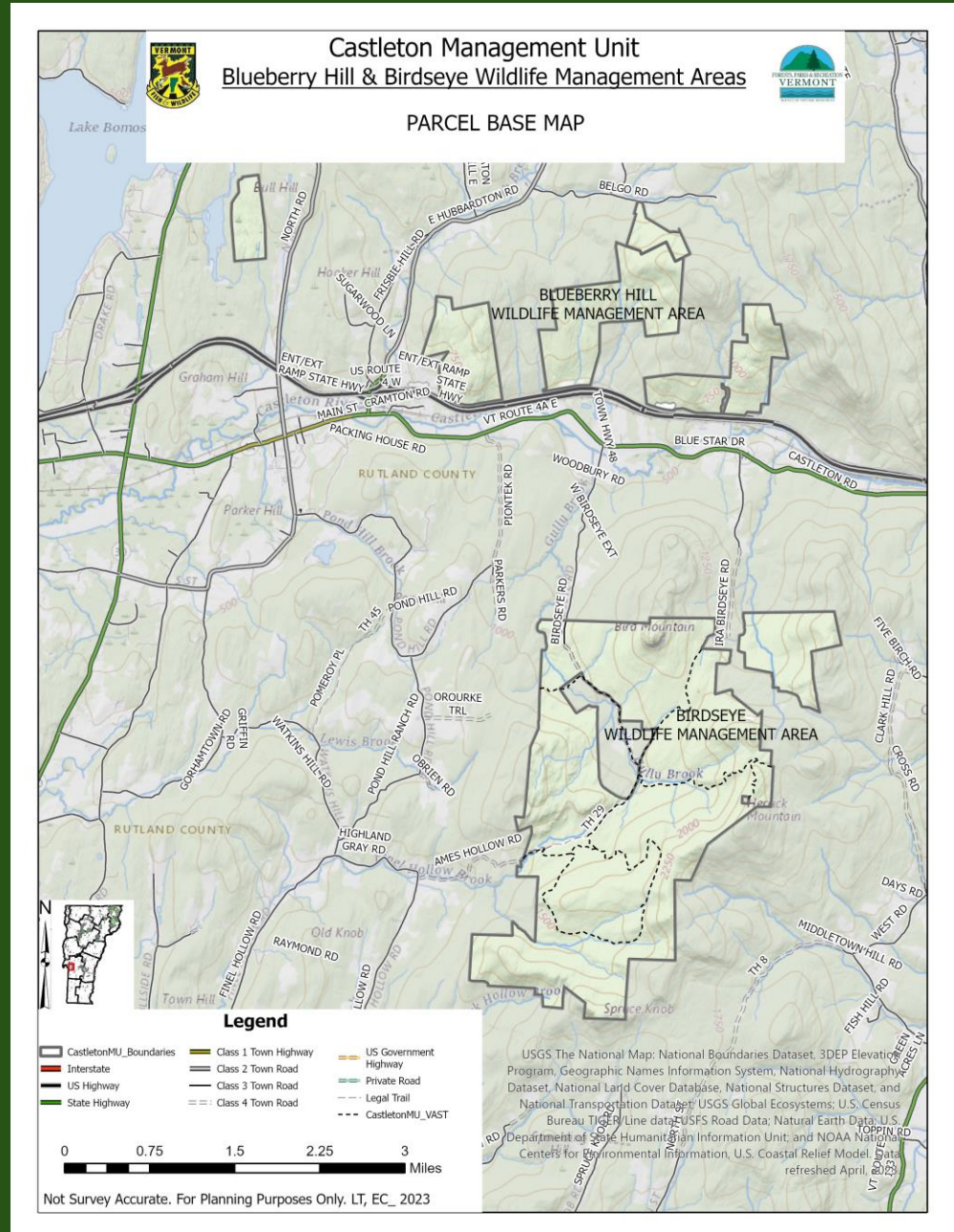
- 4,725 acres
- Taconic Mountains Biophysical Region
- Prominent features:
  - Bird Mountain
  - Herrick Mountain
  - Elevation ranges from 500' - 2600'
  - 2800-acre additional acreage



# OVERVIEW OF OWNERSHIP

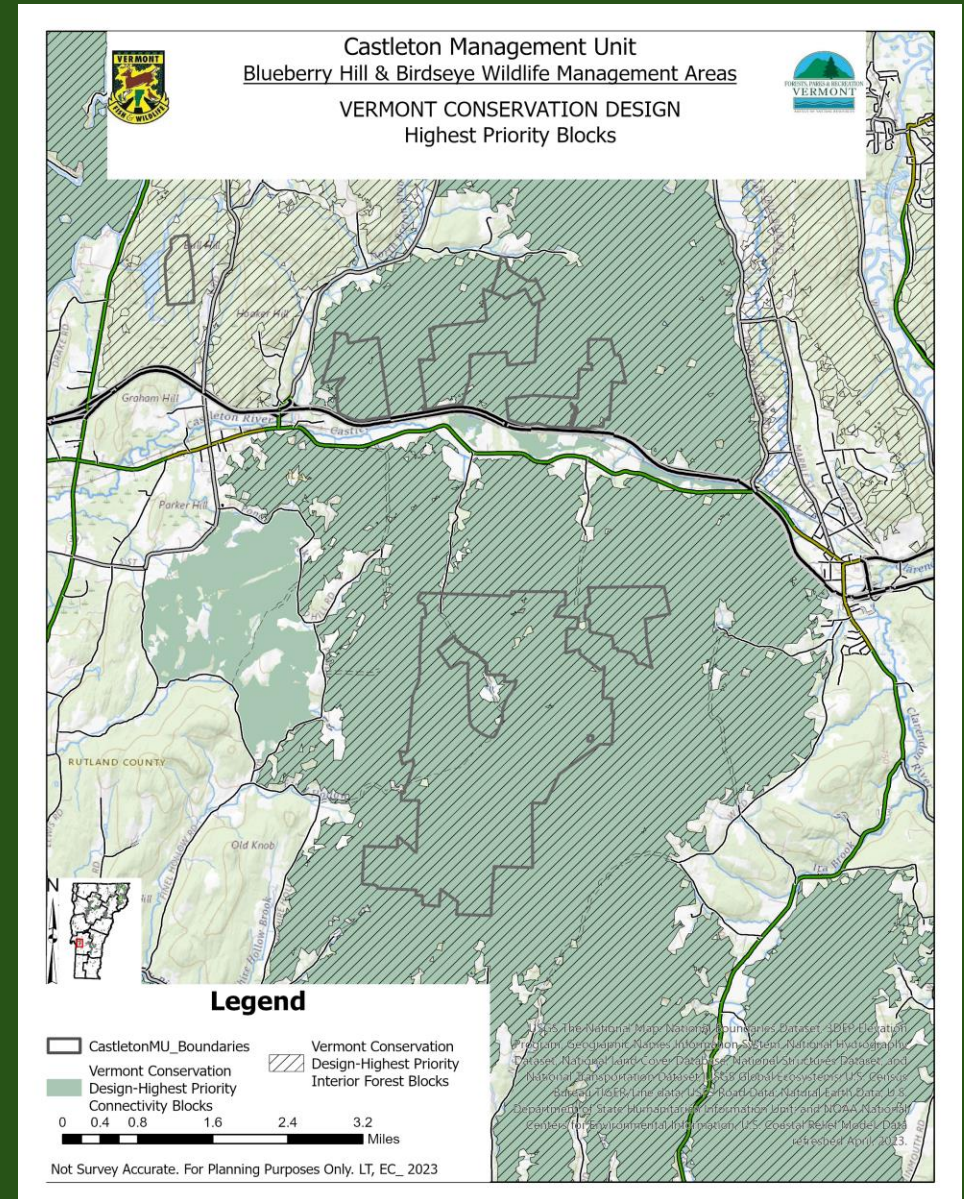
- VFWD Ownership:
  - Blueberry Hill WMA – 1,152 acres
  - Birdseye WMA – 3,573 acres

Parcel	Town	Acres
Birdseye WMA	Castleton	115.0
	Ira	1,704.0
	Poultney	1,754.0
		3,573.0
Blueberry Hill WMA	Castleton	935.8
	Ira	216.1
		1,151.9
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4,724.9</b>



# OVERVIEW OF LAND BASE

- Landscape Context
  - Adjacent Conserved Lands
  - West Rutland Town Forest (east of Birdseye)
    - Many other ownerships and easements within the connectivity blocks
      - Vermont Land Trust, The Nature Conservancy, Town, and other state lands
- Forest Blocks and Connectivity Blocks
  - Within two large (18,600 ac. & 23,600 ac.) Highest priority interior forest blocks and highest priority connectivity blocks
  - Regionally critical “Adirondacks to Greens” connectivity corridor



# UNIT-WIDE MANAGEMENT GOALS

- Protect the ecologically functional landscape and natural and cultural resources
- Promote climate adaptation and carbon resilience on the landscape to address climate change impacts
- Provide high quality wildlife habitat for a diversity of species





# UNIT-WIDE MANAGEMENT GOALS

- Provide opportunities for dispersed, sustainable, fish and wildlife-based recreation
- Sustainably manage forests using silvicultural practices to achieve wildlife habitat goals, support a healthy and resilient forest, and to support the production of an array of wood products and the local economy



# Public Scoping

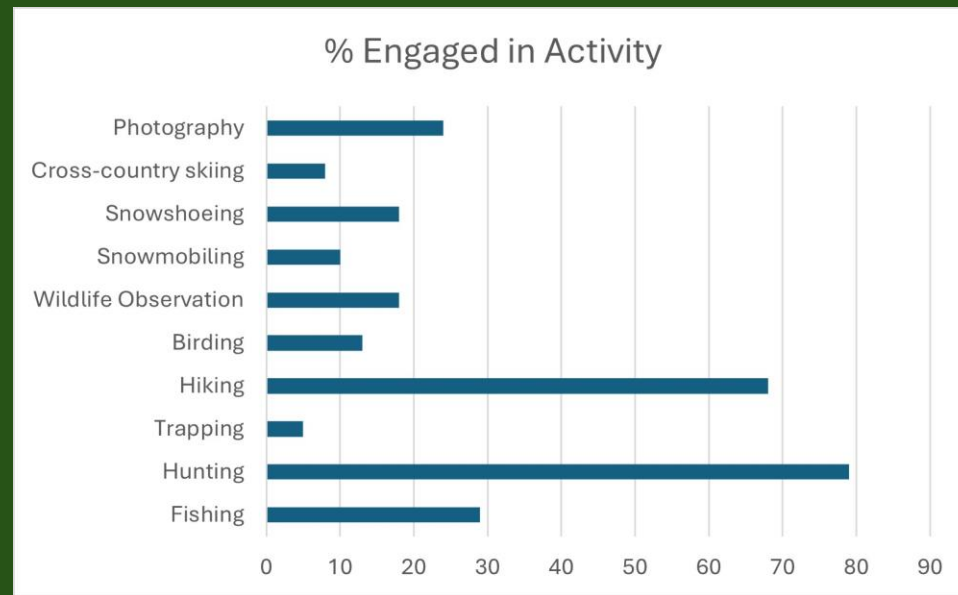
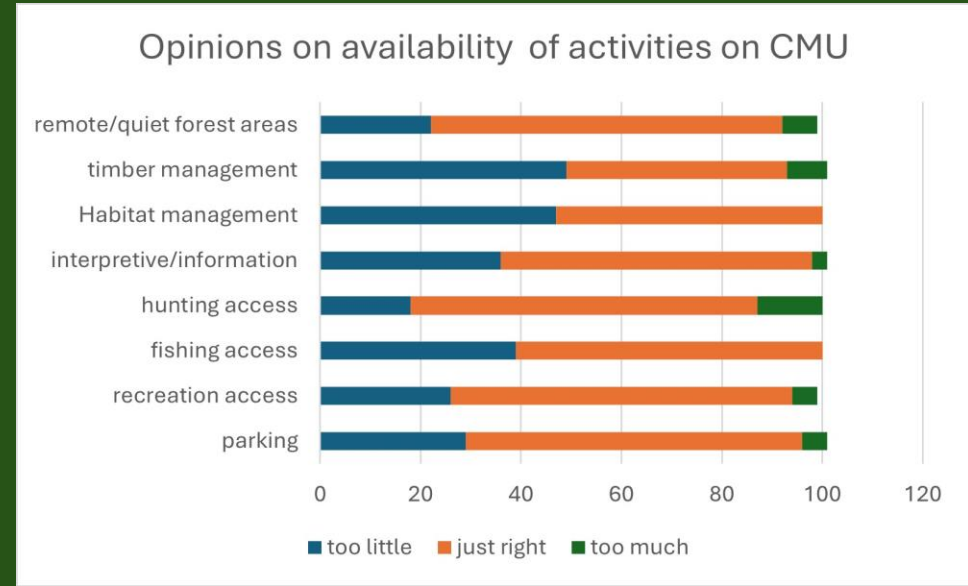


# PUBLIC SCOPING HIGHLIGHTS

- In-person meetings
- Story Map
- Email comments
- Survey responses



# PUBLIC SCOPING HIGHLIGHTS



# MANAGEMENT PLAN OVERVIEW



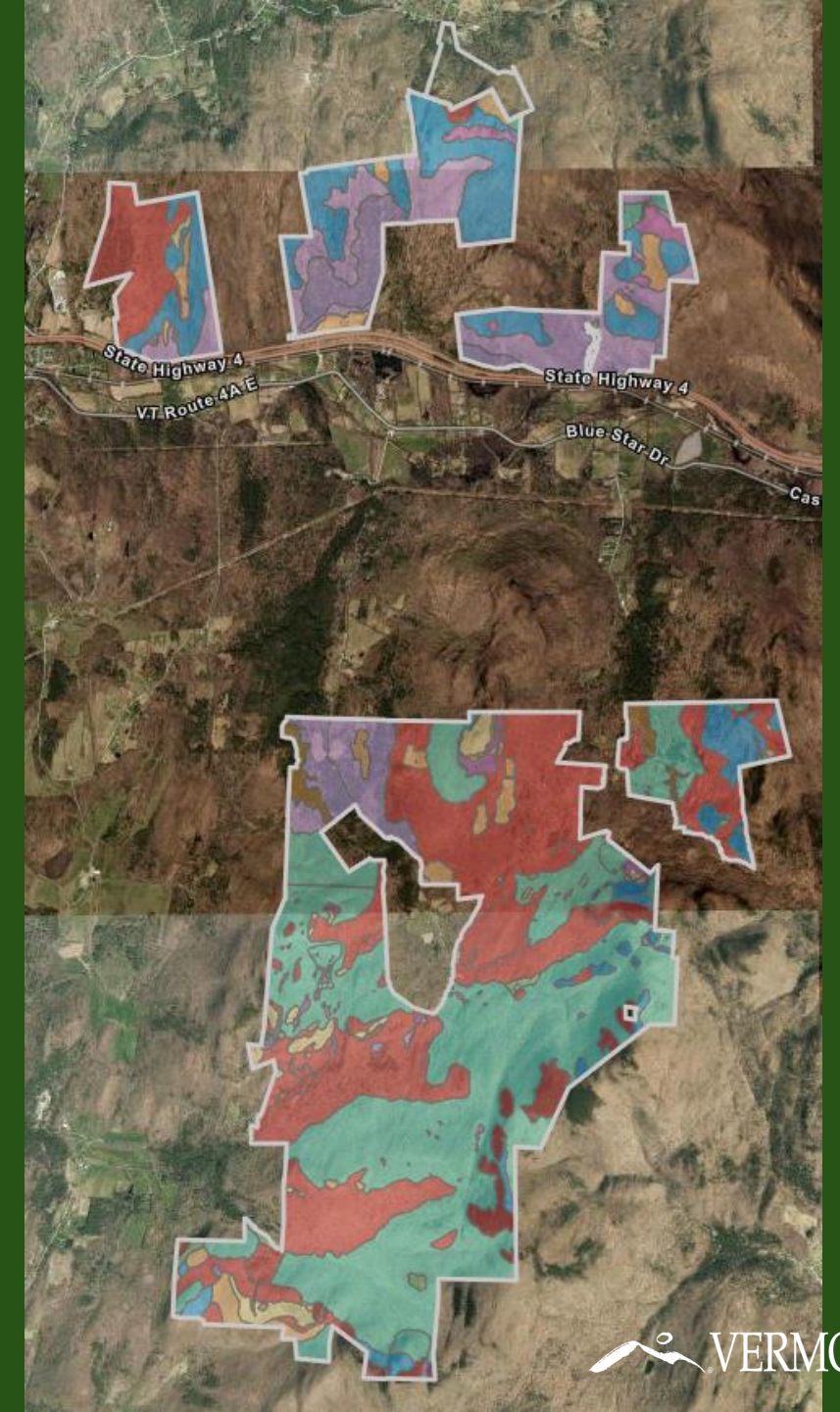
# ECOLOGICAL & WILDLIFE CONTEXT

- Located in the Taconic Mountains Biophysical Region
- Remarkable range of physical, biological, and ecological diversity
- Highest priority Habitat Connectivity Blocks and Interior Forest Blocks



# ECOLOGICAL HIGHLIGHTS

- Castleton Management Unit
  - 28 natural community types
  - 16 are rare or uncommon types in Vermont
- Blueberry Hill WMA
  - 10 rare and uncommon plant species
- Birdseye WMA
  - 25 rare and uncommon plant species





# ECOLOGY - *MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES & ACTIONS*







Maintain an  
ecologically  
functional landscape





Promote wildlife movement and ecological connectivity





Protect sensitive state-  
significant natural  
communities and RTE  
species





Maintain and enhance the quality of sensitive and common state significant natural communities and RTE species





Enhance and restore natural community habitat features, structure, and species composition through targeted silvicultural practices





Promote the development of structurally complex old forest conditions and early successional habitat





Promote native species  
and manage invasive  
species



# WILDLIFE HABITAT ASSESSMENT HIGHLIGHTS

- Large unfragmented forest blocks
- Abundance of mast stands
- Cliff habitats utilized by peregrine falcons
- 27 rare, threatened or endangered species across the MU (24 plants, 3 animals)
- Large area of relatively unique deer wintering area focused more on southern aspect and high nut and acorn production than typical conifer cover
- Variety of habitat types present including semi-open areas, young and mature forests





# WILDLIFE HABITAT – MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES & ACTIONS

- Protect and enhance unique wildlife habitat and features for both general and target wildlife species.
- Enhance habitat through management of all vegetative stages.
  - Use timber harvesting to create young forest to aid in meeting and maintaining 3-4% VCD targets for this region.
  - Use a combination of passive and active forest management strategies to promote the development of old and structurally complex forests over time.
- Assess management activities for impacts to wildlife at the landscape level.
- Maintain connecting habitat to aid in the movement of plant and animal populations adapting to changing climate.
- Maintain high quality surface waters to protect aquatic habitat.



# RECREATION



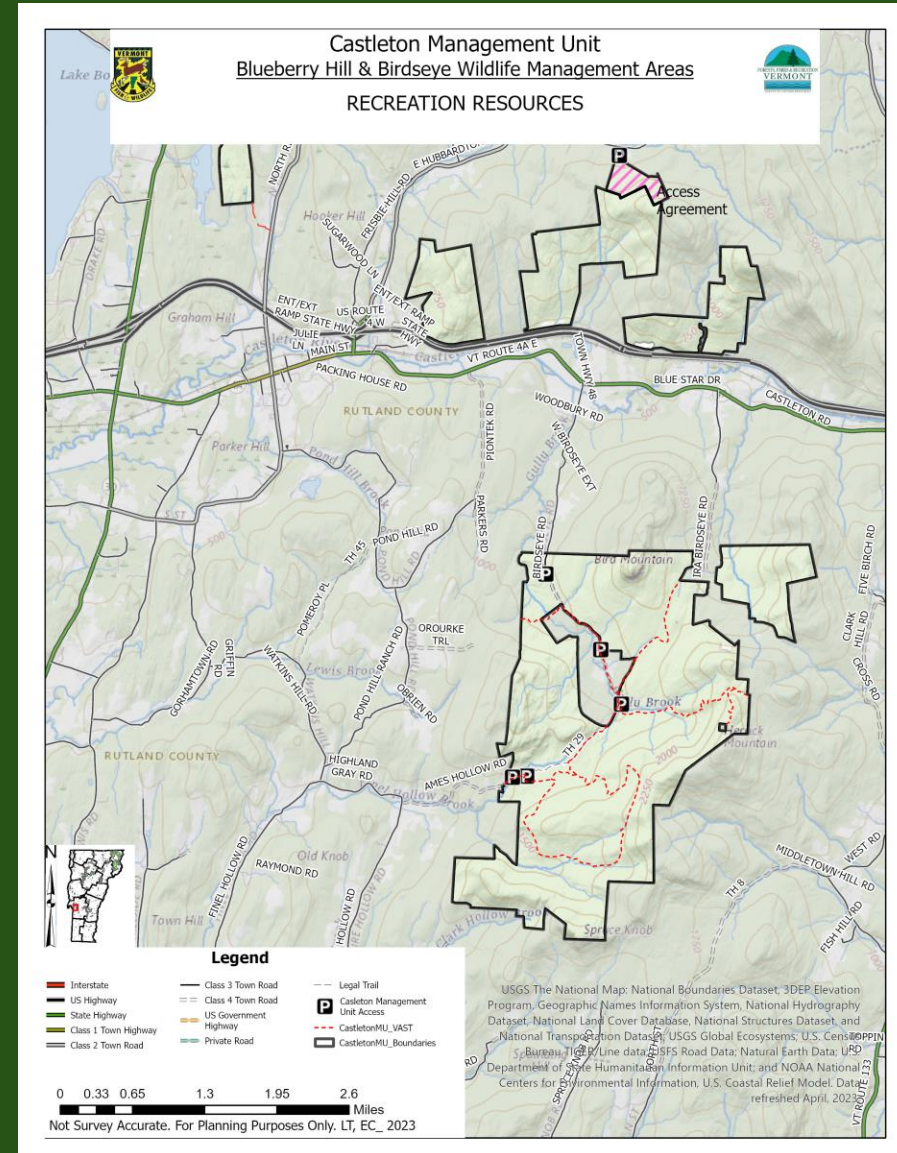
# RECREATION & PUBLIC ACCESS HIGHLIGHTS

## Legal Considerations that Shape Recreation:

- WMA Rules & Parcel acquisition funding sources
  - emphasize fish and wildlife-based recreation - H, F, T, wildlife viewing, and related wildlife related outdoor activities
- Conservation & Public Access Easement
  - Non-commercial, non-motorized, low impact, low density, dispersed wildlife-based

## Opportunities :

- Parking / public access
  - 5 locations on Birdseye WMA
  - 1 location on Blueberry Hill WMA
- Nearly 9 miles of designated VAST trail
- Network of woods roads for hiking
- Remote areas that support wildlife-based recreation, self-reliance



# RECREATION – MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES & ACTIONS

- Support opportunities for dispersed, sustainable, fish and wildlife-based recreation
- Provide landscape for remote recreation
- Partner with VAST for sustainable trail management
- Ensure proper planning for and implementation of new opportunities
- Develop public access where lacking, needed and appropriate



# FOREST RESOURCES



# HOW CLIMATE CHANGE MAY IMPACT CMU FORESTS

- Increased invasive plant and pest spread
- Altered water availability, decomposition, & nutrient cycling
- Tree growth
- Food availability for wildlife
- Increased risk of drought and fire.
- Increased extreme weather events.



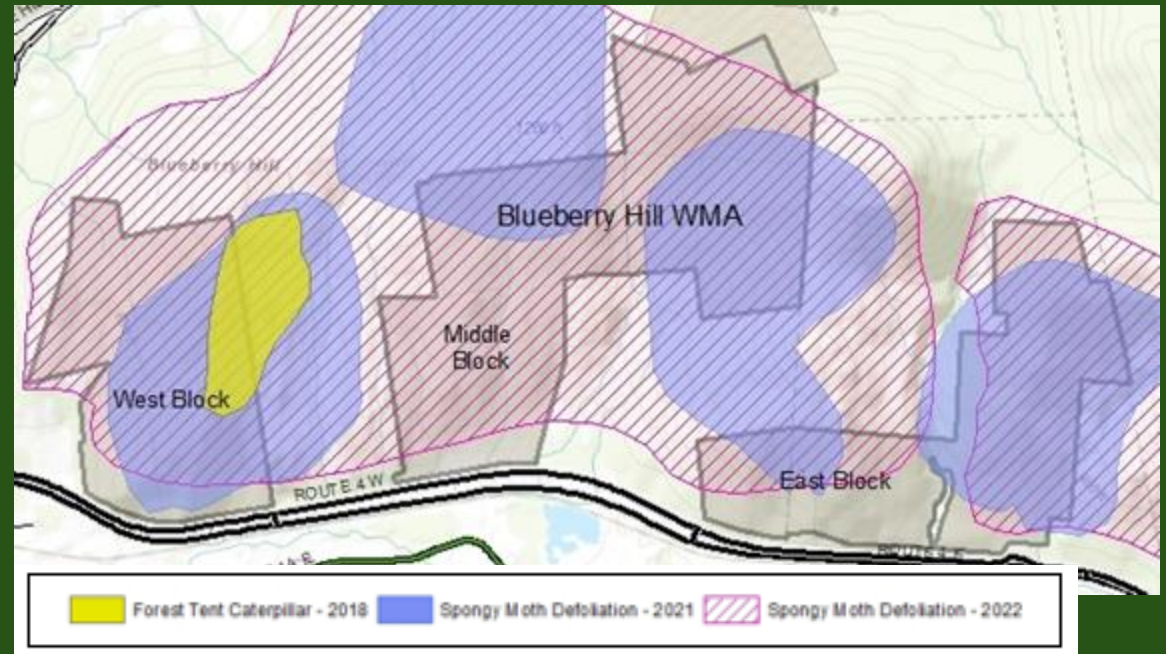
# FOREST HEALTH

## Monitoring

- Forest Tent Caterpillar Traps on Birdseye WMA
- Aerial surveys – statewide
- General Observations

## Detected Threats

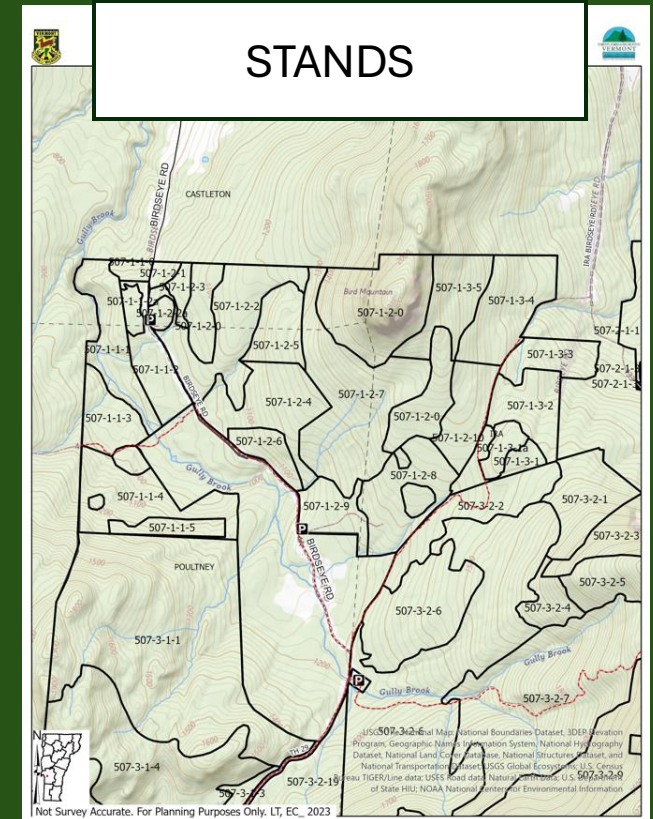
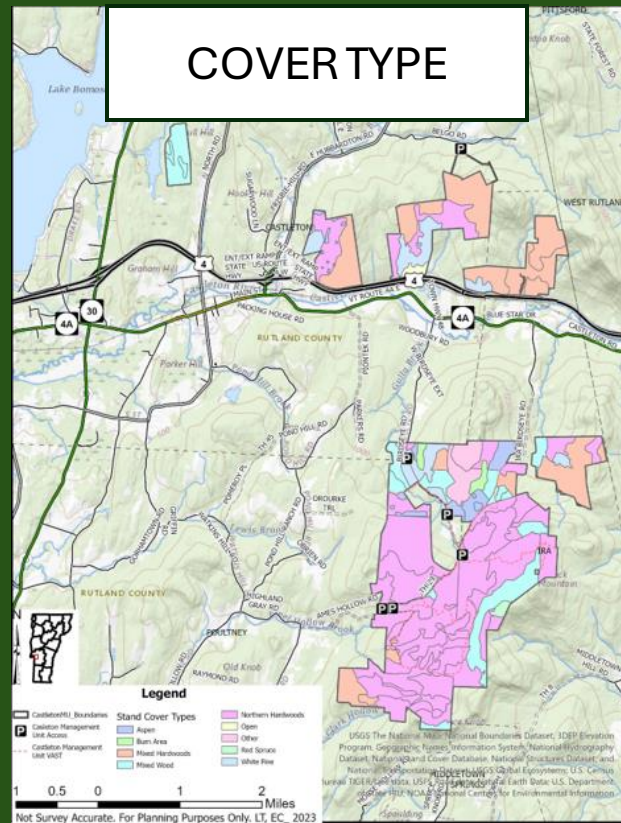
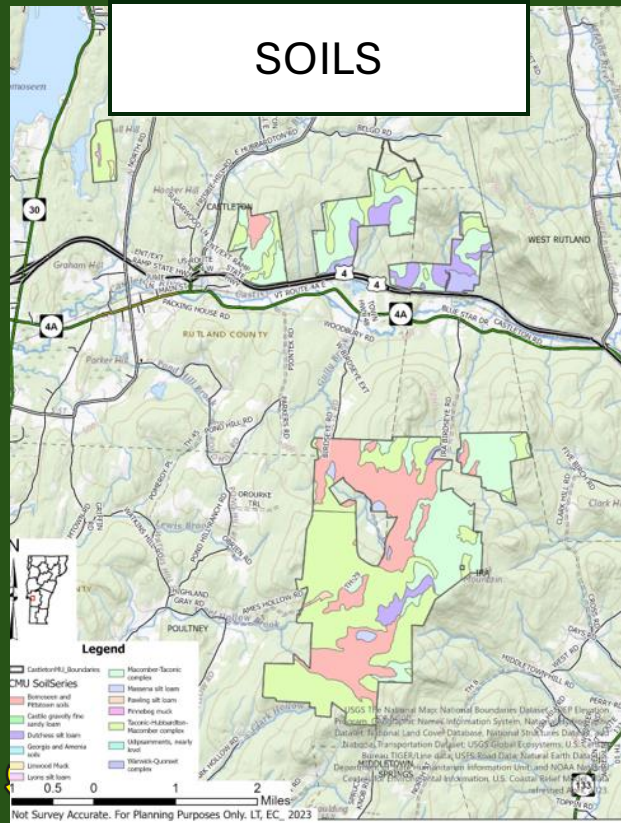
- Forest Tent Caterpillar
- Spongy moth defoliation
  - Dry, south-facing slopes
  - BBH (drought prone)
- Emerald Ash Borer
- Invasive plants



# ASSESSING THE FOREST RESOURCE

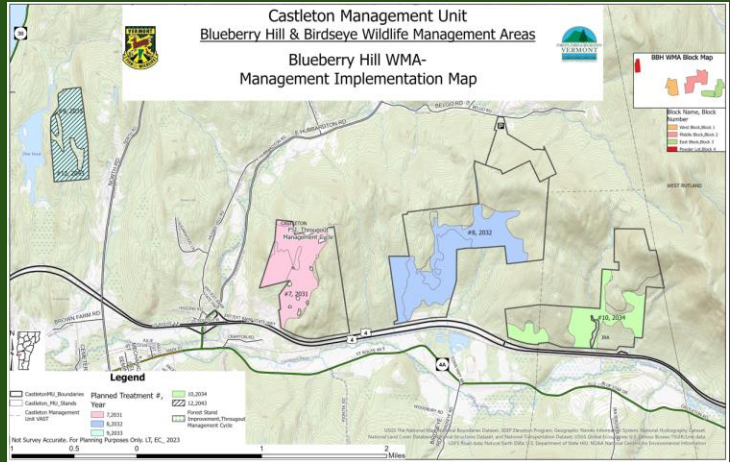
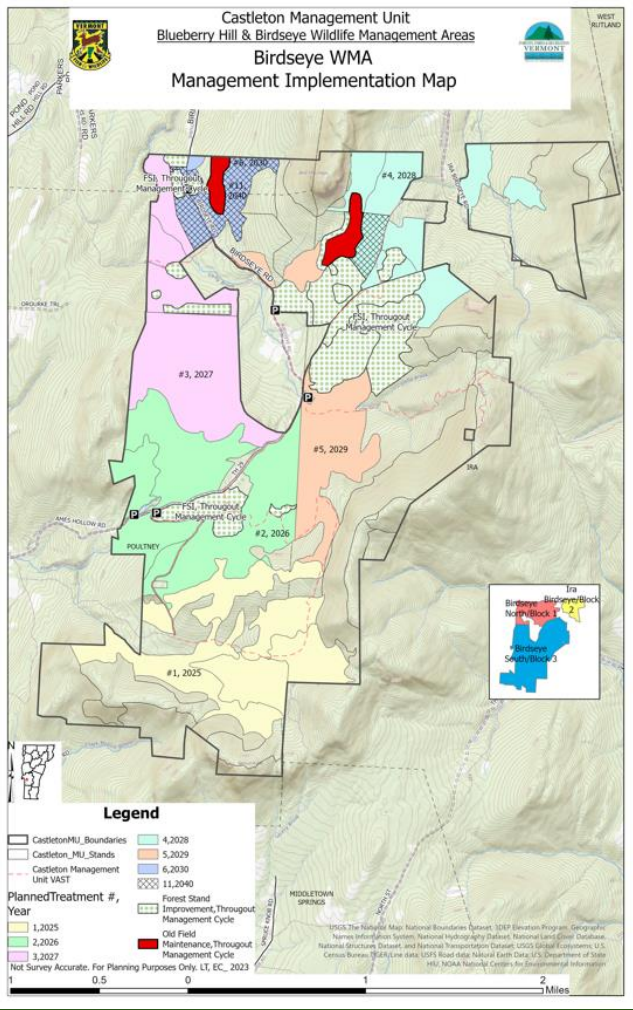
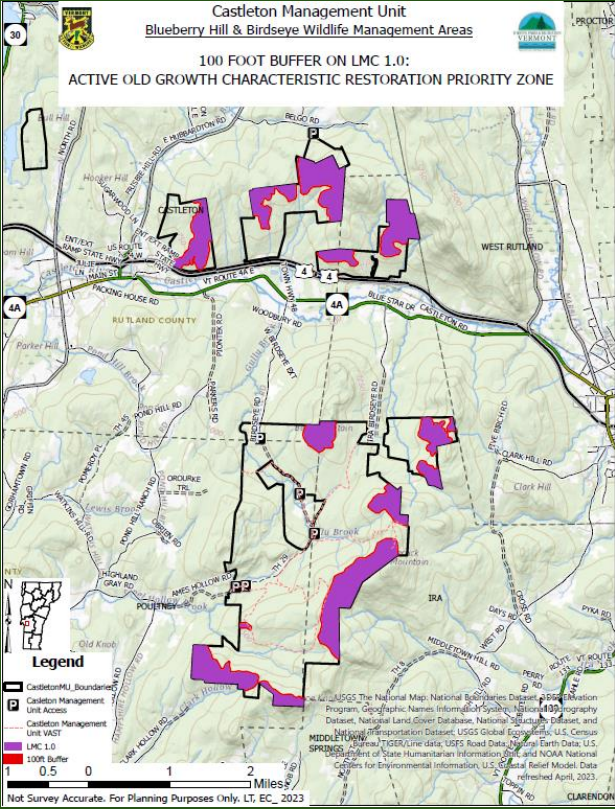
Entire unit assessed using combination of:

- Remote sensing and cover mapping
- Inventory of trees, and conditions
- District records and local knowledge





# FOREST RESOURCE – MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES & ACTIONS



# FOREST RESOURCE – MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES & ACTIONS

## Forest Management Timber Harvest Development

This is the treatment area as depicted in a past Long-Range Management Plan. This area was selected based on the goals of the plan and the general inventory and assessments done during the planning process.

A more detailed site-level inventory and review excluded the northeast portion from cutting, identified water features that would be avoided, and developed more detailed boundaries for cutting based on the conditions of the forest stands. The imagery underneath shows the forest cover prior to

Treatment types were selected based on the site-level inventory and goals of the plan and then implemented. Most trees were cut in the blue hatched area, the overstory of mature trees was removed to release the understory in the red hatched area and select individual trees or small clusters were cut in the yellow hatched area. The areas between weren't cut at all, and no cutting occurred

- Landing
- Main Skid Trails
- Buffered Water Features

**Treatment Type**

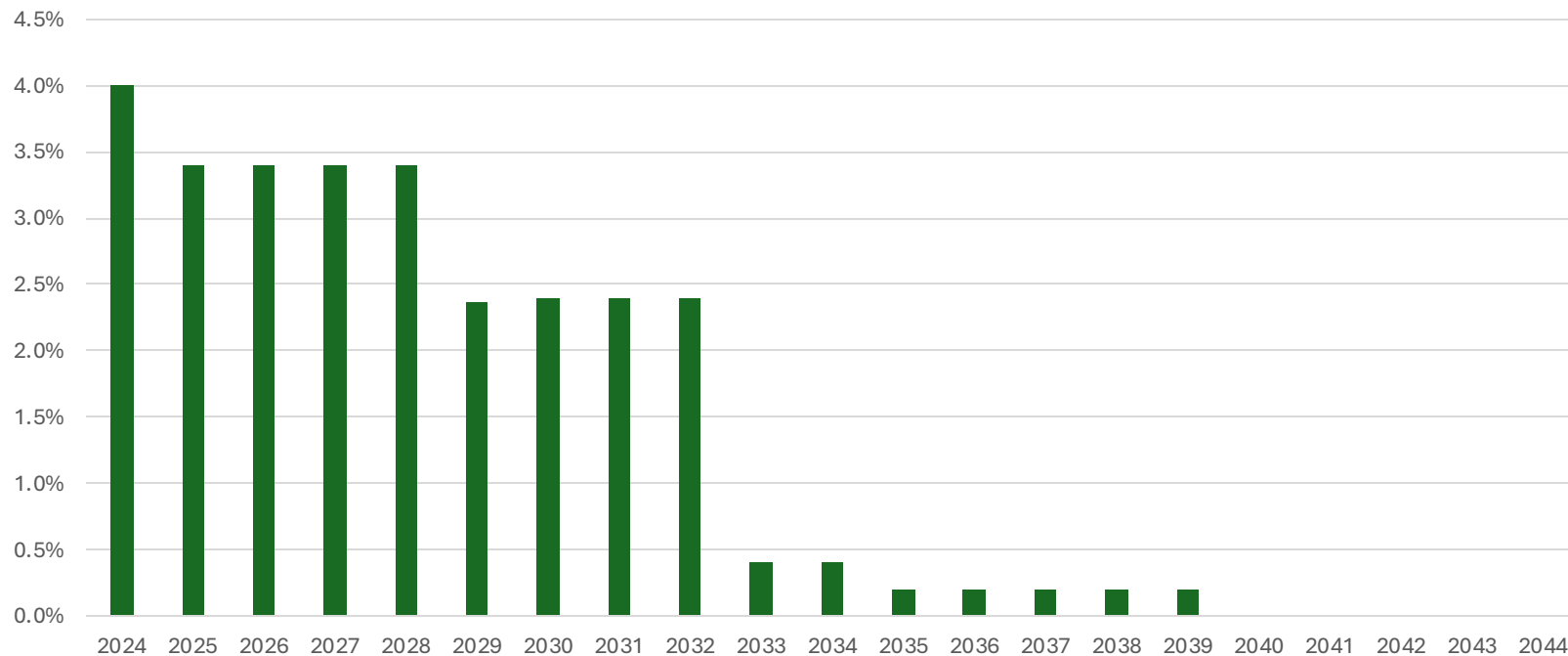
- Clearcut with Reserves- 15 acres
- Overstory Removal- 13 acres
- Single Tree/Group Selection- 53 acres



# FOREST RESOURCE – MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES & ACTIONS

## Young Forests

Timeline of Percentage of CMU Currently in Young Forest Throughout Management Cycle



[https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Golden-winged\\_Warbler/id](https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Golden-winged_Warbler/id)

[https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Ruffed\\_Grouse/photo-gallery/65615501](https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Ruffed_Grouse/photo-gallery/65615501)

[https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Wild\\_Turkey/photo-gallery/311368611](https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Wild_Turkey/photo-gallery/311368611)



# FOREST RESOURCE – MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES & ACTIONS

## Young Forests

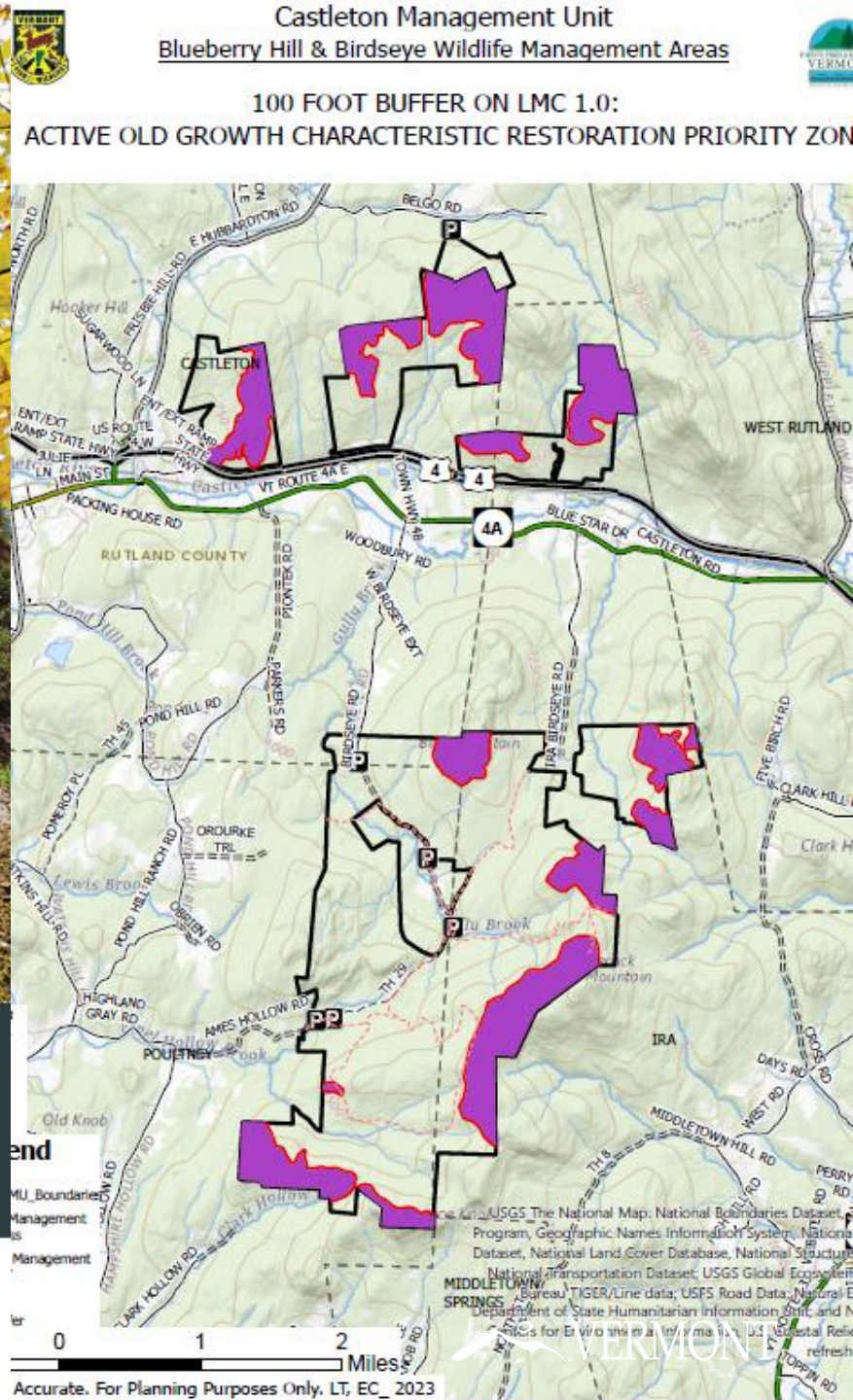


Old Forests

# FOREST RESOURCE – MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES & ACTIONS



**RESTORING OLD-GROWTH CHARACTERISTICS**  
to New England's and New York's Forests



# WATER RESOURCES & FISHERIES



# WATER RESOURCES & FISHERIES HIGHLIGHTS

- The CMU is located within both the Castleton and Poultney River watersheds.
- Gully Brook in Birdseye WMA is the most prominent stream in the CMU.
  - provides year-round habitat for a healthy, naturally reproducing, self-sustaining wild brook trout populations.
  - forested riparian zones continue to protect this cold-water resource.
- Wetlands are notably sparse – just 1% of CMU has mapped as wetland communities.
  - few areas of groundwater seepage, and several vernal pools are found in otherwise dry hilltops and in small benches on slopes.



# WATER RESOURCES & FISHERIES – MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES & ACTIONS

- Maintaining the CMU as extensively forested, with significant riparian areas and intact wetlands is a key strategy to reduce and mitigate flooding in the CMU and downstream to the Castleton River.
- Enhance resiliency of roads and trails to protect water quality, prevent soil erosion, and provide sustainable recreation and management.
  - Increasing the size and capacity of culverts, bridges, ditches, installing disconnection practices to avoid stream sedimentation, and closing or relocating unsustainable road segments are some of the practices that are being implemented.





# OTHER ASSESSMENTS

- Legal Constraints
  - Conservation Easements
- Historic/Cultural Resources
- Scenic Resources



# LAND MANAGEMENT CLASSIFICATION



# LAND MANAGEMENT CLASSIFICATIONS

1.0 Highly Sensitive Management - These are ***areas with uncommon or outstanding biological, ecological, scenic, cultural or historic significance***

2.0 Special Management - are described as ***areas where protection and/or enhancement of resources are an important consideration for management***

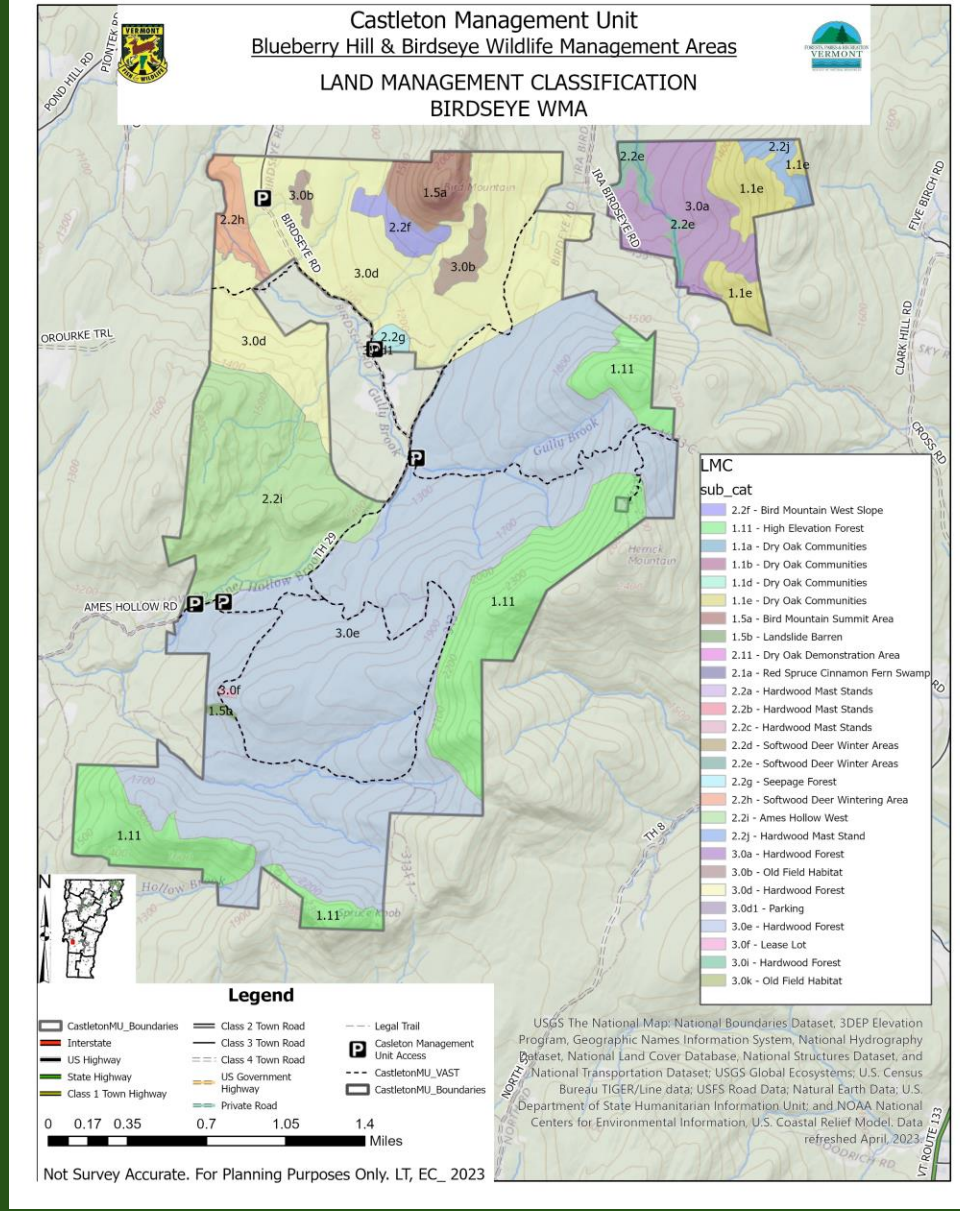
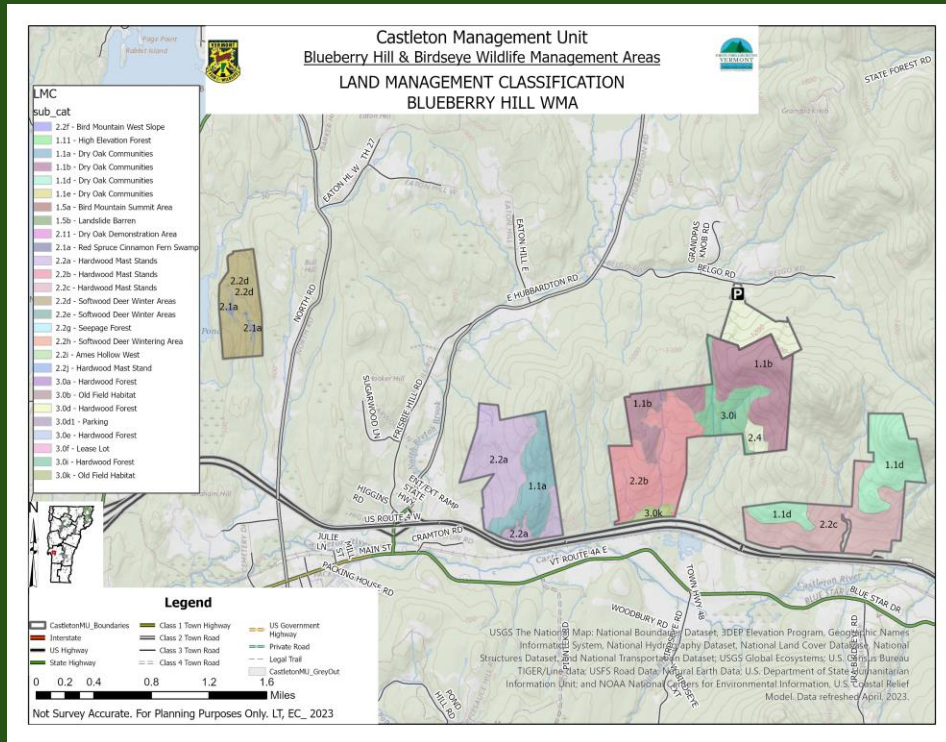
3.0 General Management – areas where ***dominant uses include vegetation management for timber and wildlife habitat, concentrated trail networks and dispersed recreation***

4.0 Intensive Management – areas where there is a ***high level of human activity and high intensity development*** on/or adjacent to state land



# LAND MANAGEMENT CLASSIFICATIONS

Highly Sensitive Management – 1,157 acres - 24%  
 Special Management – 1,251 acres - 26%  
 General Management – 2,548 acres - 50%  
 Intensive Management – 0%



# WHAT COMES NEXT?



# TIMELINE

- May 21: Draft plan made available
- June 12: Public meeting (recorded)
- June 12 – August 31: public comment period
- After August 31:
  - Review public comments
  - Make plan updates



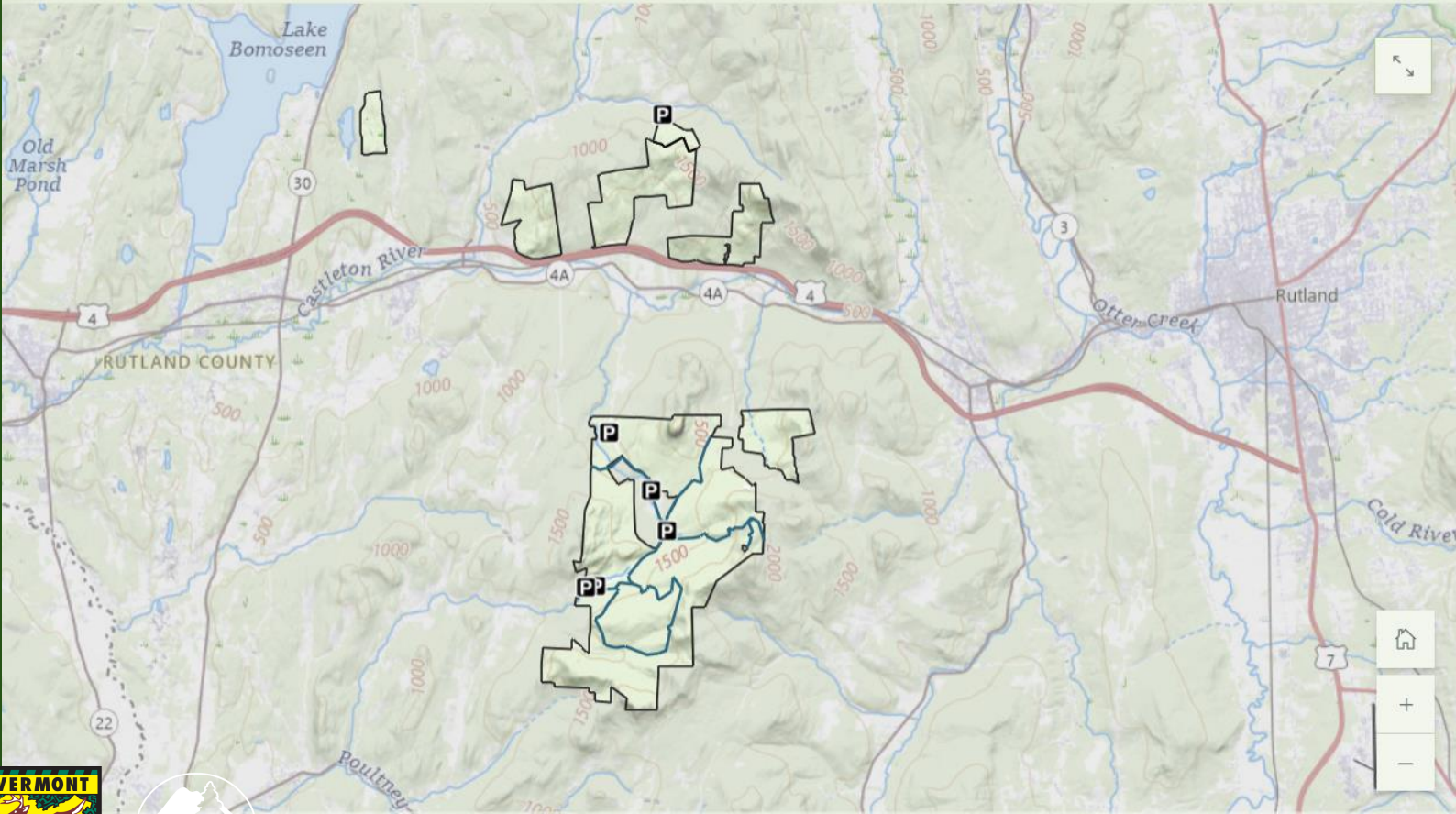
# TONIGHT'S MEETING IS JUST THE BEGINNING!



Castleton Management Unit



← Natural Communities Wildlife and Habitat Forest & Timber Resources Forest Health Water & Fisheries Resources Recreation Resources Roads and / →



## Recreation

The Castleton Management Unit is comprised of two Wildlife Management Areas, Birdseye and Blueberry Hill, that are owned by the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department. **WMAs are managed first and foremost for the conservation of fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats.** WMAs are also managed to provide the public with opportunities to hunt, fish, trap, view, and otherwise enjoy fish and wildlife and the beautiful places they're found. In keeping with these goals, there are activities that are not typically



# COMMENT DEADLINE: AUGUST 31, 2024

- In person tonight at the comment table
- Online comment form:  
<https://forms.office.com/g/TVG5m6THC5>
- By email: [ANRStateLandsPlanning@vermont.gov](mailto:ANRStateLandsPlanning@vermont.gov)
- By mail:

Department of Forests, Parks & Recreation  
c/o Lisa Thornton, Stewardship Forester  
271 North Main Street, Suite 215  
Rutland, Vermont 05701-2424

<https://fpr.vermont.gov/castleton-management-unit>





# WHAT DO WE DO WITH THE COMMENTS RECEIVED?

- We monitor all comments as they come in
- We respond to questions that would benefit from an answer to inform a comment
- After comment period closes, we read, consider and discuss all comments received
- We make updates to the LRMP to incorporate comments/suggestions that are:
  - Compatible with the other natural resource management goals of the property
  - Consistent with Department and Agency missions
- ***Include clear suggestions of changes you'd like to see to the plan!***



THANK YOU!  
QUESTIONS?



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# OPEN HOUSE

