



# Vermont Town Forest Recreation Planning

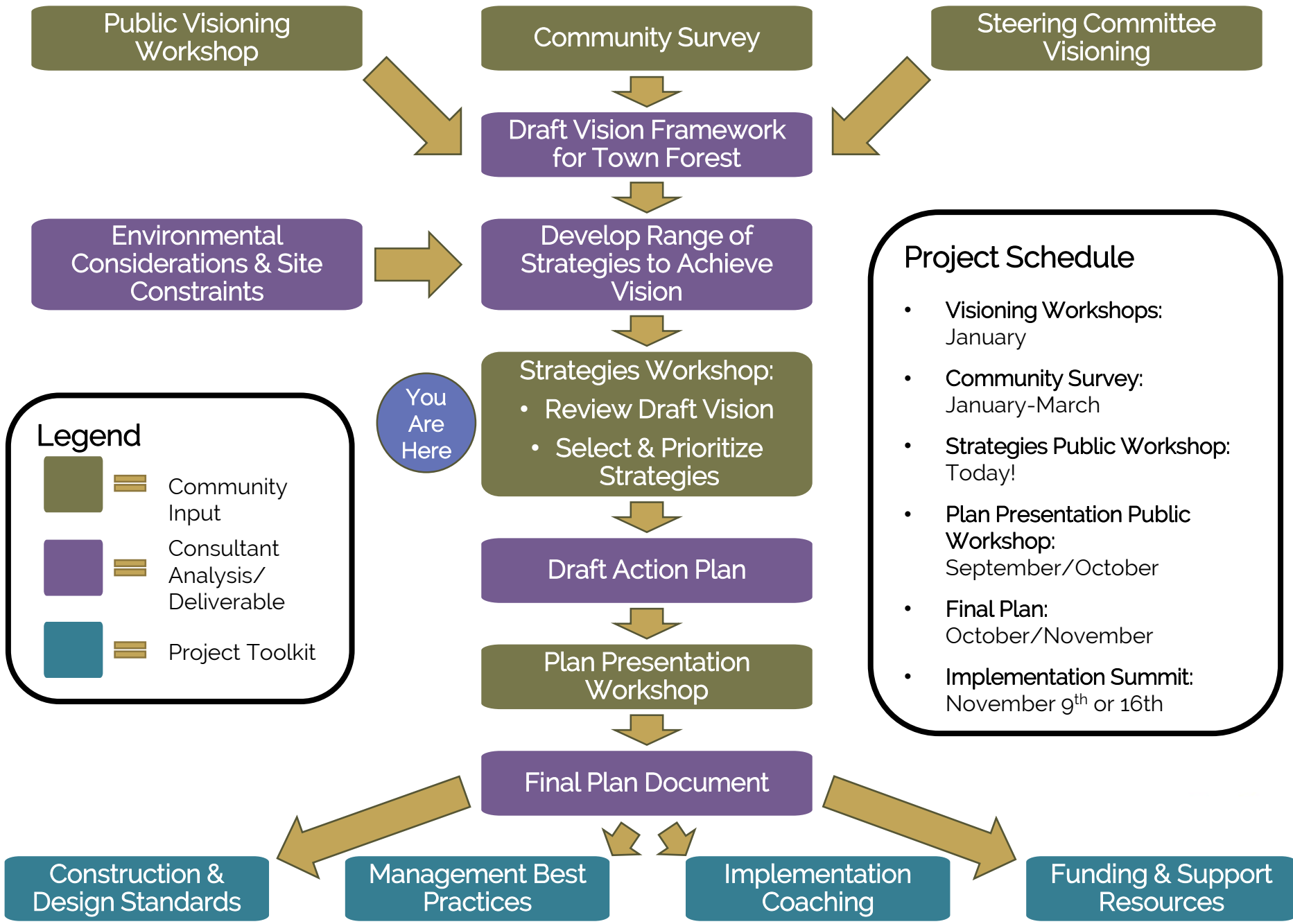
## July Committee Meeting

July 18, 2018  
Hartford, VT



# Project Process





# Project Progress

## Community Visioning & Draft Strategies

- Forest Walk
  - Identifying areas of ecological and recreational importance in the forest
- Steering Committee Meetings
  - Analysis of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats to the forest
- Public Workshop
  - January 23, 2018
  - 45-55 attendees
  - Questions about a vision, natural resources, activities, programs, and events in the forest
- Survey
  - 103 responses
  - Available both online and hard copy
  - Same questions as the public workshop



This information was taken into account in developing natural resource guidelines, vision framework, and strategies for the forest



# Today's Public Workshop

Informing the community and gathering input

- Presentation of management balance, key attributes, issues, and draft strategies to the community
- Prioritization of draft strategies with a dot exercise
- Mapping preferred locations for the various strategies
- Conversations with community members



# Refining Strategies

Highlighting the most important actions

- Public priority feedback will help us identify the top ten strategies
- Also will be informed by:
  - Prioritization input from the committee
  - Our professional analysis of the right mix of projects
- Top 10 strategies will get more treatment in the final plan document
  - A “playbook page” in the plan that drills down on the specifics of that strategy.
  - The strategies that don’t rise to the top will be included in the plan document, but will stay in the table format.



# Project Deliverables

Action Plans With Discrete, Clear and Implementable Strategies for Improvement of Recreation

- Action Plans will identify:
  - Project description
  - Action responsibility
  - Timing (immediate, short, medium, long-term)
  - Partners involved
  - Action or planning dependencies
  - Available support resources
  - Funding and grant opportunities
  - Magnitude of costs (\$-\$\$-\$\$\$-\$\$\$\$)



Everything you need to go after grants to implement these projects!



# Draft Plan Review

Review the full draft plan package

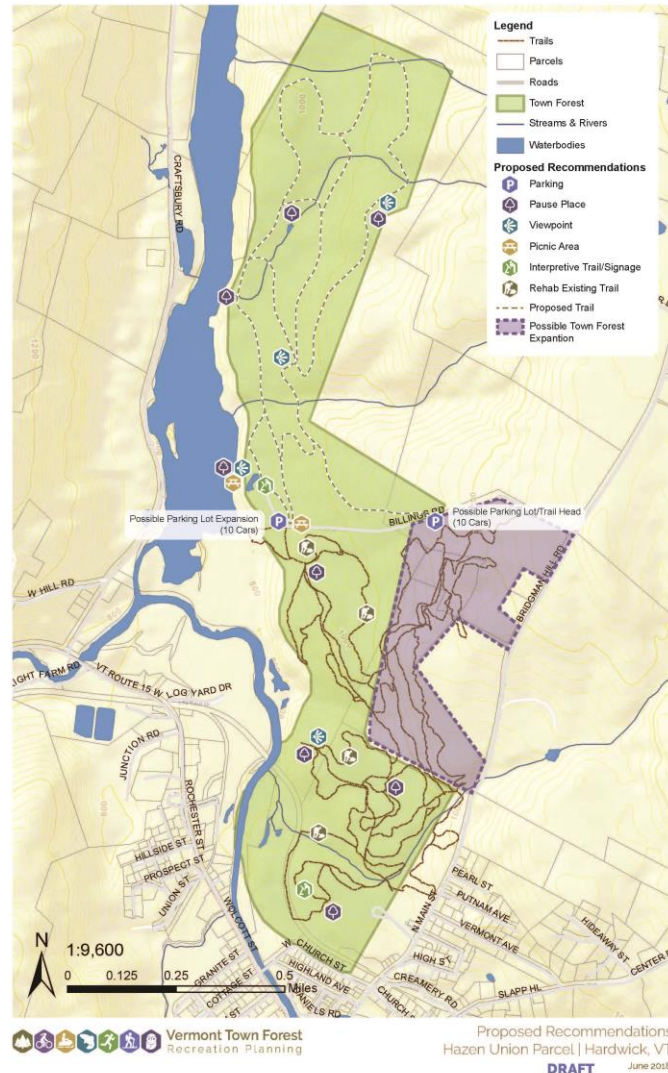
- Draft Plan Document
  1. Introduction and Community Profile
  2. Public Engagement Summary & Needs Assessment
  3. Town Forest Vision Framework
  4. Town Forest Action Plan
  5. Bubble Diagram Map
- Late August/September
- Review in committee meeting without consultants
- Consolidated memo of comments and feedback





# Project Deliverables

## Bubble Diagram Maps—Planning Before Design



# Plan Presentation

Presenting the complete plan with priorities to your decision-makers

- Late September/October
  - Committee to select date and inform us
- Format of presentation
  - Select Board
  - Conservation Commission
  - Town Forest Committee
  - Forest Walk
- Presentation by committee members
- UCF/FPR Support



# Implementation Summit

Gathering the necessary people together to implement projects

- Looking at Friday, November 9<sup>th</sup> or 16<sup>th</sup>
- At the summit, you can connect with
  - Trail builders
  - Grant administrators
  - State agencies
  - Plant nurseries
  - Foresters
  - Interpretive support



# Who will be there?

- Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)
- Recreational Trails Program (RTP)
- Agency of Commerce and Community Development (ACCD)
- Vermont Forest, Parks, and Recreation Department (FPR)
- Urban and Community Forestry (UCF)
- Vermont Youth Conservation Corps
- Upper Valley Trails Alliance
- Local Motion
- FPR Interpretive signage experts
- Maja Design
- Champlain Valley Native Plant Restoration Nursery
- And more!

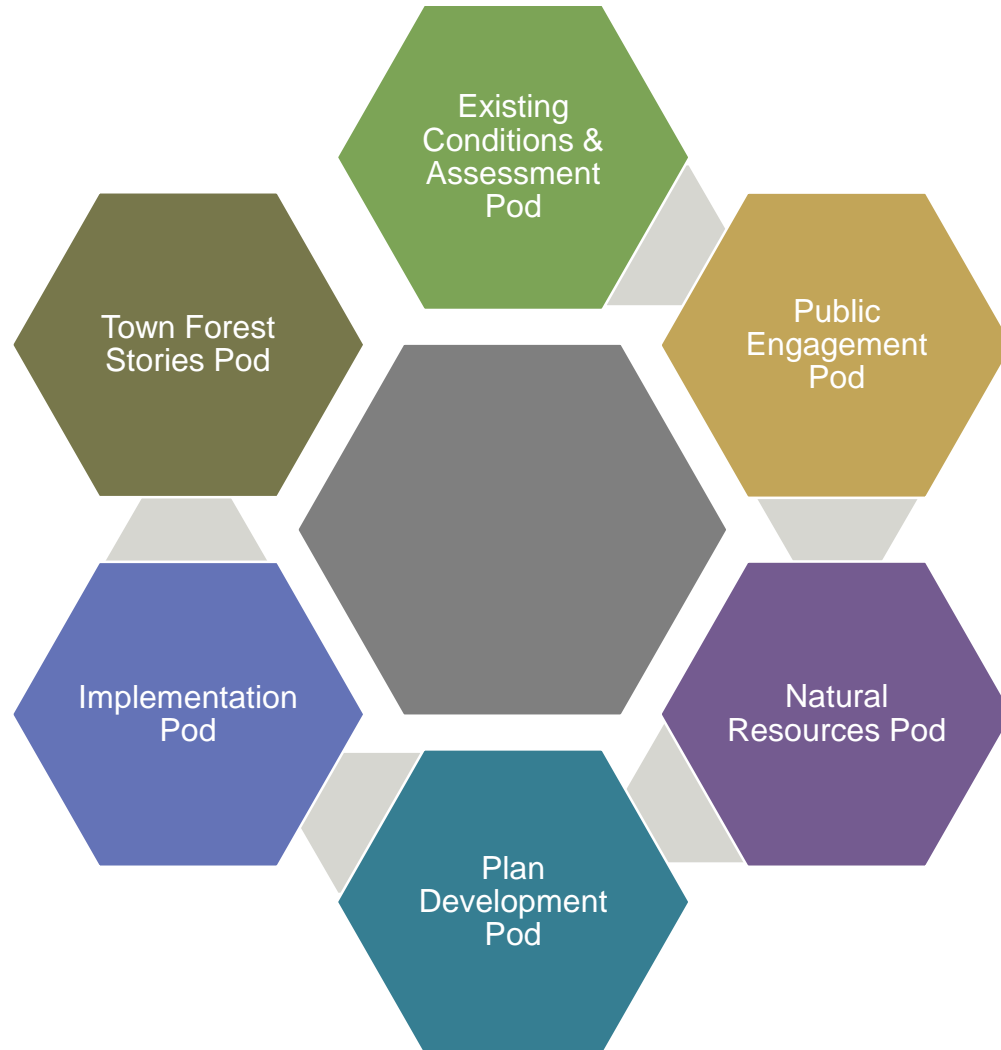


# Implementation Toolkit



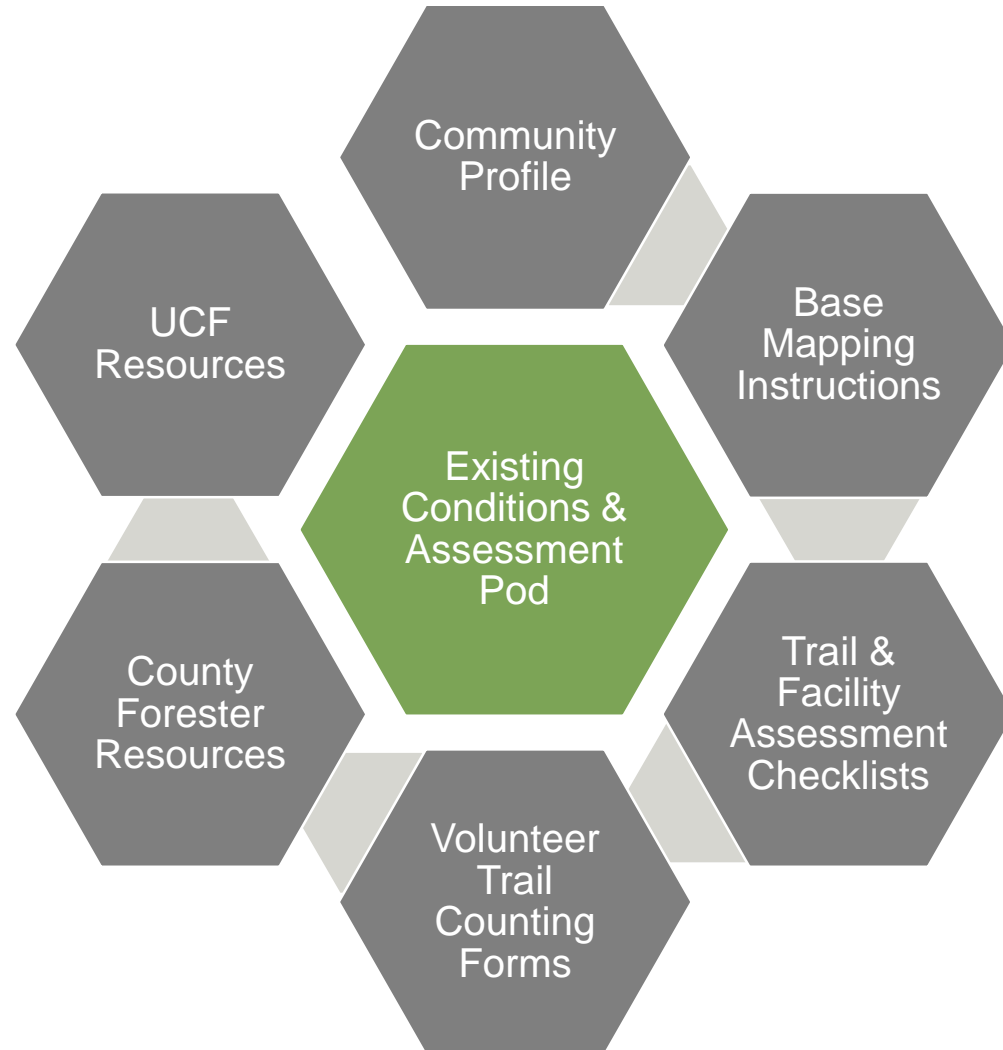
# Recreation Planning Toolkit

Everything Needed to Complete a Town Forest Recreation Plan



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# Natural Resources Guidelines

- Arrowwood Environmental draft guidelines sent to the committee in May
- Section about each natural community in the forest: vernal pools, floodplain forests, wetlands, deer wintering areas, etc.
- For each, there's background information, explanation of its importance, general management guidelines, regulatory issues, links to additional resources and guidelines, and a matrix of compatible activities.

## Vernal Pools

### What are they?

Vernal Pools are seasonally flooded forested wetlands that hold water in the spring and typically dry out by late summer. They typically have six characteristics: 1) they occur in a forested matrix (though there are exceptions to this); 2) they have a seasonal hydrology; 3) they are isolated from surface waters; 4) they are small; 5) they lack fish, and 6) they have vernal pool indicator species present. Vernal pool indicator species are those species that are dependent on these habitats (see below).



### Why are they important?

Vernal Pools provided critical habitat for a wide variety of amphibians and invertebrates including indicator species such as wood frogs, spotted salamanders, blue-spotted salamanders, Jefferson salamanders, fairy shrimp and fingernail clams. Unlike other amphibians in the region, the eggs of these indicator species do not have any defenses against predation by fish; they are therefore reliant on the fishless aquatic habitat of Vernal Pools.

### General Management Guidelines

The species of amphibians that breed in these pools spend most of their adult lives in the forests which surround the pools. For this reason, the health and functioning of a vernal pool is intimately linked with the condition of the upland forest surrounding the pool. This fact, along with the seasonal hydrology of the pools are critical to understanding proper management of these resources.

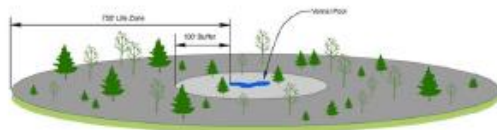


Figure 1. Vernal Pool management zones

Activity	Compatibility in Wetland*	Compatibility in Buffer*	Comments (seasonal restrictions, buffers, mgmt.)
Hiking Trails	Maybe	Y	Small, single track hiking trails that do not involve tree clearing may be compatible in the wetland buffer. Care should be taken to not disrupt local hydrology near the wetland. Proper trail construction to prevent soil erosion is crucial. Poorly constructed trails can divert or concentrate drainage patterns resulting in altered hydrology.
Biking Trails	Maybe	Y	See comments for Hiking Trails
X-C Ski Trails	Maybe	Maybe	Single track cross country ski trails may be compatible, see comments for hiking trails. Wider groomed ski trails that involve clearing may or may not be compatible in the wetland buffer, depending on the nature of the wetland and the degree of proposed impacts.
ATV trails	N	N	Creation and use of ATV trails is generally not compatible in wetlands or wetland buffers. ATV traffic has the potential for creating soil disturbance and disrupting local hydrology. ATV traffic has numerous, well documented, negative impacts on many wetland functions and values.
Snowmobile Trails	N	N	Wide, groomed snowmobile trails that involve clearing may not be compatible in the wetland buffer, depending on the nature of the wetland and the degree of proposed impacts.
New Access Roads	N	N	Impacts to wetlands and wetland buffers from new roads should be avoided.
Structures/Buildings	N	N	Impacts to wetlands and wetland buffers from new buildings should be avoided.
Parking Lots	N	N	Impacts to wetlands and wetland buffers from parking lots should be avoided.
Forestry/Logging	N	Y	While certain silvicultural activities are an allowed use in wetlands and wetland buffers, it can be very difficult to conduct these without causing significant negative impacts to the wetland system. Low impact logging in wetland buffers is typically more easily accomplished. See links to guidelines in the Resources section.
Camping	N	Y	Limited, low impact camping may be appropriate in a wetland buffer, depending on the nature and extent of the impact and the characteristics of the wetland.
Sugaring	N	Y	Sugaring practices are mostly compatible in the wetland buffer.
Extraction (gravel, sand)	N	N	Extraction is not compatible.



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# Hartford's Toolkit Resources

## Implementation resources in the toolkit

- Trailhead Kiosk Volunteer Designs
- Parking Considerations Toolkit
- Sustainable Trail Standards
- Land Conservation and Recreational Access Toolkit
- Trail Markers and Wayfinding Toolkit
- Vtrans Signage Program
- Trail assessment forms
- Natural Resource Guidance Toolkit
- Pause Places Toolkit
- Bench Volunteer Designs
- Interpretation Guidance Toolkit
- Sustainable facility standards
- Programming Partnerships Toolkit
- Story Walk Toolkit
- Mapping and Promotion Toolkit
- Trail Friendly Business Toolkit
- Volunteer Development and Recruitment Toolkit
- Model Proposal Process
- Natural Resource Guidance Toolkit
- Vermont Town Forest Stewardship Guide
- Management Zones Toolkit



# Strategies



# Parking and Access Strategies

Strategy or Action	Description	Relative Cost (\$-\$-\$\$\$-\$\$\$\$\$)	Toolkit & Support Resources
<b>1. Parking &amp; Access</b>			
Vehicle wayfinding signage	Add vehicle wayfinding signage from villages to the forest.	\$\$	-Trail Markers and Wayfinding Toolkit -Vtrans Signage Program





# Trails Strategies

Strategy or Action	Description	Relative Cost (\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$)	Toolkit & Support Resources
<b>2. Trails</b>			
Existing trail conditions assessment and review	Study existing trails, especially those following former logging roads and unsanctioned trails, and evaluate for potential ecological harm and mitigate the site through necessary means. Adopt, reroute, and decommission as appropriate	\$	-Trail assessment forms -Natural Resource Guidance Toolkit -Sustainable Trail Standards
Redesign existing trail system	Based on the results of the existing trail conditions assessment and review, reroute, redesign, or replace trails to enhance experiences for all user groups, improve drainage, and limit erosion. Ensure system includes a mix of traditional footpaths and "bike-optimized" multi-use natural surface trails to provide desired experiences.	\$\$-\$\$\$	-Trail assessment forms -Natural Resource Guidance Toolkit -Sustainable Trail Standards
Hartford Trails Collaborative	Convene mountain bikers, hikers, ATVers and other user groups to begin an on-going dialogue around trails and to establish a framework for collaboration in the future. Build upon partnerships with Upper Valley Trail Alliance (UVTA).	\$	-Volunteer Development and Recruitment Toolkit
Trail markers and signage	Add signage in the forest for wayfinding, information, and trail etiquette. Ensure it communicates town ownership and/or conservation commission management.	\$\$	-Trail Markers and Wayfinding Toolkit -Interpretation Guidance Toolkit



# Other Facilities and Structures Strategies

Strategy or Action	Description	Relative Cost (\$-\$\$-\$\$\$-\$\$\$\$)	Toolkit & Support Resources
<b>3. Other Facilities and Structures</b>			
Pause Places	Develop a series of "Pause Places" or "mini-destinations" along the trail system. These may be a rest stop, an informational stop, or both. All pause places should include a bench or appropriate rocks/boulders for seating and should capitalize on locations with the potential for views, sunsets, rest, and rejuvenation. Opportunities for natural and historical interpretation should also be explored. Some could also include public art or a 'little free library.'	\$\$	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Pause Places Toolkit</li> <li>-Bench Volunteer Designs</li> <li>-Interpretation Guidance Toolkit</li> </ul>
Create and maintain locations for birding and viewing wildlife	Build more locations to sit and observe wildlife. Benches are encouraged in a variety of locations. Coordinate with Pause Places. Caution should be taken to not changing the character of the forest.	\$	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Pause Places Toolkit</li> <li>-Bench Volunteer Designs</li> <li>-Interpretation Guidance Toolkit</li> </ul>



# Education & Programs Strategies

Strategy or Action	Description	Relative Cost (\$-\$-\$\$\$\$- \$\$\$\$)	Toolkit & Support Resources
<b>4. Education &amp; Programs</b>			
Develop a trail maintenance program	Work with Hartford Career & Tech Center on a trail maintenance program. School groups or Boy Scouts are other possible maintenance groups. Coordinate with trails collaborative effort. Seek participation from all five villages.	\$	-Volunteer Development and Recruitment Toolkit -Programming Partnerships Toolkit
Host school group programs in the forest	Bring students to the forest for ecology programs, recreation programs, etc. Consider a high school mountain biking team.	\$	-Programming Partnerships Toolkit
Ecology tours	Offer ecology tours (birdwatching, plant identification, etc.) for children and adults.	\$	-Programming Partnerships Toolkit
Lessons, skills camps, and clinics	Offer lessons, skills camps, and clinics for trail running and mountain biking.	\$	-Programming Partnerships Toolkit
Species identification lists	Bird, plant and mammal species identification checklists could be developed and made available at the trailhead kiosk. Should also be utilized in education experiences.	\$	-Programming Partnerships Toolkit
Story Walk	A Story Walk is an innovative and delightful way for children — and adults! — to enjoy reading and the outdoors at the same time. Laminated pages from a children’s book are attached to wooden stakes, which are installed along an outdoor path. As you stroll down the trail, you’re directed to the next page in the story.	\$\$	-Story Walk Toolkit



# Events Strategies

Strategy or Action	Description	Relative Cost (\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$)	Toolkit & Support Resources
5. Events			
Races in the forest	Hold small-scale, local mountain bike, trail running or Nordic races in the forest.	\$	-Programming Partnerships Toolkit





# Administrative Actions Strategies

Strategy or Action	Description	Relative Cost (\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$-\$)	Toolkit & Support Resources
<b>7. Administrative Actions</b>			
Adopt formal process for proposing and reviewing new trails and facilities	Process will include ecological concerns and will provide all stakeholders and user groups an opportunity to propose new trails and facilities.	\$	-Model Proposal Process -Natural Resource Guidance Toolkit
Management zones	Revise management zones of the management plan to consider and plan for all uses. Designate areas more suitable for wildlife habitat, hunting, or mountain biking, for example.	\$	-Management Zones Toolkit
Partner with Hartford Parks and Recreation	Partner with Hartford Parks and Recreation to utilize the Town Forest for Town recreation programs and to benefit from staff expertise.	\$	-Programming Partnerships Toolkit



# Questions & Discussion



Thank You!!!!!!

