

TWO RIVERS-OTTAUQUECHEE REGIONAL COMMISSION

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February 2012

Spotlight on Forest Stewardship Planning

Four Percent Loss of Forestland Across Vermont; Two Rivers Region Follows Suit

According to an in-depth state-wide study, the number of parcels containing more than fifty acres of ‘woodland’ (undeveloped land with relatively intact forest) has decreased in Vermont by four percent (4%) between 2003 and 2009.* This percentage of loss might seem insignificant at first; however, the changes wrought over time will be monumental if unchecked. While the Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee region has many conserved lands, most towns are still undergoing slow, but steady parcelization (in which a parcel is subdivided into smaller lots) and fragmentation (in which infrastructure, such as roads, interrupt previously open space). Consider the following:

Percent of Loss in Parcels Greater Than 50 Acres Between 2003 and 2009*

| Percentage | TRORC Towns |
|------------|--|
| 0% | Bridgewater, Fairlee, Hartland, Pomfret, Rochester, Stockbridge, Topsham, Woodstock |
| 1% | Barnard, Bethel, Bradford, Braintree, Corinth, Granville, Norwich, Pittsfield, Plymouth, Sharon, Strafford, Thetford |
| 2% | Chelsea, Hancock, Newbury, West Fairlee |
| 3% or more | Brookfield, Hartford, Randolph, Royalton, Tunbridge, Vershire |

TRORC’s Forest Stewardship Committee: Working to Enhance Regional Forest Stewardship

As part of a grant through the U.S. Forest Service, TRORC has convened a forest stewardship committee to examine threats to forests in the Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee region and to brainstorm strategies to maintain or enhance them. The Committee is writing a report to summarize their findings, and will develop recommended town plan and zoning language by working with staff at the Vermont Natural Resources Council and other Regional Planning Commissions. Ultimately, TRORC will develop a ‘forest consultation packet’ that will be sent to planning commissions in municipalities with town plans that will expire soon. In addition to the packet, TRORC staff will be available to assist in developing model forest related policies if or when a municipality requests such help in revising their town plan.

Committee members include...

private landowners, private foresters and timber harvesters, the Windsor County Forester, members of local Conservation Commissions and other natural resources groups and TRORC Staff.

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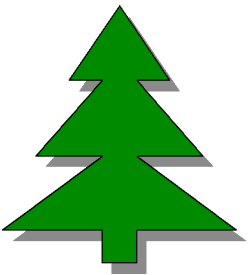
*Vermont Family Forests & Vermont Natural Resources Council: “Informing Land Use Planning and Forestland Conservation Through Subdivision and Parcelization Trend Information” “Town Data.” Website: <http://svr3.acornhost.com/~vnrccorg/cgi-bin/town2.cgi?ALLTOWNS>.



The Forest Based Economy Is Larger Than You Think...

Forest resources account for several major employers in the TRO region, including Copeland Furniture in Bradford and Pompanoosuc Mills Corporation in Thetford (both of which employ between 100 and 250 people). Additionally, many residents of the Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee region are employed in pursuits that relate to logging, sawmills, manufacture of furniture, construction that uses local wood, production of maple syrup, Christmas tree farming, and more. Indirectly, our residents are indebted to the forestlands for jobs that rely on tourism, including positions at ski resorts (downhill and cross country), on state lands (think hiking or camping), at hotels and bed and breakfasts, inns, restaurants and gift shops.

In a 2007 report entitled “The Economic Importance and Wood Flows from Vermont’s Forests,” the Northeast State Foresters Association estimates



that state-wide, 6,379 Vermonters were employed in forest-based manufacturing alone, and approximately 13,000 people total were employed in all forest related professions (manufacturing, tourism, and recreation).

Q: Why should you care about the loss of forestland in the TRO region?

A: Because parcelization and fragmentation...

- 1. Harm the forest industry** by decreasing the number of parcels available for timber harvesting (usually, a lot must be fifty acres or greater in size to be considered ‘economically viable’). With less land available for forestry purposes, there is a greater incentive to subdivide or sell the land for development. Additionally, it means fewer forest-related jobs for our residents.
- 2. Decrease wildlife habitat and interrupt wildlife corridors** (connected areas) which are necessary for many species to maintain a stable population.
- 3. Degrade the ‘working landscape’ which Vermonters and tourists alike have come to treasure.** If we continue to develop in open spaces, the view in Vermont will soon look just like that of any other state; our unique image will be lost and so will our tourism-based jobs and revenue.

News & Updates

Congratulations To Our Three Towns...

...that were awarded VTrans Transportation Enhancement grants: a pedestrian safety project along VT12 in Bethel, a pedestrian scoping study in Hartland Three Corners, and a path scoping study along US5 south of VT10 in Norwich.

Transportation Enhancements (TE) are awarded for 12 categories offering communities the opportunity to expand transportation choices. Activities such as safe bicycle and pedestrian facilities, scenic routes, beautification, historic restoration and other investments increase opportunities for economic activity, recreation, accessibility, and safety for everyone beyond traditional highway programs.

The 2013 program will be announced in April 2012, with applications due in August 2012.

Annual Transportation Project Prioritization

As part of our annual transportation project prioritization process, we work with the TRORC Transportation Advisory Committee and municipalities to examine our list of VTrans transportation projects and rank them based on regional project criteria. Eighty percent (80%) of the decision making process at VTrans is based on engineering criteria and other technical factors, and twenty (20%) is based on input from the Regional Planning Commissions concerning economic development, historic resources, etc. We’ve sent the draft list of 40 regional projects to our member towns, and comments will be accepted until March 16. Please contact Rita Seto at rseto@trorc.org for inquiries.

Community Recovery Partnership Meetings

To help municipalities with their long-term Irene recovery challenges, state officials have been meeting with the residents and members of municipal government in those towns that were hardest hit by Tropical Storm Irene.



Governor Shumlin at 1/17 meeting.

On January 17, a meeting took place at the Vermont Independent School of the Arts in Sharon to engage people from Sharon, Royalton, Randolph, and Bethel in a discussion of issues such as housing, transportation, floodplain zoning, and more.

Governor Peter Shumlin began the meeting and was flanked by several state officials (from the Agencies of Commerce & Community Development, Human Services, Natural Resources, Transportation, and Vermont Emergency Management), as well as staff from TRORC and the Green Mountain Economic Development Corporation.

Another Community Recovery Partnership meeting in this region was held on January 30th for the towns of Pittsfield, Rochester, Stockbridge, Hancock, and Granville. A meeting will also be held on February 9th at the Bridgewater Village School for the towns of Bridgewater, Woodstock, Barnard, Plymouth and Reading.

Mitigation Measures for Roads

All towns affected by Irene are reminded that they should always request hazard mitigation (also known as 406 mitigation) in project worksheets for permanent repairs (Category C) being funded by FEMA Public Assistance money. It is easy to skip this step in the hurry to rebuild, but this is an important opportunity to rebuild in a more robust way to avoid future damages. If an applicant's FEMA Project Specialist states that no Section 406 is eligible, they should request assistance from the FEMA Public Assistance Coordinator (PAC) and a FEMA hazard mitigation specialist. For any towns with questions on this matter, please contact Rita Seto (rseto@trorc.org).

More Bang For Your Cleanup Buck!

Local officials contemplating post-Irene cleanup will get more bang for their buck hiring Vermont Youth Conservation Corps (VYCC) crews for debris removal, site restoration, fish and wildlife habitat reclamation, and other labor-intensive work. An added bonus is summer employment and job training for local youth.

Sharon Selectboard Chairman Brad Atwood explains: "We've used VYCC on previous conservation projects... The crews do great work and they provide excellent on-site supervising and project management."

For information about hiring a VYCC crew to work on projects in your town, contact Keegan Tierney at 802-434-3969 ext. 141.

Never Again Thanks to Hazard Mitigation

When a building is damaged by flooding, purchase of the property to ensure that it is never built upon again is sometimes the best way to avoid a future tragedy. The Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) provides such an opportunity. Currently, TRORC is working with 12 towns to purchase 64 properties outright, to elevate three homes, and to relocate another further away from the river. Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC) has also been tasked by the state to assist with these applications.

Typically, this grant program pays 75% of the costs that the town bears in 'buying out' a landowner and returning the property to a natural state, while the landowner assumes the other 25% of the costs. However, TRORC will develop a regional application for 'matching funds' from the State which would help cover most, if not all, of the 25% portion.

For more information on this effort, contact Kevin Geiger (kgeiger@trorc.org).



Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission
128 King Farm Rd
Woodstock, VT 05091

The Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission

FY 2012 TRORC Representatives

Barnard - Gerald Fredrickson, Gerry Botha (Alt.)
Bethel - Yaroslav Stanchak, Olena Stanchak (Alt.)
Bradford - Nancy Jones, Bobette Scribner (Alt.)
Braintree - Mark Bannon
Bridgewater - Nelson Lee, Jr., Norman Martin, II (Alt.)
Brookfield - Dee Montie
Chelsea - Carl Pepperman, Cherylanne Linaris (Alt.)
Corinth - Frank Roderick
Fairlee - Ken Gulick
Granville - No representative
Hancock - No representative
Hartford - Lori Hirshfield
Hartland - Richard Waddell, Charles Jeffries (Alt.)
Newbury - Larry Scott, Scott Labun (Alt.)
Norwich - Jamie Hess, Jeff Goodrich (Alt.)
Pittsfield - Jerry Drugonis
Plymouth - Jim Allen
Pomfret - William Emmons
Randolph - Del Thompson, Ken Hafner (Alt.)
Rochester - Larry Straus
Royalton - David Brandau, Walter Hastings (Alt.)
Sharon - Paul Haskell, Deborah Jones (Alt.)
Stockbridge - Mark Doughty, Bill Edgerton (Alt.)
Strafford - Steve Campbell, Guy Denechaud (Alt.)
Thetford - Tara Bamford, Jim Masland (Alt.)
Topsham - Thomas Flannigan
Tunbridge - Michael Sacca
Vershire - Bill Baylis
West Fairlee - Skip Brown
Woodstock - Charles Wilson
Members-At-Large: - Christine Walker (UVL-SRPC)
Jennifer Colby (Agricultural Advisor)

Our Mission

Our primary goals are to advocate for the needs of our member towns, and to articulate a vision for building a thriving regional economy while enhancing the region's quality of life. The Commission's staff provides technical services to local, state and federal levels of government and to the Region's non-profits and businesses.

Staff Members

Pete Fellows, CFM - GIS Manager
Mapping, Data Collector
Kevin W. Geiger, AICP, CFM - Senior Planner
Emergency Mgmt, Sustainable Planning
Dee Gish - Finance Manager
Administration, Grants Management
Peter G. Gregory, AICP - Executive Director
Policy Development, Advocacy
Brian Hamlin - Temporary Employee
Transportation & Energy Support
Loralee Morrow, LEED AP - Regional Planner
Economic & Sustainable Development
Chris Sargent, AICP - Senior Planner
Energy & Town Planning
Rita Seto, AICP - Senior Planner
Transportation & Emergency Mgmt
Emma Zavez - Planner
Energy, Forest Stewardship, Broadband

Upcoming Events

- 2/9** Community Recovery Partnership Meeting at the Bridgewater Village School from 3-6 PM for residents and municipal officials from Bridgewater, Woodstock, Barnard, Hartford, Plymouth, and Reading.
- 2/9** TAC Meeting at Woodstock Town Hall from 9:30-11:30 AM
- 2/16** LEPC #12 meeting at the Royalton Barracks from 6-8 PM
- 2/16** Vermont Communities in a Digital Age Conference at Vermont Technical College (Randolph) from 9 AM - 4:30 PM.
See www.vermontworkshop.org for more information.

For more information, please visit:
www.trorc.org/events.html

To receive a digital copy of this newsletter, please e-mail:
dgish@trorc.org