

## **Continued Success in the Northeastern Area Community Forest Program**

*Neal Bungard, U.S. Forest Service, Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry*

In 2015, I wrote about the Community Forest Program (CFP) in the [Summer Edition of the Forest Matters Newsletter](#). In a continuing effort to share the stories of successful CFP efforts across the Northeast and Midwest, it seemed appropriate to give an update of all the fantastic projects that have occurred in the 3 short years since then.

As of the summer of 2015, six projects had used CFP funds to acquire a total of 2,429 acres of new or expanded community forest land. More detailed stories about some of those first six projects have been published in past issues of *Forest Matters*, including the [Lincoln Community Forest](#) in Wisconsin, [Barre Town Forest](#) in Vermont, [Cooley-Jericho Community Forest](#) in New Hampshire, and the [Rensselaer Plateau Community Forest](#) in New York. As of the summer of 2018, CFP accomplishments in the 20 States served by the Northeastern Area now total 21 projects and 7,095 acres of new or expanded community forest in seven States.

With these 15 additional projects now completed in the Northeast and Midwest, there is an even greater variety of purposes, uses, and stories to share about these successful efforts.

### **North Falmouth Community Forest 1 and 2**

The Community Forest Program afforded Falmouth, ME, the opportunity to purchase four parcels in August 2015 and September 2017. The North Falmouth Community Forest acquisition increases contiguous habitat by 100 acres, increasing total acreage of the community forest to more than 400 acres. These parcels provide a mature forest habitat, protect an existing snowmobile corridor, and provide more opportunity for a more robust multiuse recreational trail system and hunting area. In addition, key access is acquired for forestry operations within the community forest to improve habitat and improve forest system health.



*The public uses trails on the CFP-acquired parcels of the North Falmouth Community Forest. (Courtesy photo by Amanda Stearns, Town of Falmouth, Maine)*

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**Plimpton Community Forest**

With the invaluable assistance of the Trust for Public Land, the Town of Sturbridge, Massachusetts, purchased the 281-acre Plimpton Community Forest, made possible with a Community Forest Program grant from the U.S. Forest Service and a State LAND grant. The parcel provides a significant link between other permanently protected open space and wildlife management areas. The community forest has a small network of walking trails and provides opportunities for hunting and outdoor educational events. Some areas of the forest were harvested prior to the acquisition and now give the public an insight into forestry practices and forest regeneration.



*A young porcupine sits in a hemlock tree on the Plimpton Community Forest. (U.S. Forest Service photo by Neal Bungard)*

**Milan Community Forest**

The Town of Milan acquired the 842-acre additions to the Milan Community Forest in northern New Hampshire in two parts in April and December 2016 using Community Forest Program funds. A detailed writeup on the Milan Community Forest was featured in the [Winter 2018 issue of Forest Matters](#).



*In addition to the recreational features of the Milan Community Forest, water resources, such as the riparian areas around Leavitt Stream, are protected. (U.S. Forest Service photo by Neal Bungard)*

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**Owls Head Town Forest**

The Owls Head Town Forest in Vermont was expanded in May 2016 through the Community Forest Program. The property now consists of 280 acres with more than 5 miles of trails. It is a popular spot for hiking, biking, horseback riding, and snowshoeing/skiing. During the late 1800s, the property was home to up to five working marble quarries. The largest quarry, known as the Gettysburg Quarry, sits at 1,700 feet in elevation and offers a glimpse into the industrial past of Dorset. The quarry dump offers fantastic views of the Mettawee and Battenkill Valleys.



*This stone bench is dedicated to Dorset resident Art Gilbert, who was the catalyst for the Community Forest Project and the expansion of the Town Forest. (Courtesy photo by Town of Dorset, Vermont)*

**Yellow Dog Community Forest**

The Yellow Dog Conservancy used Community Forest Program funds to acquire the 668-acre Yellow Dog Community Forest in the northern Upper Peninsula of Michigan in September 2016. A detailed writeup on the Yellow Dog Community Forest was featured in the [Winter 2017 issue of Forest Matters](#).



*The Yellow Dog River Falls is one feature of the Yellow Dog Community Forest. (U.S. Forest Service photo by Neal Bungard)*

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**Portman Nature Preserve**

Using Community Forest Program funds, the Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy acquired 187 acres in January 2017 in southwestern Michigan along the shores of Lime Lake. A detailed writeup on the Portman Nature Preserve was featured in the [Winter 2018 issue of \*Forest Matters\*](#).



*The fall colors along the shore of Mud Lake, public access, and unique wildlife habitats are just a small sampling of the public benefits provided by the Portman Nature Preserve. (Courtesy photo by Nate Fuller, Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy)*

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**Buffam Brook Community Forest**

The Town of Pelham, Massachusetts, acquired the 161-acre Buffam Brook Community Forest with a grant from the Community Forest Program in January 2017. The forest protects a large riparian corridor and wetland complex that supplies water for a cold water fishery where old growth and associated structures are planned, including snag creation to enhance cavity nesting and a diverse forest structure. The adjacent upland areas are planned to have shelterwood management for interior forest birds, stand diversity, local wood supply, and climate resilience. The University of Massachusetts-Amherst Forestry Program is currently using the community forest to support student fieldwork. A plan is also under contract to develop K-12 educational programming with the Hitchcock Center for the Environment in Amherst.



*A mixed hardwood overstory with a thick hobblebush understory grows on one of the tracts of the Buffam Brook Community Forest. Unlike further north, hobblebush thickets are not very common in this part of Massachusetts. (Courtesy photo by Mike Mauri, Consulting Forester)*

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**Albert Family Community Forest**

The Albert Family Community Forest, the Rensselaer Plateau Alliance's second community forest, embodies the vision of the property's previous owners, Kevin and Mary Albert, who wish for the forest to inspire future generations. On January 20, 2017, the Rensselaer Plateau Alliance acquired the 353-acre property in East Nassau, New York, with a Community Forest Program grant and a donation by the Alberts. The forest now has a kiosk and parking area, 5 miles of hiking trails cleared by a volunteer trail crew, and public events that have included family and youth programs.



*A stream flows through the Albert Family Community Forest; other features include wetlands and old stone walls. (Courtesy photo by Nate Simms)*

**Waitsfield Scrag Community Forest**

In July 2017, the Town of Waitsfield, Vermont, acquired a critical 110-acre addition to its 640-acre Scrag Mountain Town Forest with a Community Forest Program grant and in partnership with the Vermont Land Trust. The Scrag Forest "Gateway Parcel" has enabled the Town to provide easy access to what had been a largely landlocked public resource. The Town has created a new trailhead with a sizeable parking area and informational kiosk, and anticipates establishing new trails for four-season pedestrian use in the coming years. The parcel also hosts valuable wildlife habitat, headwater streams, and opportunities for future municipal timber harvests.



*Board members of the Northern Forest Center learn about Waitsfield's Scrag Mountain Town Forest and the role of the CFP in the Gateway Parcel acquisition. (Courtesy photo by Liza Walker, Vermont Land Trust)*

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**Page Pond Community Forest**

Situated just a quarter mile from the shore of Lake Winnepesaukee in New Hampshire, Page Pond Community Forest is now one of the Town of Meredith's largest tracts of protected land. The first phase of the project was completed in 2009, while the October 2017 acquisition using Community Forest Program funds added nearly 200 acres to the 567-acre forest. With frontage on a well-traveled road near the town center and the lake, the property was once slated for residential development. Now, the public enjoys miles of walking trails that wind through the diverse forest, rich with historical remnants and native wildlife.



*With the October 2017 acquisition, more than half of the frontage along Page Pond is now permanently protected. (Courtesy photo by Jerry Monkman, EcoPhotography)*

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**Hidden Valley Nature Center**

In Maine, the Hidden Valley Nature Center permanently protected 950+ acres in January 2018 with a grant from the Community Forest Program. The property features pristine ponds, vernal pools, a kettle hole bog with boardwalk, wetlands, dramatic topography, campsites, six overnight accommodations, and a mile of shore frontage on Little Dyer Pond, all knit together by more than 25 miles of trails. The nature center has about 7,000 visitors annually. Hidden Valley is a community forest owned by the Midcoast Conservancy, an organization dedicated to nature-based education, nonmotorized outdoor adventure, and sustainable forestry. Midcoast Conservancy practices, demonstrates, and teaches others about low-impact sustainable forestry. It also hosts events that include courses on timber frame construction, chainsaw safety, forest ecology, “Women and Our Woods” workshops, and trail building.



*Children learn to ski at the Kids' Cross Country Ski Clinic at the Hidden Valley Community Forest. (Courtesy photo by Midcoast Conservancy)*

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**Richmond Town Forest**

The Town of Richmond, Vermont, is the proud owner of a 428-acre forest located a mile from the village center. The Vermont Land Trust helped the community acquire the forest in March 2018. The acquisition, made possible with a Community Forest Program grant, is a key part of a protected area that helps connect Camel's Hump State Park with Mount Mansfield State Forest. The forest is home to moose, bear, deer, bobcat, and other wildlife. The Richmond community is developing a management plan for the property with recreation opportunities, including trails for hiking, cross-country skiing, mountain biking, hunting, and birdwatching.



*View of Vermont's iconic Camel's Hump from the new Richmond Town Forest. (Courtesy photo by Olivia Wolf)*

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**Eagle's Nest Community Forest**

Located adjacent to the city of Marquette in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, the Eagle's Nest Community Forest includes 18 acres of old-growth northern forest and coastal wetlands bordered by 1,130 feet of Lake Superior shoreline. Previously owned by the same family since 1870, the Superior Watershed Partnership acquired the property in May 2018 with a grant from the Community Forest Program in order to provide numerous community benefits as well as protection from subdivision and development in perpetuity. The community forest will provide multiple educational and recreational opportunities for area residents and visitors year-round, including hiking and cross-country ski trails, nature-watching opportunities, and public access to unique and varied coastal ecosystems.



*Lake Superior Community Forest shoreline. (Courtesy photo by Superior Watershed Partnership)*

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**Laughing Whitefish Community Forest**

The 82-acre Laughing Whitefish Community Forest is located adjacent to Lake Superior in Alger County, Michigan. The community forest is dominated by forested uplands (including old growth white pine), forested and emergent coastal wetlands, the mouth/estuary of the Laughing Whitefish River, and 2,000 feet of Lake Superior sand beach. Located in an area where coastal development pressures are at an all-time high, the parcel will serve to preserve important coastal ecosystems and provide educational and recreational opportunities for area residents and tourists. The Superior Watershed Partnership acquired the forest in June 2018 using a Community Forest Program grant.



*Aerial view of the mouth of the Laughing Whitefish River and the Laughing Whitefish Community Forest. (Courtesy photo by Superior Watershed Partnership)*