

Thriving Forest Industry, Thriving Forests



Vermont Forests: Why do we care?

Vermont is the 4th most forested state with **4.5 million acres** of forest covering a whopping **75% of the landscape**.

How we maintain our forests has significant implications for our environment, our culture, our economy and our future. **We cannot thrive without thriving forests.**



Vermonters need healthy forests to thrive.

Our Ecology

Large blocks of contiguous forest provide habitat for native species and a means for animal migration, biodiversity, and connectivity. Forests provide clean water and clear air.

Our Economy

Vermont's forest industry supports nearly 14,000 jobs and generates \$2.1 billion in sales. Forests support \$30.8M in economic activity from trail use and \$300M from foliage season tourism.

Our Environment

Healthy forests are critical to combating climate change: they sequester and store carbon, moderate air temperature, protect water supply, mitigate floods, and control erosion.

Our Culture

Working lands are central to Vermont's identity. Vermonters have been working in the woods, playing in the woods, and using wood products for generations.

Not to mention the **countless wood products** we use **everyday**:

**Lumber, toilet paper, firewood, furniture,
diapers, flooring, auto part, paper, cardboard, textiles...**

We are **losing forestland**
at a rate of approximately
11,000 acres per year.

And our remaining forestland is facing
new & growing threats every day.



What can we do?





Forest Economy Study Group

Our tripartisan group, in partnership with the Dept. of Forests, Parks and Recreation, did a LOT of listening:

- Site visits across the entire state
- Presentations by industry professionals
- Research and review reports



Our goal was for these conversations to inform legislation to support a viable, sustainable forest economy.



What did we hear?

VIMEK

Our vulnerable forests are facing:

Climate Change

Higher summer and winter temperatures, heavy precipitation events, less snow, more winter rain, drier summers, and more extreme weather events.

Development

As people continue migrating to Vermont, development pressure increases leading to increased parcelization and loss of forest stewardship culture.

Ecological Pressures

Invasive plants, pests and pathogens are increasing which threaten forest health, regeneration and function.

Fragmentation

Diminishes function, interrupts migration, and degrades habitat quality leading to less biodiversity, more invasive plants, pests, pathogens, and poorer water quality.

Our forest industry is facing:

- **Increased cost of doing business**
- **Decreased profits**
- **Diminishing workforce**



* The number of sawmills in Vermont has declined from 140 in 1970 to fewer than 20 today. The Northern Forest region has lost 11 of 17 pulp mills since 1999.

Wood is a **safe, renewable** resource that's **greener** than concrete, steel or plastic. We know how to **do it right** - right here in Vermont.

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**The Vermonters engaged in
the industry care deeply about**

→ **the environment**

→ **sustainability**

→ **innovation**



Building Momentum

The legislature, Dept. of Forests, Parks and Recreation, and other partners have made significant strides over the years, including:

- Working Lands Enterprise Board
- Forester licensure
- “Right to conduct” forestry
- Current Use - 2M acres of forest
- Modern wood heat programs
- Vermont Conservation Design





The Path Forward

A thriving, modern forest industry is Vermont's best tool to ensure healthy, sustainable forests.

**We need to understand where we are and
where we want to go.**

**We already have this roadmap for the
agriculture sector, now it's time to
develop a comprehensive action plan for
the forest sector.**

H. 566 Vermont Forest Future Program

- Establish a program to stabilize and strengthen Vermont's forest economy over 10 years.**
- Building on previous reports & climate action plan, create an action plan to 1) increase economic development 2) sustainably manage wood resources and 3) develop the workforce.**
- Key Goal: Identify infrastructure investments and public policy recommendations that will support new and existing forest products enterprises.**

Vermont Climate Action Plan Recommendation

Pathways for Adaptation and Building Resilience in Natural and Working Lands

Pathway 3: Economies: Grow and connect local and sustainable natural and working lands' economies, markets, and food systems while ensuring and providing equitable access to said economies, markets, and food systems for Vermont's people.

Strategy 1: Develop, expand, and sustain local markets specifically for food, agricultural, and forest products in ways that ensure food sovereignty and security and provide for all Vermont's peoples.

- b. Develop a strategic plan for the forest economy, modeled on the Farm-to-Plate strategic plan but improved to better incorporate impacted stakeholders and principles of equity, as well as examining our current language and approach to forest management.

**Decisions and actions made
today will influence our
forests and Vermont economy
for generations to come.**