

# **CHOICES AND CHALLENGES IN TOWN FOREST MANAGEMENT**

**Report from  
A COMMUNITY FOREST WORKSHOP**

**September 13, 2003  
Gorham, New Hampshire**

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*Andrew Lindsey, Lincoln Town Forest Project, Lincoln, Vermont*

*Dee McClave, Conservation Commission, Jackson, New Hampshire*

*Haven Neal, Town Forester, Gorham, New Hampshire*

*Rolland Perry, Public Works Department, Bangor, Maine*

*David Willcox, Randolph, Vermont*

## **WORKSHOP SPONSORS**

The Quebec-Labrador Foundation/Atlantic Center for the Environment (QLF) is a non-profit community-service organization that exists to support the rural communities and environment of eastern Canada and New England, and to create models for stewardship of natural resources and cultural heritage that can be applied worldwide. QLF is headquartered in Ipswich, Massachusetts and Montreal, Quebec, Canada with field desks in Vermont, Maine, New Hampshire, Newfoundland and Quebec's Lower North Shore.

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The National Community Forest Center, Northern Forest Region (NCFCNFR) is one of six national centers focused on supporting citizen-based research. Its core purpose is to help rural people conduct and use research to inform decision-making about forest resources. The Center is administered through Yellow Wood Associates and guided by an Advisory Council composed of a diverse array of individuals involved in forest-related issues. NCFC's work includes: developing partnerships and facilitating communication among existing organizations, assisting communities in defining research agendas, engaging scientists in participatory research, conducting targeted research to address region-wide issues and opportunities, and providing information and technical assistance related to community forestry. Visit us on the web at [www.ncfcnfr.net](http://www.ncfcnfr.net) or call 1-800-727-5404.

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### **Introduction**

The forests, economy and culture of the Northern Forest region have been woven together in an intricate web of relationships within communities for generations. This web, however, is unraveling with accelerating speed. Globalization of the forest products industry and the fragmentation of the forest land base threaten not only the long-term viability of the region's forest-based economy, but also the vitality and well-being of the region's communities. Historic and cultural traditions and strong social networks associated with the forested landscape are being lost.

While large-scale land protection initiatives have marshaled impressive resources and achieved significant success in securing large tracts of forest land as they come on the market, it is unrealistic to rely on the non-profit community, even with the assistance of state and federal programs, to respond to the persistent pattern of sales of large tracts of forestland, primarily by industrial owners. Nor is it realistic to assume that, simply by conserving forestland, the integral links between the economy, culture and civic vitality of our communities will be reconnected or reinforced.

An opportunity exists to engage communities not only as another player in the conservation and stewardship of the region's productive forest land base, but in so doing, to create economic opportunities through the ownership/management of forest land, to build community capacity and social capital, and to support other community priorities. To determine the full extent of this opportunity, information is needed on the extent of interest and the degree of knowledge in town ownership and management of forest resources within communities throughout the region. Additionally, case studies and examples of successful models of town ownership and management (including documentation of costs and benefits to communities) are needed to offer both information and incentive to interested communities. Finally, understanding is needed about the information and resource needs of communities in order for them to acquire and successfully own and manage town forests.

### **Workshop Objectives**

The purpose of this workshop was to engage individuals from communities that own and manage forestland as community assets with individuals from communities that are strategically poised to do so in order to:

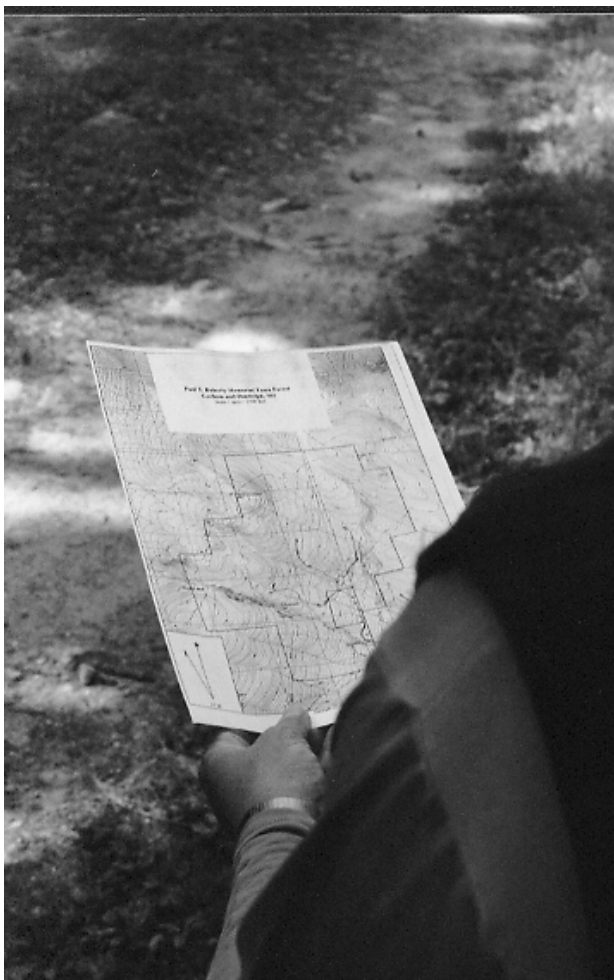
- Explore how to engage a community in planning for its town-owned forests;
- Consider how citizens can influence decision-making with respect to the use of town forests;
- Explore options for how to use town-owned forest resources;
- Examine challenges in management and use of town-owned forests;

- Hear about the experiences of communities in the Northern Forest region who have successfully set community-wide goals for managing their town-owned forest resources;
- Discover strategies and resources to assist in meeting the challenges of town ownership and management of forest resources; and
- Help capture questions and lessons to share with other towns.

The workshop was designed with three exercises in the morning, a field trip to the Gorham Town Forest and two exercises in the afternoon.

## **Participants**

Participants represented communities from Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont including: Haven Neal – Town Forester for Gorham, NH; Robert Brown – Berlin, NH; Rolland Perry – Town Forester, Bangor, ME; Paul Hartshorn - Waitsfield, VT; Andrew Lindsay - Lincoln, VT; Dee McClave - Jackson, NH; David Willcox – Randolph, NH; Ben Eisenberg - Randolph, NH; and Don Johnson – Conway, NH.



*Navigating the Gorham Forest*

## **Preparatory Reading**

Prior to the workshop, the Lincoln, Vermont Town Forest Project Case Study was sent to all participants. The town of Lincoln, Vermont is situated on the western slope of the Green Mountains in the northern portion of Addison County. Lincoln's principal watershed is the New Haven River, which runs through the center of town. All subwatersheds of Lincoln are part of the greater Otter Creek watershed. Approximately 25 percent of Lincoln, the eastern portion along the ridge, is part of the Green Mountain National Forest. Of that U.S. Forest Service land, a substantial portion is part of the Breadloaf Wilderness and a very small portion is part of the Bristol Cliffs Wilderness.

Like many rural Vermont towns, Lincoln has slowly been reforested as working farmland has been abandoned. Recently it has begun to reckon with development pressure, as people are able to commute greater distances from industrial centers or work from home. Lincoln has a

population approaching 1,250 and has little industrial base beyond a pallet mill. It has a commercial sector comprised of a general store, an inn, a mechanic, and a small collection of artisan shops/galleries. Agriculture and forestry are still practiced in Lincoln but the scale is comparatively smaller now than in the past.

Within the town of Lincoln are three town-owned forests: the Colby Hill forest, 170 acres; the Ripton Lot, 104 acres; and the former Urz property, 88 acres. Both the Colby Hill forest and the Ripton Lot were essentially given to the town — Colby Hill in 1969 and the Ripton Lot in 1933. The town purchased the former Urz property in an effort to relocate its town garage in March 2000. There was some controversy over the town's purchase of nearly 90 acres for the purpose of developing two acres of sheds and equipment. The Town Forest Project is partly a result of that controversy. The Lincoln town-owned forests are scattered across the town. A local chapter of Keeping Track has been running a transect through these woods for the last two years and have documented heavy use from bear, fisher, and moose.

Over the last few years, Lincoln residents and the Planning Commission have been hard at work creating a necessary revision of the Town Plan. The plan sets many goals to be reached in the coming years in an effort to maintain the health and character of a town reckoning with growth. One of those goals is to develop management plans for the three parcels of town-owned forest within Lincoln. The Town Plan states these management plans should be “long-term and sustainable and [should] not threaten the non-timber resources of forestland, such as biological integrity, wildlife habitat, education, and the benefits to humans or wilderness.”

Since the drafting of the newly adopted Town Plan, Lincoln has formed a local Conservation Commission (LCC). The LCC sees it as their task to work with the community to make these management plans a reality. Some hard working citizens nominated Lincoln to be a recipient of grant monies given by the National Community Forestry Center (NCFC) which helps “rural people conduct and use research to make informed decisions about forest resources.” Lincoln received the grant to fund a coordinator for its Town Forest Project. Andrew Lindsay, a local resident, was hired to coordinate the town's efforts. He participated in the workshop to share his experiences of his work in Lincoln. The Lincoln Town Forest Project Case Study is available to download from the National Community Forestry Center website: [www.ncfcnfr.net](http://www.ncfcnfr.net).

### ***EXERCISE #1 – “Two Truths and a Lie”***

***This exercise asked each participant to tell two truths and a lie about their town and its forests.***

**Truths:** The truths that the participants told revealed that, in all of the communities, at least one of the following is true:

- ◆ Forest land is valued as a community asset.
- ◆ Opportunities exist to develop or expand town forests.
- ◆ Significant acreage is available for acquisition by the town.
- ◆ Some town forests represent notable generosity and vision by individuals in a town.
- ◆ There is potential in every town for communities to come together to develop and manage town forest land.

**Lies:** The lies revealed that, in many of the communities, conflict and lack of consensus exist around issues related to the value of forest land: who should own it, how it should be managed (or not); that there is a perception that resources to acquire and manage forest land as community assets are not available; and that there is little support for efforts to acquire/own and manage forest land.

Participants were asked who had come because of their success and who was there to learn from those who had succeeded. The response revealed an even distribution with half of the participants representing towns with successful projects, and half of the participants there to learn.

***EXERCISE #2 – Sharing processes that involve communities in planning for town-owned forest resources and understanding how decisions are made.***

Participants who wanted to learn from successful town forest projects were asked to pose specific questions they had related to town forest projects. Participants from towns with successful projects responded by framing the story of their town forest projects with those questions in mind.

***1. “We are plagued with a ‘them’ versus ‘us’ mentality. How do we get ‘them’ and ‘us’ to be on the same page?”***

Participants offered several approaches from their own experiences including:

- *Design a process that attracts attention and engages people in conversation about the value of forestland in a community. Components of such a process include asking questions, listening, feeding back information, collecting names and addresses, regular events to get people out into the forest, sharing earlier experiences with the forest, and having conversations about the forest with no agenda.*

The town forest initiative in Lincoln, Vermont did not start with an agenda. The handful of people in town interested in the town forests knew that the problem of “them” and “us” was present, but could not identify who needed to be involved. They did not know what questions should be asked. Their first step was to attract attention and engage people in the town in a conversation. As a result, they started with “Hello Town of Lincoln, we are going to start a discussion about our town forests...every Saturday we will have a walk on the town forest lands.” The walks were sparsely attended, but somebody new would always come out. The organizers always listened to the people who came, collected names, addresses and stories, and repeated what they heard back to people. They held a forum – 2 people came. Instead of asking the planned question of “what are we going to do with our town forest?” the question became “why didn’t people come?” This emphasized the need to ask the right questions. Answers to the questions included: provide food, pick a day and give lots of notice. The next forum attracted 45-50 people with no agenda, just the call to “come and tell us what you feel about the forest.” It

became a year-long process that expanded interest in and awareness of town forest land and its potential.

- *Recognize the influence of the “sheer force of numbers.”* In the town of Conway, New Hampshire, there was a recognized component in town that was dramatically opposed (them) to developing a conservation management plan for town lands. However, a coordinated effort by members of the Conservation Commission and Selectmen, and the Town Manager to contact other members of the community and the media generated an overwhelming voice (us) in favor of conservation management planning for the town forests.
- *Use existing institutions in town, hire a third party, or establish a new entity.* The towns of Conway and Randolph both relied on existing institutions (in Conway, the Conservation Commission; in Randolph, the Planning Board) to serve as the convener for discussions. The town of Conway hired a third party to distribute questionnaires and facilitate a forum to determine the community’s goals and objectives for the town forest. In both the towns of Randolph and Gorham, a separate entity was established, a forest advisory board, that makes recommendations and advises the town on matters related to the management of the town forest.

## **2. “How do you get people to sit at the table “when we all have the same thing to lose?”**

Most participants cited a catalyst: a crisis (ice storm in Conway), a pressing issue (protecting water supplies in Gorham), or an opportunity (sale of a large tract of industrial forestland in Randolph) that brought people to the table. Another suggested letting rumors leak out that the town plans to use the forest for some particular purpose, to “stir the pot.”

## **3. “Who is going to take the lead in carrying on these activities?”**

This question seemed to reflect many of the concerns related to the capacity of a town to initiate, promote and/or pursue the development and management of town-owned forest land. There were a variety of examples that offered answers. In the town of Gorham, a group of visionary town leaders back in the 1930s took it upon themselves to create a town forest. More recently, visionary town volunteers in Randolph took the lead. In Lincoln, Vermont, when a small group of interested individuals reached the capacity of their volunteer time, they were resourceful enough to find a grant to support paid staff and support. Finally, in Conway, the combination of leadership from existing town institutions (the Conservation Commission, Board of Selectmen and Town Manager), coupled with paid third party assistance, worked collaboratively to develop the conservation management plan for the town forest.

***EXERCISE #3 – Sharing options for the use of town-owned forest resources and related challenges: How do you accommodate different views in developing management guidelines or plans for town forests?***

Participants from towns that are interested in developing or expanding town-owned forest land posed a number of questions to participants from towns with successful town forest projects.

- 1) How do you take the vital signs of a forest?
- 2) How do you know that what you are doing is good for the forest?
- 3) How do you enforce against motorized vehicles?
- 4) What are all the models for un-funded maintenance, e.g. trails, habitat, etc.?
- 5) How do you think about natural resource conservation when citizens are struggling with day-to-day needs?
- 6) How do you prioritize goals to avoid conflict and maximize the potential of your town forest?
- 7) In an effort to please and accommodate everyone, how do you realize the land's potential?
- 8) How do you resolve conflicting views and uses?
- 9) How do you manage recreational use?

The responses from the participants emphasized the following:

- *Identify priorities. What is the purpose of the town forest? The process of setting priorities will help prevent conflict and reconcile potentially conflicting uses.*  
The priorities for the Gorham Town Forest are to protect the water supply and provide income to support other community priorities. This clear statement of purpose clarifies issues related to how the forest can be used, and when and how a forest is managed for timber products (e.g. all harvests are in the winter to minimize impacts on the water supply). The land recently acquired by the town of Randolph has an historic recreational use and easement language that requires access for recreation. The town has entered into agreements with local volunteer trail clubs (hiking and snowmobile) to create and manage trails on the property. This arrangement not only ensures that the property will be available for recreational use, but that maintenance costs not funded by the town will be covered. Clear priorities will help define and establish enforcement programs for conflicting uses.
- *Establish an open and dynamic process.* There was general agreement that any process for management of town-owned lands must be one that:
  - 1) invites people into a discussion about the land and the establishment of priorities for its uses;
  - 2) provides open meetings that are publicized well in advance;
  - 3) offers flexibility in prescribing activities;



4) sets out a specific, long-term planning time-frame (such as 10 years) and then builds in a revision process based on a recognition that views and priorities change, and that knowledge is best gained from experience over time.

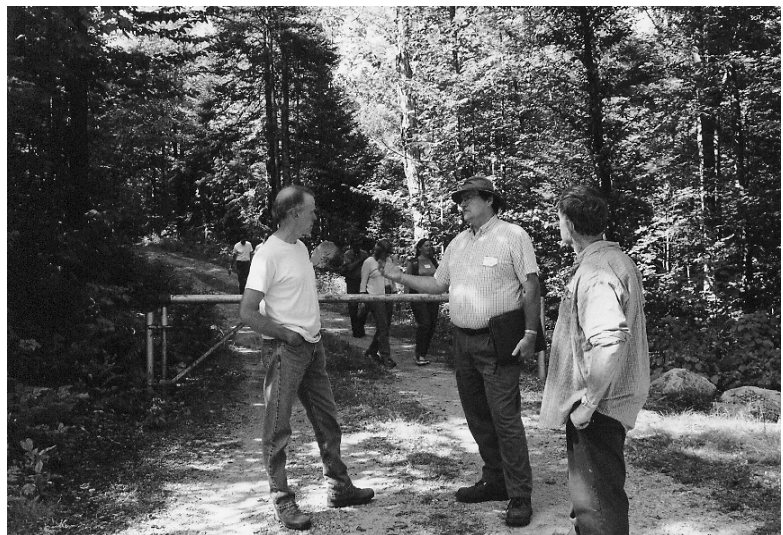
- *Engage professional foresters and develop management plans.* Soliciting the advice and counsel of professionals (consulting or county foresters) will provide needed information on the vital signs of forest health, and evaluating whether current practices are good for the forest. It was noted, however, that determining what is “good” for the forest is sometimes subjective, based on acquired knowledge, changing attitudes and priorities.

### Conway, New Hampshire

The town of Conway owns over 1,600 acres of land, much of which is forested, and most of which is managed with formal management plans under the oversight of the Conservation Commission. The town has a master plan, a forest management plan and retains the services of a consulting forester.

The largest parcel of land is a 908 acre area known as the Common Lands. The Conway Common Lands date back to colonial times and eventually became de facto “Town Commons” available for use by those townspeople who were, “through economic misfortune, in need of firewood.” An ice storm in 1998 devastated 50-75% of the total crown of the Common Lands. The community applied for a grant under ice storm recovery funds, and hired an outside consulting forester to conduct a management plan. The process was initiated and coordinated by the Conservation Commission, Board of Selectmen and Town Manager. The consulting forester conducted a survey of town residents that served as the basis for many of his recommendations in the management plan. The management plan is a 10-year plan that links different groups in town (it is incorporated into the Master Plan). It transcends the terms of both Conservation Commission members and Board of Selectmen.

Conway’s town-owned forest land produces income and revenues to the community. Whittaker Woods is a heavily used recreational area, and portions of the Green Hill area have ecological significance for its habitats, wildlife and biological diversity.



*Discussing management of the Gorham Forest*

## ***SITE VISIT TO GORHAM TOWN FOREST***

The Gorham Town Forest is a 5,000 acre tract located in the adjacent town of Randolph, New Hampshire. The land encompasses the watershed of the Gorham town water supplies. The management priorities of the Gorham Town Forest are protection of the quantity and quality of the town's water supplies, revenue from timber harvesting to support other community priorities, and education.

In the early 1900s, much of the land in northern New Hampshire was held by industrial landowners. Harvesting practices were not regulated nor were they guided by management plans or restrictions. In the 1930s, a group of visionary citizens in the town of Gorham became concerned that the results of the industrial timber harvesting practices would seriously impact the quantity and quality of the town's water supplies, and in 1934 purchased the land from the Brown Paper Company.

From 1934 until the late 1980s, the only management of the land was the maintenance of two reservoirs. During the late 1980s, however, the town began to look at the land as a possible source of revenue. The steps that the town took over the next several years were guided both by the influence of a group of older leaders in town and by the fact that Gorham is a forest-based community whose residents understand and appreciate the value of a working forest. The town passed a warrant article in 1990 establishing the land as a town forest and appointed a Town Forest Committee to oversee management of the forest.

The committee recognized the need to hire a professional forester to help develop a management plan and to manage the forest. Bids were solicited and a former forester from the James River Company, Haven Neal, was hired as the town forester. Haven worked with the Gorham Forest Committee to establish goals for the forest:

1. To protect the town's water supplies
2. To provide income to the town
3. To serve as an educational resource for the community.

While the town was involved, through the town meeting process, in establishing the Town Forest and appointing the Town Forest Committee, there was little additional effort to solicit ongoing community participation. The process of setting goals, designing a management plan and the day-to-day operations of managing the forest are primarily carried out by the Town Forest Committee and Town Forester.

There is, however, growing awareness of and appreciation for the Town Forest as a community asset. It has generated over seven figures in income to the town (and supported costs of a new fire station). It provides an outdoor classroom for both elementary and high school classes. And timber from the Town Forest is currently being selected and harvested to be used in the renovation of the town hall.

***EXERCISE #4 – Addressing common challenges to the community-wide resource management planning process.***

All participants were asked to identify issues related to owning and managing forest land as a community asset. Responses and discussion are recorded below:

*1. How can you successfully manage a multiple use forest? How do you do it over time?*

Don Johnson from Conway offered a practical response. He suggested that while he is an advocate of multiple use, he recognizes that you cannot do everything at the same time. You need to intelligently make decisions and set priorities, recognize that mistakes will be made, and make sure you have an open process that promotes broad communication, flexibility and adaptability. Others suggested that maximizing the potential of the forest in an atmosphere of compromise is “kind of a puzzle – you fit it all together” and suggested that with clear priorities, professional advice and a willingness to be adaptable and flexible, you can achieve multiple goals. An example was offered where a timber program could be developed that could also enhance recreation.

*2. How is cooperation facilitated between towns?*

Two examples of cooperation between towns were offered during the course of the workshop. The Randolph Town Forest project actually involved land in the Town of Jefferson. Jefferson worked closely with Randolph during the acquisition process, but declined to join in a joint Randolph/Jefferson Town Forest. Randolph wanted to make sure that there were ongoing opportunities for Jefferson to remain involved. A seat on the Town Forest Committee has been identified for Jefferson. Notices of the meetings are posted in both towns. Randolph makes a concerted effort to maintain communication channels with Jefferson. And Randolph pays property taxes to Jefferson for the Randolph Town Forest land that is in Jefferson.

The Gorham Town Forest is actually located in the Town of Randolph. Gorham operates as a landowner in Randolph, pays property taxes to Randolph, and collects taxes from Gorham (a tax paid to towns



*Exploring forested areas related to Berlin, NH*

based on receipts from timber harvests).

*3. How do you capture the full range of benefits to communities of town forests and frame a conversation about the forest as a vital community asset?*

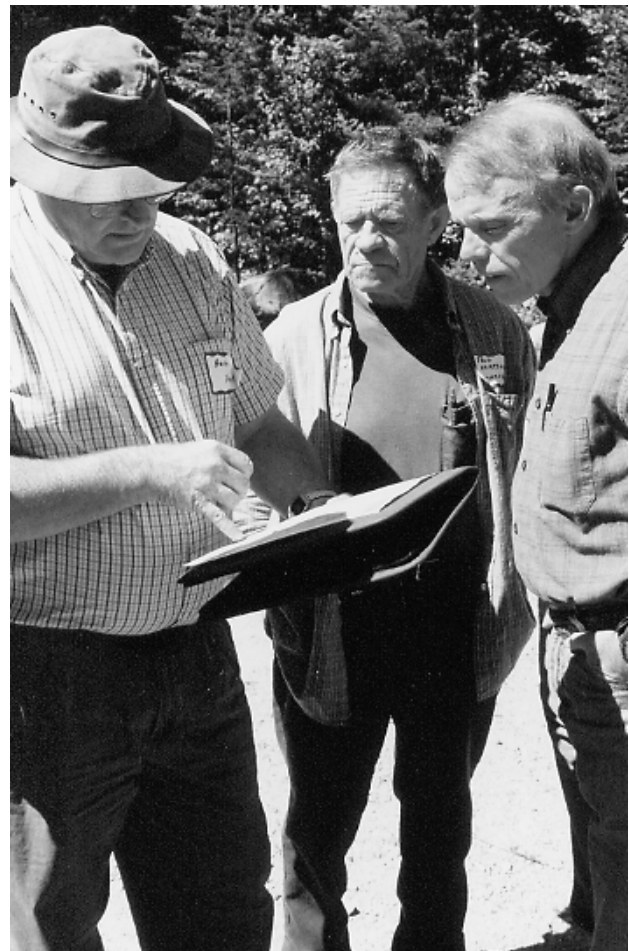
This question arose throughout the workshop in a variety of ways and prompted a variety of responses. Many participants offered that people in communities do not necessarily appreciate open space until they lose it. And attitudes like “the forests belong to the selectmen” or “how is it going to make money?” impede a broader view of the value of forests as a community-wide asset.

Robert Brown offered the example of Berlin, New Hampshire which may be the last “city” that is in the forest. It has 17,000 acres of forestland within the city boundaries; a town inventory of natural resources, incorporated in the master plan, identified the forest as a recreational resource. At the same time, however, discussions about purchasing forest land are not possible because of other pressing priorities, in a community that is still reeling from employment and economic problems associated with the operations of a paper mill. And yet, the future water supply for the city was recently put in jeopardy by the sale of the entire watershed to a timber investor. Robert’s questions during the course of the workshop were: “How do you get them to think? How do you get people talking about the forests?”

### **Benefits of Town Forests**

Workshop participants made a list of some of the benefits of town forests to communities:

- recreational experiences
- monetary value of recreation benefits
- aesthetics
- temperature regulation
- safety/security of being surrounded by woods
- a sense of place
- continuity and identifying with the forest
- the comfort of knowing wildlife are nearby
- water supply/water resource protection
- air quality
- revenues from harvesting
- hunting and fishing
- an educational and experiential



*Reviewing returns from timber extraction  
on town-owned forest land*

- learning resource
- carbon sequestration
- value of products to town (wood for town hall)
- non-timber forest products
- community capacity building
- pride and symbolic uses of the wood resource
- economic development (entrepreneurial enterprises)
- controlling growth
- cost savings to towns (it costs less to have open space)
- funding other community priorities (e.g. fire station)
- link using the natural resource to meeting social service needs of the community
- sustaining the local economy
- sustainable harvesting
- social connections forged and renewed in relation to the forest

#### *4. How do you solicit public acknowledgement of the role of the forests in community life?*

Responses to this question are found in many of the stories and comments offered during the workshop. The Town of Lincoln, Vermont initiated a process of having regular, repeated walks in the town forest land, inviting people to ask questions and comment. (“I invariably heard comments like ‘I came out here as a boy’ that were almost always about a special moment in this place where they had not been in a long time. I just saw a different head space pass over them.” -- Andrew Lindsay, Lincoln). Lincoln was careful that in the early stages it did not do something just for the sake of doing it, because what they really were looking for was acknowledgement of the forest as a community asset and to have people pause to think “what do we want for the future?”

The Town of Gorham held a town meeting and, by vote of the town, established a town forest. Activities related to the town forest - including school field trips, using timber from the Town Forest for renovations to the town hall, and using revenues from the Town Forest to support the costs of a new fire station - all connect the value of the town forest to community life.

Conway’s town institutions (the Conservation Commission, Town Manager and Selectmen) recognized the value of forests to the town and, when needed, coordinated efforts to engage the public and solicit support for conservation management planning.

Similarly, the Randolph Planning Board, recognizing the value of forests to the town, proceeded to organize and facilitate open meetings on the opportunity to acquire land for a town forest that led to the town’s purchase of the land - to ensure ongoing access for recreation and to maintain the forested character of the town.

Participants offered a variety of strategies to other participants, including one-on-one contact, person-to-person conversations, getting the word out, identifying a nucleus of people, knowing when groups meet (e.g. PTA, Kiwanis, churches) to talk about issues, and bringing people in who have successful, useful stories to tell.

### ***EXERCISE #5 – Identifying common community needs and resources***

The participants made a list of the following needs:

- Maps/mapping services
- Sources of funding for:
  - Paid help to supplement volunteers
  - Acquisition
  - Management of forest land
  - A cost of community services study
- Information on available training so citizens can know what to ask a professional forester
- Database of funding sources, technical assistance, selectmen, and local people involved in community forestry
- Ten great ways to bring people together
- Media resources such as sample letters to the editor and articles and advice on how to use electronic networking
- Case studies of successful town forest models/projects
- Economic analysis documenting the cost/benefit (to include the full range of benefits of town forests)
- Flow chart of how a forest initiative moves through town/city government
- A one-stop resource for town forest management advice



*Bridge under construction by Girl Scouts*

Participants offered suggestions on a variety of available resources:

- Resource information: Non-profits - NH Timberland Owners' Association, Society for the Protection of NH Forests, Vermont Land Trust, Trust for Public Lands, Cooperative Extension; USDA Farm Service Administration and Natural Resource Conservation Service, Tree Farm System
- Maps: University of NH GRANIT System; The Nature Conservancy, Trust for Public Lands, Society for the Protection of NH Forests, Audubon Societies, Regional Planning Commissions

## Randolph, New Hampshire

The Town of Randolph has 30,000 acres, and is home to a population of 320 in the winter and 850 in the summer. One-third of the town was owned by timber companies that managed the land for timber products. The Planning Board became increasingly concerned that, as management of the timber companies moved farther away from the community, the interests, concerns and priorities of the community would be less and less visible.

The town completed a master plan in 1980 and revised it in 1992. During the master planning process, many expressed concern that any major development would overwhelm the town. In 1995, the Planning Board learned that the then-current owner, Hancock Timber, was signaling interest in securing funding for a 2,000 acre conservation easement within the boundary of the White Mountain National Forest. The Planning Board held a public meeting to solicit support for protecting the land as part of the National Forest. The Planning Board, Selectmen and Conservation Commission cooperated to generate public support to get \$1.5 million of federal funds earmarked for the project. The 1998 ice storm then prompted Hancock Timber to reassess its ownership of the rest of the land (12,000 acres) in Randolph. The town initially looked at acquiring a conservation easement and held public meetings to determine the priorities of the town that a conservation easement would need to address. During this process, Hancock Timber decided to put the land on the market, and the town was faced with the challenge and opportunity of taking the step of establishing a town forest.

The public meetings on the easement evolved into discussions of whether to initiate negotiations to purchase the land. The cost of acquiring the parcel (\$1.8 million) was beyond the capacity of the town. (The town was too small to bond, people did not want to impose an increased tax burden on town residents, and a loan secured with future returns from timber harvesting was not possible as the land had been heavily cut and no revenues were expected for a period greater than banks could accommodate.) Public sentiment was in favor of purchase, however, so the Planning Board worked with the Randolph Foundation, a local community foundation established in 1950, to help support the town. The board sent letters to foundations and individuals successfully raising \$1.8 million from over 200 individuals and 8 foundations. The final step was to work out the details of a conservation easement that is held by the state of New Hampshire and to put a management system in place. New Hampshire State Law enables town forests to be managed by committees appointed by the selectmen. Members of the Planning Board, however, wanted to make sure that funds from the management of the town forest would not be subject to town debate and that they would be managed separately from the town's general fund. Town residents successfully secured passage of a special act of the New Hampshire General Court that puts management of the Town Forest under the jurisdiction of the Planning Board, and has a provision for a revolving fund into which all proceeds from managing the land will be deposited and then transferred to the town's general fund by the Planning Board.

The Randolph Town Forest has cooperative management agreements with the White Mountain National Forest, the Randolph Mountain Club (for trail development and maintenance) and a snowmobile trail club. The forest preserves the traditional recreational use of the land for hiking, skiing, and snowmobiling. It provides ecological protection for wildlife habitat and allows for sustainable harvesting of timber products.

## **Key Findings**

1. Communities need to set their goals and objectives. In order to do that, they need to connect with the community as a whole and find out what people care about. Communication lines need to be open from the beginning through the end.
2. Nothing needs to be set in stone. Towns need to keep revisiting their forest plans again and again, because a community's needs change, as do its desires.
3. If a community adopts a management plan, the town needs to incorporate it into the Town Master Plan to give it authority and make it part of the town's land use decisions.
4. Communities need information on how and where to get funding to hire an organizer and for other assistance in their forest planning and management efforts.
5. The outset of the forest planning process is a critical time, and resources, including human resources, need to be applied quickly and effectively, especially in response to a threat or need.
6. Multiple-use is not an either/or situation. Do not turn it into a win/lose proposition for the town's residents. Multiple uses are not fundamentally incompatible, except for all-terrain vehicle (ATV) use. A variety of techniques are available to make multiple-use work. For example, towns may use different forested parcels for different purposes, or different areas within one large parcel for different purposes.
7. The issue needs to be reframed from a 'conservation versus development' debate, to a discussion of 'multiple benefits.'
8. The Town Forest can support a way of life.
9. Managing a Town Forest is a way of demonstrating the best forest management practices.
10. A town can have control over what its citizens do not want changed, by effectively managing and using its Town Forest. Good planning tools are available to avoid conflicts over land use.
11. What makes Town Forest management work is the people who care about the land and the connection to what people want.
12. Education and facts inform and prepare people to make decisions, taking into account what they want.
13. If people go to a space wherein they recall their early experiences with the forest, they are in a space where they can deal cooperatively with others to develop solutions to forest management questions.



### **Evaluation of the Workshop:**

The participants were asked what was valuable about the workshop. Responses included the fact that there was a good cross-section of geography, experience, kinds of communities and approaches to community forests; the design of the workshop and the exercises promoted participant involvement; the field trip was valuable; and the weekend date/time of year was convenient.

Participants were then asked to suggest changes or revisions in the format and content of future workshops. Responses included an interest in having a larger group with greater representation from across the region (New York, Vermont, New Hampshire and Maine). At the same time, it was suggested that another format might be to locate the workshop in order to attract more people from a smaller area. It was also recommended that the workshop seek certification to qualify for continuing education credits.



*Thanking the guide*