



Lamoille County Planning Commission

Spring 2013

Forest Stewardship

With 80% of land in Lamoille County forested, forests are a pivotal piece of our economy, landscape, and livelihood. Most of that land is owned by private landowners, meaning that forest planning occurs on a parcel by parcel basis. Yet forest health, productivity, and connectivity can only be successful if regions, municipalities, and forest landowners work together to keep forests productive and healthy. How to do that is the crux of the Landscape-Based Forest Stewardship project.



The Forest Stewardship project began as a statewide collaboration between Vermont's Regional Planning Commissions (RPCs) and the Vermont Division of Forests. LCPC has been coordinating the project since Phase 1 began in 2011. Four RPCs used geographic information system (GIS) technology and a

stakeholder engagement process to inventory and assess forest resources, identify forest landscape types, and produce strategies for each landscape type. This phase culminated in 2012 with the publication of *Landscape-Based Forest Stewardship Planning – A Regional Approach* (available for download on the Commission's Web site www.lcpcvt.org).

Lamoille County's portion of the plan includes initiatives for landowners, regional implementation tasks, and ideas for local efforts. Examples include: increasing landowner access to information, tools, and support; promoting regional and local planning efforts and policies that support long term forest stewardship; enabling a vibrant forest products industry to thrive in Lamoille County; and ensuring the county's forests support a diverse array of values, uses, and activities. LCPC is working regionally toward encouraging markets for creative uses of forest and forest food products to provide communities with non-traditional ideas for economic development, for example, harvesting and using knotweed, an invasive species, as a food product.

Phase 2 of the project, set to begin in spring 2013, takes that plan and puts it into action. Four additional RPCs will join the project as implementation strategies identified in Phase 1 are tested statewide through voluntary municipal participation. Some of the potential strategies identified for Lamoille County include regulatory and non-regulatory actions, such as alternatives to large lot zoning, small-scale timber processing, road overweight policies, and town forests. If your town or village is interested in participating, please contact Taylor Foster at 888-4548 or Taylor@lcpcvt.org.

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A Sampling of Forest Stewardship Strategies

REGULATORY STRATEGIES

Alternatives to Large Lot Zoning Large Lot Zoning—minimum lot sizes of five or more acres—can reduce development pressures on rural areas, but it can also accelerate fragmentation of working forest and agricultural land by requiring a landowner to divide more land than is necessary for a new house lot. Planned Unit Developments (PUDs) allow “clustered” development in one area of a parcel while leaving the remainder of the parcel undeveloped.

Small Scale Timber Processing Historically, most of Lamoille County’s timber was milled at large, central facilities located in village cores or industrial areas. There is a growing trend toward small scale mills, home-based firewood suppliers, and cottage industries. Some local zoning regulations may inadvertently prohibit these activities in rural areas. LCPC can assist with modernizing zoning definitions and provisions to support new forest resource based businesses. Communities without zoning can also support these activities by clearly noting their importance in the Municipal Plan, which is reviewed in the Act 250 process.



NON-REGULATORY STRATEGIES

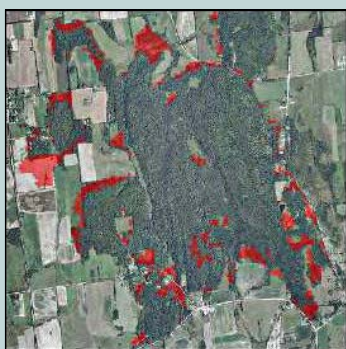
Road “Overweight” Policies Many towns have overweight policies that restrict use of town roads by large vehicles. These rules are often necessary to prevent undue wear and tear on rural roads. Some communities have overweight road restrictions that allow some agricultural and commercial truck traffic but restrict access by logging trucks. Giving logging trucks parity with other commercial trucks can support a working forest economy.

Town Forests Town forests are simply forest land that is owned and managed by a community. Several Lamoille County communities have developed forest management plans and natural resource inventories of their town forests. LCPC is available to assist communities in organizing workshops, mapping forests and recreational resources, or acquiring a town forest. Town forests can provide a great tool to educate the general public about sound forest stewardship practices through workshops or demonstration practices.

Monitoring Forest Land Cover Change Evaluating change in forest land cover over time, including acreage, location, and amount of core habitat, can help a community understand how effective its policies are in supporting its working or conserved forest lands. A forest change analysis, if repeated at regular intervals, can be used as a measurable indicator of the outcome of forest stewardship practices and policies. Towns can contact LCPC for a change analysis.

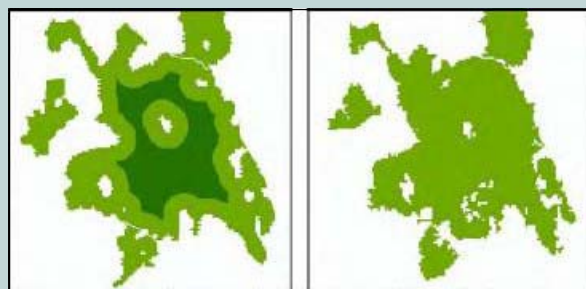
CASE STUDY: BRIDPORT FOREST LAND COVER CHANGE ANALYSIS

During Phase 1 of the Forest Stewardship project, the Addison County RPC developed a process for quantitatively and qualitatively evaluating change in forest land cover. A comparative analysis of forest land cover was conducted using 1992 and 2006 vintages of the National Land Cover (NLCD) database to determine locations where forest has been gained or lost.



Forest loss (red) in Bridport between 1992 & 2006. Most is along the forest edge.

The most common and clearly observed cause of forest land cover change was the chipping away at forest boundaries by new development. While the actual amount of forest cleared for each development may be minimal, collectively over time, numerous small subtractions can significantly impact core forest habitat and the species within it or change the forest’s economic potential. The 1992 land classification image (left) of the Bridport patch shows that core habitat (dark green) was present. By 2006, it was lost (right) because of development chipping away at the forest edge.



Bridport Patch Core Habitat Change



Emergency Relief & Assistance Fund

At LCPC's February Transportation Advisory Committee meeting, Milly Archer from VLCT presented the new Emergency Relief & Assistance Fund (ERAF) rule changes that will take effect on October 23, 2014. This rule defines the portion of the total project cost municipalities are required to pay when applying for disaster recovery funds through the FEMA Public Assistance program. All municipalities will be responsible for paying 17.5% of the project cost; however, if municipalities adopt a series of hazard mitigation strategies, they can lower the level of match paid out by the municipality to 12.5% or as low as 7.5%. Municipalities that adopt these strategies will not only be cutting long-term costs but will have taken steps to reduce future damages from natural disasters, providing enhanced public safety and disaster preparedness and resiliency.

Ecosystem Restoration Project



LCPC has been working with select communities since fall 2012 to identify projects that address water quality issues, such as nutrient and sediment pollution as

well as river instability from undersized bridges and culverts. One of the projects identified in this effort is a repetitive road washout near Scribner Bridge along the Gihon



River in Johnson (see photos). LCPC is providing engineering services as part of its Ecosystem Restoration Grant from the VT Agency of Natural Resources that will identify mitigation alternatives for the site. At the conclusion of the grant, participating communities will have identified projects that address stream and infrastructure mitigation and restoration projects. Communities can use the projects to build a roadmap for implementation and to identify potential funding sources.

Upcoming Trainings and Meetings

Highway Safety Forum

April 17th from 8:30 am—3:00 pm
St. Leo's Hall, St. Andrew's Church
109 South Main Street, Waterbury

Learn why Education, Emergency Services, Enforcement, and Engineering (the 4 Es) all play important roles in improving road safety. This forum will establish relationships between all regional safety stakeholders, begin discussions about sharing resources, and identify highway safety issues specific to the region.

Who should attend? All highway safety stakeholders in the region including: Law Enforcement, EMS, Fire Departments, Selectboards, Planners, Engineers, Driver's Education Professionals and others.

Town Road and Bridge Standards Forum

April 25th at 6:00 pm
River Arts, 74 Pleasant Street, Morrisville

VTrans will present the new Town Road and Bridge Standards and discuss their interaction with FEMA reimbursement. Come join the discussion on the new standards and take the opportunity to get answers to your questions and a better understanding of how the changes may impact your town's current practices.

Who should attend? Selectboards, Town Administrators, Engineers, and Highway staff.

Transportation Advisory Committee

April 24th at Noon
LCPC, 52 Portland Street, Morrisville

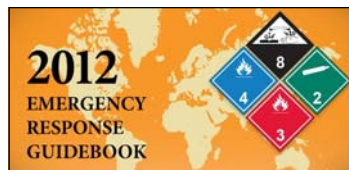
Meeting to prioritize town highway bridges and discuss the Regional Plan Transportation Chapter update.

Local Emergency Planning Committee #11

April 16th at 5:30 pm
Johnson Municipal Office, 293 Lower Main Street

Meeting will discuss revitalizing Lamoille County CERT (Community Emergency Response Team).

Who should attend? LEPC members, Emergency Management Directors/Coordinators and citizens interested in CERT! Call Taylor at 888-4548 with questions.



Emergency Response Guidebook Free App!

Emergency responders take note: The U.S. Department of Transportation announced a free, mobile web app of its Emergency Response Guidebook 2012 (ERG). The new safety tool will provide emergency responders with fast, easily accessible information to help manage hazardous material incidents. The mobile ERG will make it easier for firefighters, police, EMDs, and other emergency first responders to quickly locate the information needed about hazmat incidents, thanks to an electronic word search function, and will ensure easy reading even during nighttime emergencies. The 2012 version of the ERG includes new evacuation tables for large toxic gas spills and standard response procedures for gas and liquid pipeline incidents.

Visit <http://phmsa.dot.gov> for links to download this software from *Apple iTunes* and *Google Play* websites. The ERG app is made possible by the National Library of Medicine and the DOT's Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration. Don't have a smartphone but want a free printed copy? Contact Taylor at 888-4548 or taylor@lpcvt.org.

Atlas of Rural & Small-Town America

Looking for data to help with a grant? Need to update town plans? Visit the *Atlas of Rural and Small-Town America*, from USDA's Economic Research Service department! See how your community compares to others in the county, state, and country. This online mapping tool is easy-to-use and shows trends in four main areas:

- ◆ People (using demographics from the American Community Survey),
- ◆ Jobs (using economic and job data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics),
- ◆ Agriculture (using data from the Census of Agriculture), and
- ◆ County classifications (rural-urban continuum, poverty, population change, etc.).

What users can do:

- ◆ View county-level maps for over 60 socioeconomic indicators,
- ◆ View the entire country or zoom into specific regions, like states or county areas,
- ◆ View a selected socioeconomic indicator just for counties of a certain type (such as farming-dependent or those with persistent poverty),
- ◆ View a pop-up window showing all the indicators for a county,
- ◆ Print a version of the map or save the image in a graphics-file format that may be added to documents or presentations,
- ◆ Download a spreadsheet containing all the data for a selected county or for all U.S. counties.

Visit: <http://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/atlas-of-rural-and-small-town-america.aspx>

The Economic Impacts of Recreation

What does outdoor recreation have to do with economic development? The answer may surprise you. According to the data from the Outdoor Industry Association, outdoor recreation in Vermont generates \$2.5 billion in consumer spending, and directly employs 34,000 Vermonters. With two major ski resorts and a host of natural attractions, outdoor recreation is a key piece of Lamoille County's economy. The county is also home to several manufacturers of high quality recreation equipment.

Lamoille County's outdoor recreation economy is heavily dependent upon the winter season, and some businesses experience high employee turnover, and some residents face seasonal unemployment. That's why the Lamoille County Planning Commission and our local and regional partners are working to create more opportunities for four-season outdoor recreation and tourism. Whether it's building trailheads for the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail, improving the trail networks and visitors facilities in Smugglers Notch, or creating a regional mountain bike touring center, efforts to build a four-season economy bring more visitors, dollars, and jobs into our communities.

For more information on the economic impacts of recreation, visit www.outdoorindustry.org/recreationeconomy.



Route 15 Commuter Parking Study

With Cambridge's support for a Jeffersonville to Burlington Route 15 commuter bus confirmed, plans are underway to identify potential commuter parking locations. LCPC staff recently met with the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCPRC), Chittenden County Transit Authority (CCTA), and Chittenden County municipalities to discuss a parking study aimed at insuring bus and passenger safety while maintaining parking access for residents and businesses in our villages.

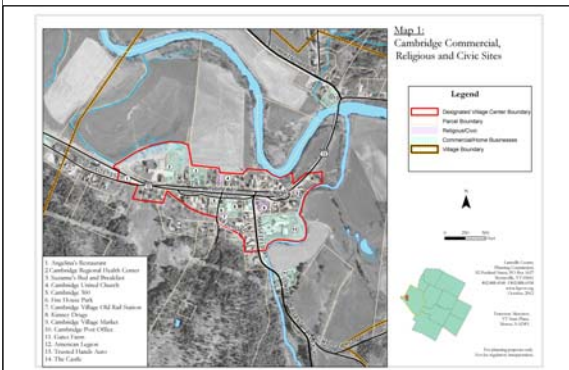
In Lamoille County, potential commuter parking locations will be investigated in Jeffersonville and Cambridge Villages. For Jeffersonville, the study will identify potential parking lot locations, examining realignment of parking spaces along Main and Church Streets, and exploring opportunities for on-street parking along School Street and Carlton Avenue. In Cambridge Village, CCTA has determined that the current State park-and-ride lot would not serve transit buses safely. The study will identify potential public lot locations or land that could be leased from private entities as a park-and-ride. The Cambridge effort is part of a larger project to identify commuter bus parking areas along Route 15 in Essex, Jericho and Underhill.



Main Street, Jeffersonville

LCPC worked with Cambridge Village and Jeffersonville representatives to define the Lamoille County study scope. As the project begins, LCPC will meet with municipalities and post opportunities for local participation on Front Porch Forum and in communities. For more information or to be put on a meeting notification list, please contact Bonnie at bonnie@lpcvvt.org or 888-4548.

Tuning Up the Vermont Downtown Program



Cambridge Village Center
as Designated by the Downtown Program

Earlier this year, the Agency of Commerce and Community Development initiated an effort to evaluate the suite of state designations collectively known as the "Downtown Program" (Downtowns, Village Centers, New Town Centers, Growth Centers, Vermont Neighborhoods) and develop recommendations for updates and improvements to the program.

An on-line survey captured opinions and ideas from a wide range of stakeholders. Survey results are available at http://accd.vermont.gov/strong_communities/opportunities/revitalization.

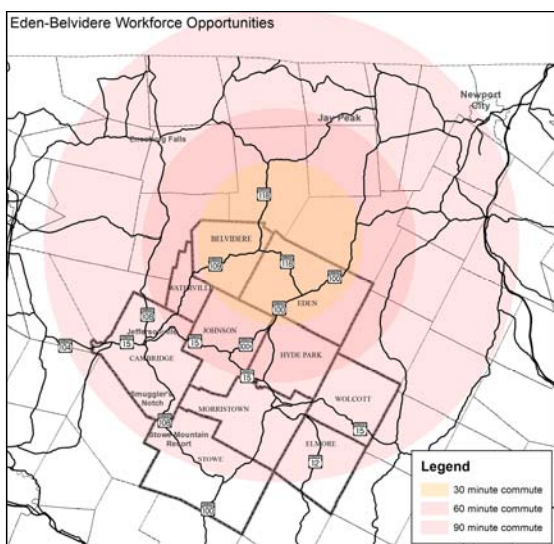
H.377 was voted out of the House Committee on Commerce and Economic Development with a few changes and unanimous support. The bill clarifies the definition of "Village Center", requires that the intent to apply for Village Center or Downtown Designation be

included in municipal plans, terminates the Vermont Neighborhoods program, establishes a "Neighborhood Planning Area" in association with other designations, establishes a "Neighborhood Development Areas" designation that retains the benefits of the repealed Neighborhoods program, and requires the Dept. of Economic, Housing and Community Development to begin examining ways to improve and strengthen the growth center and new town center designation process by June 15. Legislative bills can be reviewed at <http://www.leg.state.vt.us/ResearchMain.cfm>. Currently, Lamoille County has six Designated Village Centers and one Designated Downtown. The Agency's Community Planning and Revitalization team has also updated the Village Center Designation Application Guidelines, available at http://accd.vermont.gov/strong_communities/opportunities/revitalization/village_center.



Lamoille County Opportunities in Northeast Kingdom Initiatives

Believed to be the largest initiative of its kind in the history of Vermont, seven development projects stretching between Jay Peak Resort, Newport, and Burke Mountain Resort have been proposed for the Northeast Kingdom. From ski resort expansions to high biotech companies to a marina and conference center, early projections suggest between 2,000–7,800 direct, indirect, and induced jobs may be created, many of them conversion of part-time or seasonal jobs to full time positions.



Northern Lamoille County offers an attractive, rural setting and easy commute to the Kingdom. Belvidere and Cambridge residents have reported traffic increases on Rt. 109 on Route 109 since the Jay Peak waterpark opened. Johnson State College has been approached about internship opportunities. Eden is considering whether seasonal camps around Lake Eden will convert to year round residences, and whether the Lake’s water quality might change. Are our residents ready to take advantage of these opportunities, and are our communities prepared for potential changes?

Current studies and assessments related to housing, workforce development, transportation, and other areas may not be considering Lamoille County’s perspective. LCPC will be working with our regional and state partners in the upcoming months to identify opportunities for communities and the region to participate so that our economy moves concurrently with these initiatives.

Comments Sought: Draft Stream Alteration General Permit

The typical flood seasons of spring and early summer will soon be here, and the State wants to have a new Stream Alteration General Permit in place to ensure Vermont has clear standards in place should a disaster strike. The General Permit will provide authorization for activities that may change, alter, or modify the course, current, or cross section of any watercourse within or along the boundaries of Vermont either by movement, fill, or by excavation of ten cubic yards or more in any year. Lessons learned from managing stream alterations in 2011-2012, and the subsequent passage of Act 138, necessitate a re-write of the General Permit.



Brewster River Gravel Bar, Cambridge

Proposed General Permit changes include:

- ◆ Provisions for the State authorization of protective measures as required in Act 138;
- ◆ Other changes in 10 V.S.A. Chapter 41 Stream Alterations brought about by Act 138; and
- ◆ Clarification of State standards in the wake of Vermont’s experience during and after Tropical Storm Irene to help the State and municipalities with FEMA reimbursement.

The draft permit and other information are available at www.watershedmanagement.vt.gov/cfm/notices/rivers-notices.cfm. A public meeting will be held on April 13 from 6-8 pm at VANR’s Winooski Meeting Room, 1 National Life Drive, Montpelier. Written comments can be submitted by April 12, 2013 to Mike Kline, State Rivers Program Manager, at mike.kline@state.vt.us.



Upcoming Trainings, Workshops and Grant Opportunities (cont.)

New England ADA Center Training Opportunity

The Vermont Center for Independent Living invites municipalities to submit proposals for a field-based training day to help New England municipalities identify facility needs. Twenty applicants will be chosen to participate. If you are planning to make access improvements to a municipal building, you are encouraged to apply for a full day of training with experts who will work with you to identify barriers and create a list of solutions to improve accessibility under the Americans With Disabilities Act. Participating municipalities will also receive a \$1,000 award towards improving accessibility. Contact Kim Brittenham at (800) 639-1522 or kbrittenham@vcil.org for information.

Tax Credit Training for Communities

Over the past decade, the tax credit program has netted over \$30 million in federal income tax credits to Vermonters. While the federal and state credits are proven resources, applying for credits can be confusing. Caitlin Corkins, Vermont's Tax Credits and Grants Coordinator, is prepared to make "Tax Credits 101" presentations in your community and meet one-on-one with property owners. To schedule a presentation or site visit, contact Caitlin Corkins: (802) 828-3047 or Caitlin.Corkins@state.vt.us.

2013 Town Officer Education Conferences

The 2013 Annual Town Officer Education Conferences are taking place at three locations across Vermont.

- ◆ **April 3rd:** *Hilton Hotel, Burlington*
- ◆ **April 17th:** *Lake Morey Resort, Fairlee*
- ◆ **April 24th:** *Killington Grand Hotel, Killington*

The conferences are sponsored by University of Vermont Extension in cooperation with the Vermont Institute for Government and other participating organizations to provide town officials with current information about laws, procedures and issues that affect their roles in town government. The \$70 registration fee (\$60 if registering on-line) includes lunch, break refreshments, and a choice of five concurrent workshop sessions. Workshop information and online registration can be found at <http://www.uvm.edu/extension/toec>.

The Vermont Planning Information Center

The new and improved website for Vermont's volunteer and professional land use decision-makers (www.vpic.info) consolidates access to the resources you need including:

- ◆ All planning and zoning publications produced by the *Land Use Education and Training Collaborative*
- ◆ An improved calendar of training events (trainers can post events directly)
- ◆ Links to key websites and documents

Send questions and comments to Peg Elmer elmer.peg1@gmail.com. To obtain calendar access, contact Alison Low alison@nvda.net. Vermont's RPCs are hosting the VPIC website.

2013 Dry Hydrant Grant Program Grants

The VT Rural Fire Protection Task Force announces its 2013 Dry Hydrant Grant Program. Up to \$2500 is available for any one dry hydrant installation for fire suppression. A 25% local match of total project cost is required. Applications must be received by May 3, 2013 and are available online at www.nvtrcd.org/vtrfptf.html or by calling Troy Dare, Engineering Technician, at (802) 828-4582.

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Adopted Plan Now Required to Access Community Development Grant Funds

The Vermont Community Development Program, which manages Vermont's allocation of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding, has recently changed the application requirements for communities that apply for funding. It is now mandatory that any community seeking CDBG funding have a locally adopted Municipal Plan. Any municipality that seeks CDBG funding for economic development, public works, housing, etc. should pay careful attention to the status of their Municipal Plan. *If your Plan has expired, you will not be eligible for these funds until it is formally readopted.* For assistance with plan updates, contact Taylor at taylor@lpcvt.org. For information about the CDBG program, please contact Bonnie at bonnie@lpcvt.org.