

Community Forests

Allegheny Society of American Foresters

February 16, 2017



Rensselaer Plateau Alliance

Conservation Through Community

Community Forests

Allegheny Society of American Foresters
February 16, 2017

We will discuss/answer:

- What are Community Forests?
- The U.S. Forest Service Community Forest Program grants.
- Case Studies, How 2 Community Forests were established on the Rensselaer Plateau.
- Best Practices for Community and Municipal Engagement.

Community Forests

Allegheny Society of American Foresters

February 16, 2017

What is a Community Forest?

Slides borrowed from and used with permission of

Julie Renaud Evans,

Director of Forestry, Northern Forest Center



Community Forest Model

Our model includes:

- Community ownership
- Community participation in management
- Community benefits tied to community priorities
- Permanent Protection



Reasons for town ownership of forestland



- Conservation
- Water supply protection
- Recreation
- Habitat connectivity
- Education
- Investment
- = *Community Development*

Benefits for the Forest



- Local stable ownership
- Long-term sustainable stewardship
- Habitat protection and connectivity
- Slowing fragmentation
- Conserved forever



Benefits for the People

- Revenue generation
- Preservation of managed landscape
- Education of tomorrow's stewards
- Social – coming together
- Traditional open access
- Community pride



Real Money for Rural Communities

- ***Barre Town Forest, Barre Vermont***

Trails for mountain bikes and cross country skiing
7,000 annual visitors spending \$ 480,000 annually

- ***13 Mile Woods Community Forest, NH***

Sustainable forest management and harvesting is yielding \$100,000 net annual income for town of 280 people

Community Forests

Allegheny Society of American Foresters

February 16, 2017

About the U.S. Forest Service Community Forest Program

Slides borrowed from and used with permission of

Scott Stewart and Neal Bungard,
U.S. Forest Service

COMMUNITY FOREST



PROGRAM

USDA Forest Service

3rd Annual Community Forest Forum

May 9-10

Portland, Oregon



Quick Overview

- Purpose is to create community forests that provide community benefits.
- Requires a 50% non-federal funding match.
- Requires public access.
- Involves the community in establishing and managing the community forest.
- Fee acquisitions only



Definition

- *Community forest.* Forest land owned in fee-simple by an eligible entity that provides public access and is managed to provide community benefits pursuant to a community forest plan.
- Federal Register** /Vol. 76, No. 203 /Thursday, October 20, 2011
/Rules and Regulations **65121**



Eligible Entities

- Local governments
 - Any municipal government, county government, or other local government with jurisdiction over local land use decisions.
- Indian tribes
 - Federally recognized Indian tribes and Alaska Native Corporations.
- Qualified nonprofit organizations
 - An organization that is described in Section 170(h)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.



Eligible Land

- Private forest lands that:
 - Are threatened by conversion to nonforest uses
 - Are not lands held in trust by the United States, and
 - Can provide defined community benefits and provide public access.
- Forest lands:
 - Lands that are at least five acres in size, suitable to sustain natural vegetation, and at least 75 percent forested.
 - Forests are determined both by the presence of trees and the absence of nonforest uses.



Community Benefits

Focuses on community benefits, including

- Financial benefits from timber and non-timber resource management
- Recreational benefits secured with public access
- Natural resource protection
- Forest-based experiential learning
- Replicable models of effective forest stewardship



Funding History

- FY2012 - \$3,500,000 - 10 projects
- FY2013 - \$1,892,000 - 3 projects
- FY2014 - \$2,000,000 - 8 projects
- FY2015 - \$2,000,000 - 6 projects
- FY2016 - \$1,993,300 - 8 projects



Program Applications

FY 2012 & 2013

- 49 Applications; \$14.5 million
- 13 Awards; \$5.2 million

FY 2014

- 21 Applications; \$5.9 million
- 7 Awards; \$2.1 million

FY 2015

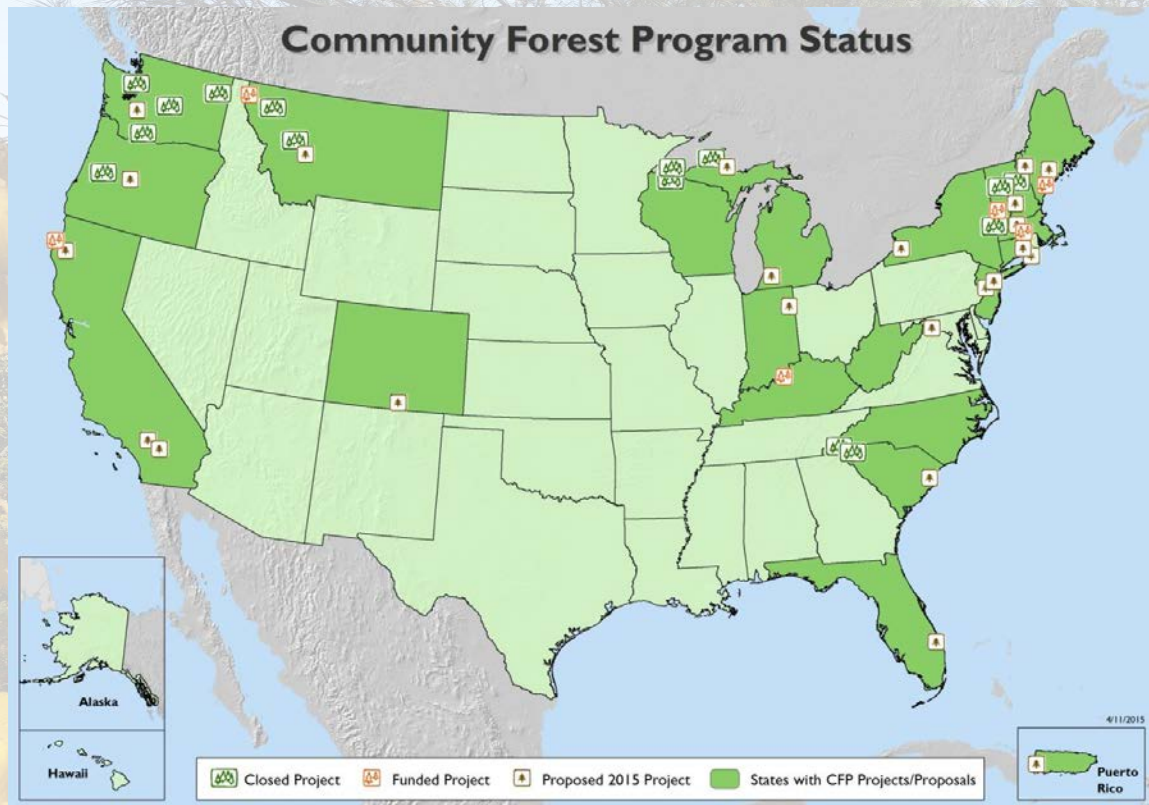
- 23 Applications; \$7.09 million
- 6 Awards; \$2 million

FY 2016

- 21 Applications; \$6.1 million



Applications





Application Process

- A national request for applications is issued
 - Applications for local government and nonprofit entities go to the State Forester.
 - Tribal applications go to the equivalent Tribal Governments official.
- State Foresters and Tribal officials forward all applications to the Forest Service and, as time and resources allow:
Provide a review of each application to help the Forest Service determine:



Project Evaluation Criteria

1. Type and extent of community benefits provided.
2. Extent and nature of community engagement in the establishment and long-term management.
3. Extent to which the community forest contributes to a landscape conservation initiative.
4. Likelihood that, unprotected, the property would be converted to nonforest uses.
5. Amount of cost share leveraged.
6. Extent of due diligence completed on the project.
7. Costs to the Federal government.



Project Acquisition

1. Must complete a Yellowbook appraisal and appraisal review.
2. Prior to closing, must notify the landowner in writing of the appraised value and that the sale is voluntary.
3. Purchase all surface and subsurface mineral rights, whenever possible, or meet remoteness test.
4. Ensure that title is clear of anything that would be contrary to the purpose of the CFP.
5. Record a Notice of Grant Requirement and a number for other requirements in deed.



Post Acquisition Requirements

- Complete the final community forest plan within 120 days.
- Provide appropriate public access.
- Submit every 5 years a self-certifying statement that the property has not been sold or converted.
- Be subject to a spot check conducted by the Forest Service to verify that property acquired has not been sold or converted and is managed consistent with the Community Forest Plan.



Rule Update

- Grant forms
- Draft Community Forest Plan
- Conveyance with approval of FS
- Other interests

Community Forests

Allegheny Society of American Foresters

February 16, 2017

Jim Bonesteel,

Executive Director, Rensselaer Plateau Alliance (RPA)

How RPA grew a Community Forest from the ground up





(c)2015 Jeff Victor

With funding and support from:



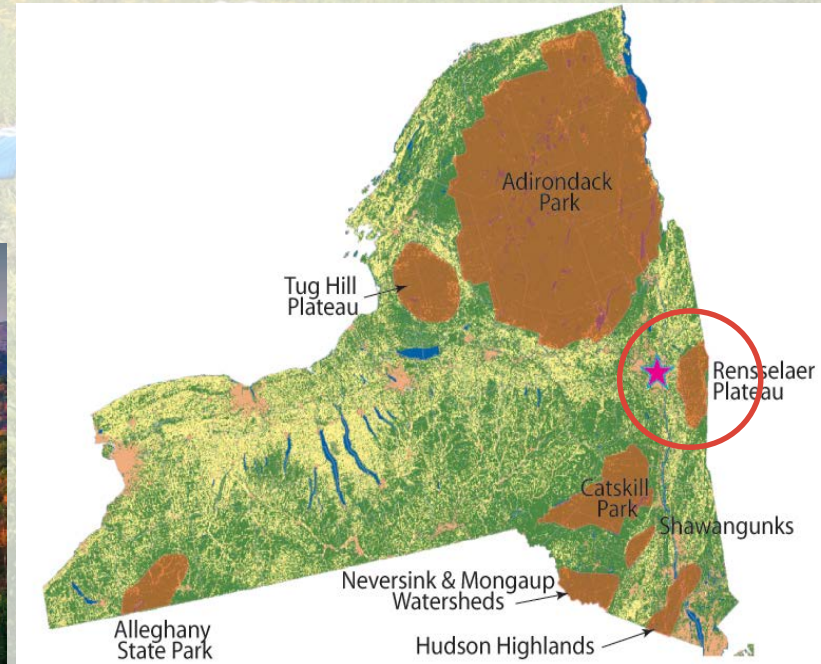
THE
CONSERVATION FUND



Poestenkill Community Forest

Poestenkill, NY - November 2014 - 350 Acres

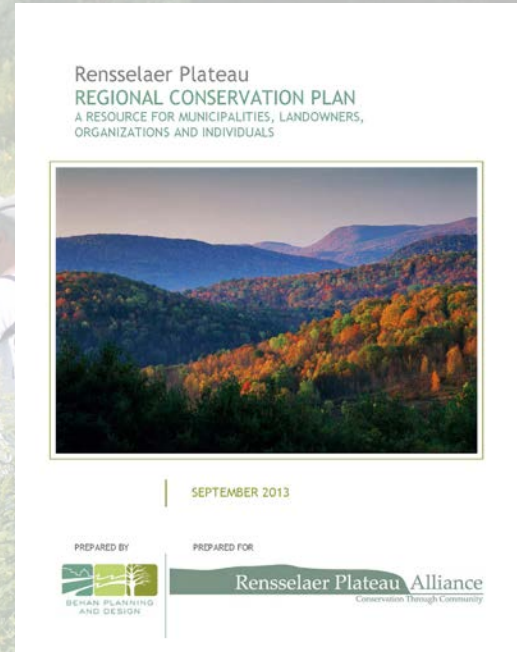
Community Forests on the Rensselaer Plateau



Community Forests on the Rensselaer Plateau

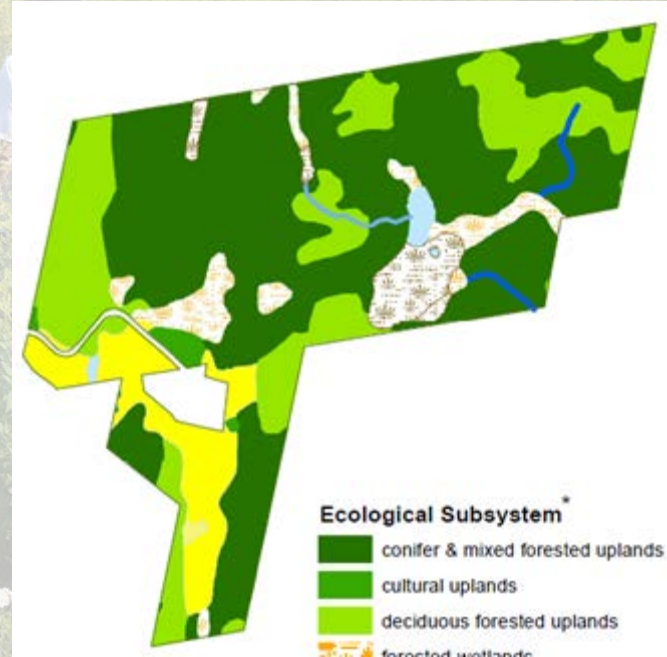
What is the Rensselaer Plateau Alliance (RPA)

- Founded in 2008, grass roots
- Conservation Plan in 2012
 - Community Engagement (HREP)
 - Ongoing engagement of town boards and planning boards
- FY16 Forest Legacy Project, 12,348 acres with partners: DEC, HREP, RLT, ASA



Poestenkill Community Forest

- Summer 2011 – Idea for Community Forest
- Nov 2012 – Community Forest Conference
- Sept 2013 – Public Workshop
- Dec 2013 – Identified Parcel
- Jan 2014:
 - Contract with seller
 - Grant application to USFS
 - Prequalified for bridge loan
- July 2014 - Grant awarded



Poestenkill Community Forest

- Nov 2014 - Closing



Poestenkill Community Forest

Partners:

- Dyken Pond Environmental Education Center
- Rensselaer Land Trust
- Empire State Forest Products Association
- New York Logger Training, Inc.
- New York Forest Owners Association
- Saratoga Mountain Bike Association
- US Geological Survey
- Tamakoce Wilderness Programs



Poestenkill Community Forest

Community Forest Committee:

- Neighbors
- Recreational Users
- Forest Owners
- Educators
- Ecologists

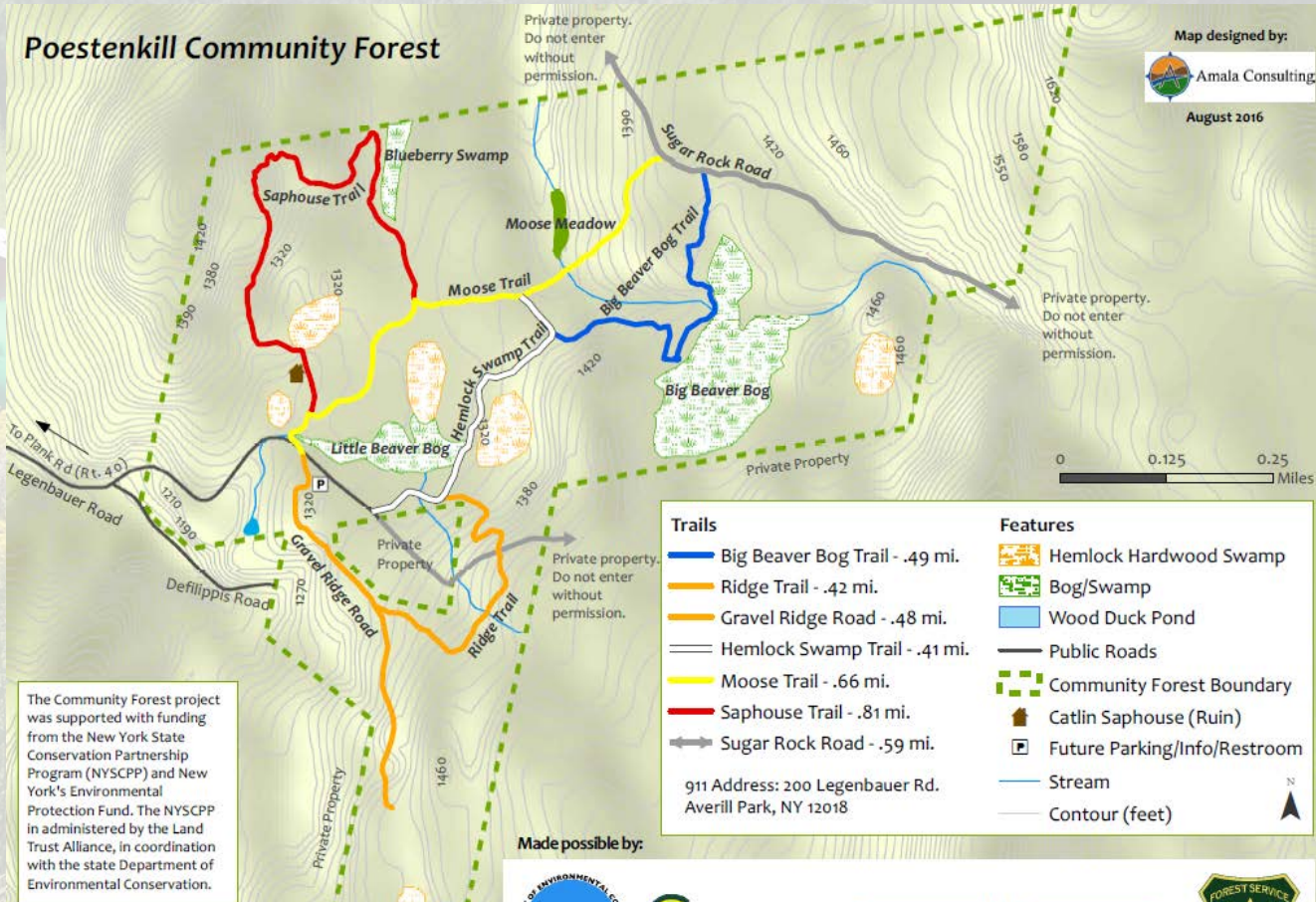


Donna Heald, a neighbor says, “The presence of the community forest on our road has been a great source of pride for us. We have enjoyed learning about native trees and the importance of controlling invasive plants, sustainable forestry, wetland ecology, trail building, as well as the local history of the land where our home resides. In addition, we have enjoyed participating in recreational activities hosted by the Community Forest such as nature walks and snowshoeing.”

Poestenkill Community Forest

Projects:

- Trails



The Community Forest project was supported with funding from the New York State Conservation Partnership Program (NYSCPP) and New York's Environmental Protection Fund. The NYSCPP is administered by the Land Trust Alliance, in coordination with the state Department of Environmental Conservation.



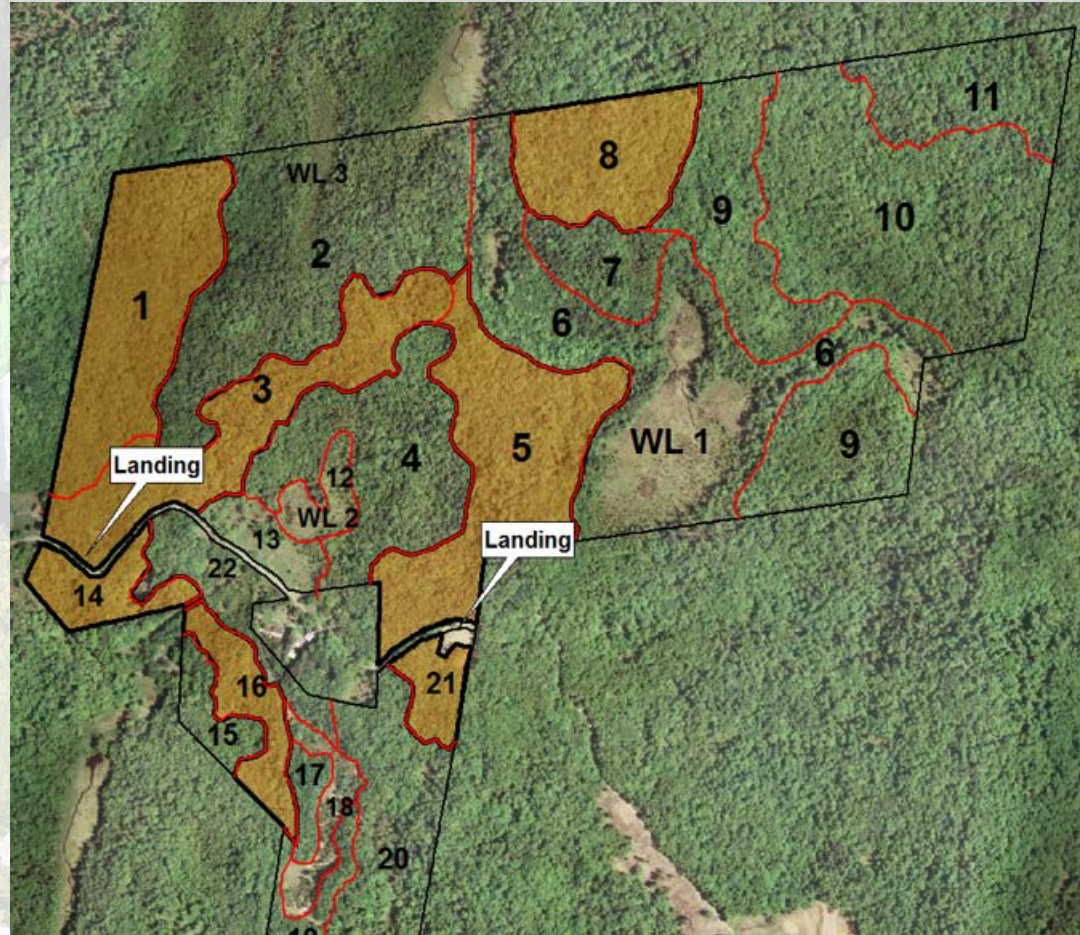
Poestenkill Community Forest

Projects:

- **Model Forest - Forest Management Plan**

Winter of 2018 harvest will demonstrate the following three prescriptions:

- Even aged management. Crop Tree Release/Shelterwood preparatory cut in Stand 3,
- Uneven aged management. Crown thinning – Single tree/small group selection in Stand 21,
- Uneven aged management. Thinning from below, timber stand improvement (TSI), Stands 1, 5, 8, 14 and 16.



Poestenkill Community Forest

Projects:

- Workshops
- Volunteer's pet projects
- Training for Forest Professionals



Rensselaer Plateau Community Forest

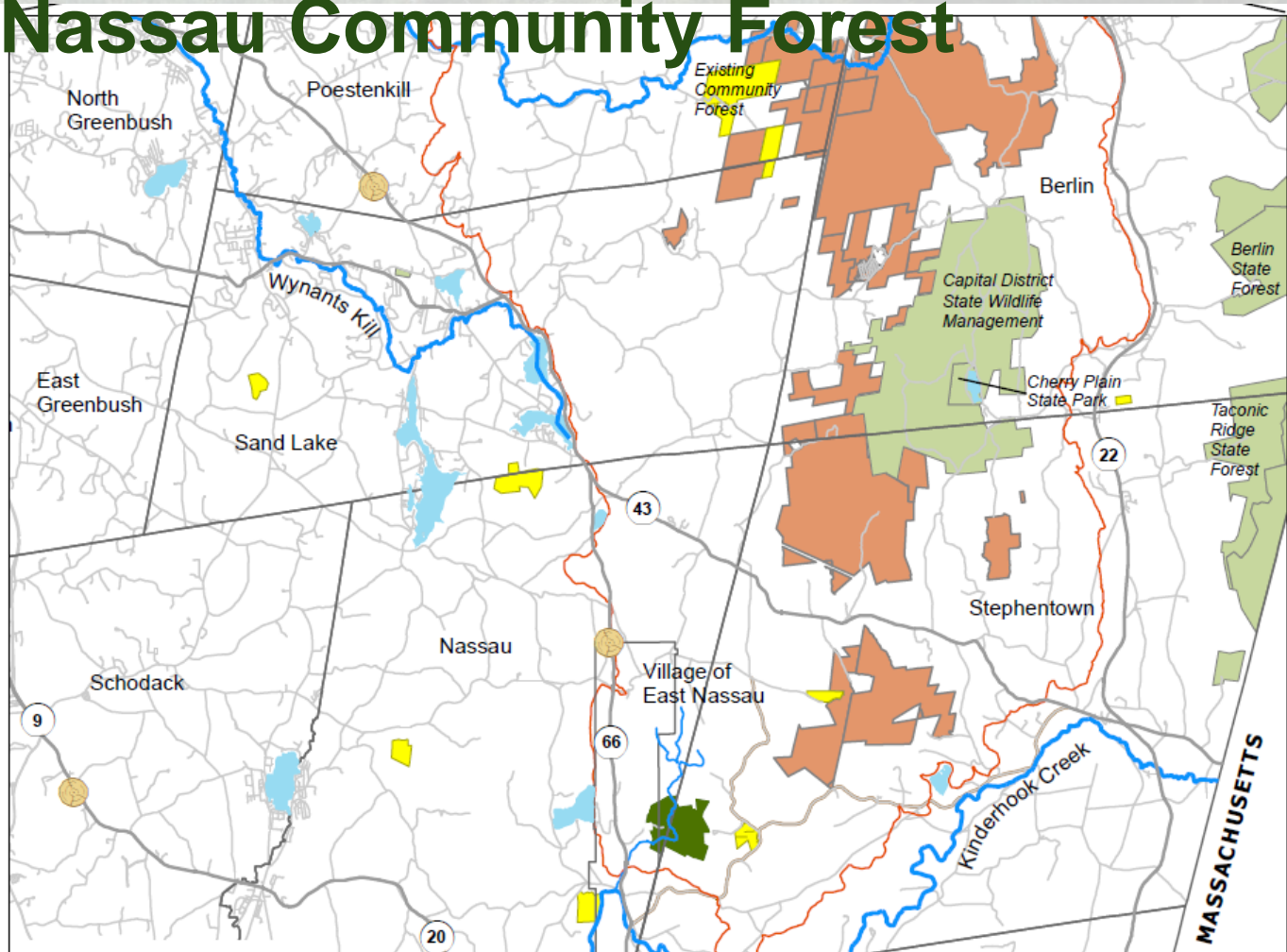
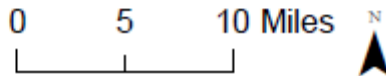
A Fantastic Model for Us:

- Very active committee from the community
- Volunteers with ownership
- Appeal to a broad range of stakeholders
 - Nature lovers
 - Trail users
 - Forest products industry
 - Landowners
 - Families



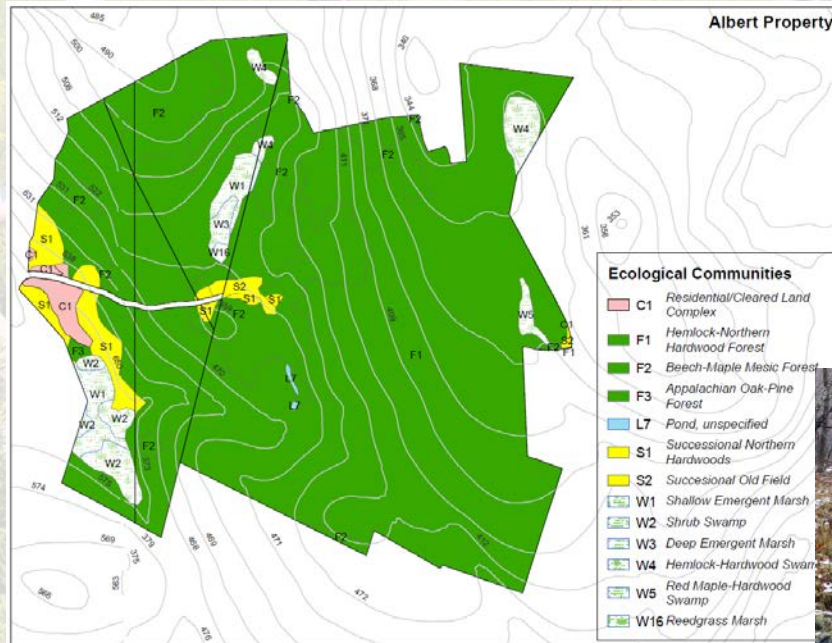
East Nassau Community Forest

- Proposed Community Forest
- Forest Legacy FY16 (funded)
- Govt. Conserved Areas
- Other Conserved Areas
- Major Lakes
- Rensselaer Plateau Boundary
- Sawmills
- Roads



East Nassau Community Forest

Land comes first this time. 353 acres beautiful forest.



East Nassau CF

Summer 2015 – Lanowner interest

Fall 2015 – Community Engagement

- Present to Village of East Nassau
- Present to Town of Nassau
- Public Workshop (inc Neighbors)

Jan 2016 – Contract signed, U.S. Forest Service grant submitted

June 2016 – Grant announced, Ranked #1

Jan 30, 2017 - Closing

Community Forest at Hayes Road East Nassau/Nassau/Stephentown

The Vision

A community resource open for public recreation and education managed by a oversight committee comprised of local community members and modeled after the Rensselaer Plateau Community Forest in Poestenkill.



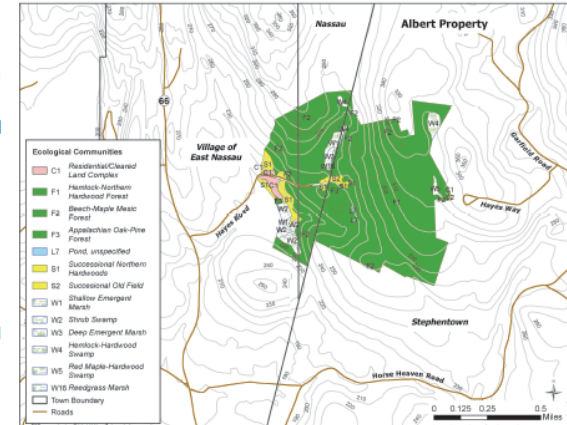
Project

Approximately 340 acres

A mix of well managed forest, a variety of wetlands, and open fields punctuated with old stone walls and logging roads.

Timeline

- ♦ Nov 2015, Public workshop, form committee
- ♦ Jan 2016, Submit USFS grant
- ♦ June, Grant announced
- ♦ July, Submit NYS grant if necessary
- ♦ Nov 2016, Closing



Benefits

- ♦ Economic—Visitors, Managed Forest
- ♦ Environmental — Clean water, storm water management, wildlife habitat
- ♦ Educational— for landowners, children, adults



Taxes

County	\$1,369
School	\$2,789
Town of Nassau	\$194
Nassau Highway	\$220
Nassau Fire/Ambulance	\$252
Town of Stepentown	\$18
Stephentown Highway	\$99
Stephentown Fire	\$96

Community Forests

U.S. Forest Service Community Forest Grant

Project Evaluation Criteria

1. Type and extent of community benefits provided. 
2. Extent and nature of community engagement. 
3. Amount of cost share leveraged.
4. Extent to which the community forest contributes to a landscape conservation initiative.
5. Extent of due diligence completed on the project.
6. Likelihood that, unprotected, the property would be converted to nonforest uses.
7. Costs to the Federal government.

Best Practices for Community Engagement

A group of about seven people are standing in a field of tall green grass and yellow wildflowers. They appear to be engaged in a discussion or a field walk. Some individuals are wearing green shirts, while others are in white or light-colored clothing. Two people in the center are pointing towards the right side of the frame, suggesting they are looking at something of interest in the distance. The background is a dense line of trees under a bright sky.

1. Start Early

2. Listen

- To Ideas
- To Concerns – record concerns – their concerns are your concerns
- Focus on Values

3. Anticipate big concerns (traffic, taxes, etc.)

4. Form committee early and foster a sense of ownership

Best Practices for Community Engagement

A group of about seven people are standing in a field of tall yellow flowers. Some are wearing green shirts, others white or blue. They appear to be engaged in a discussion or a field activity, with some pointing towards the background. The background shows a line of trees under a bright sky.

If you expect a contentious situation:

1. Consider 1 on 1 meetings first

2. Facilitate meetings:

- Lay the ground rules
- Ask participants to answer specific questions
- Break into sub-groups and report back

3. Don't make them Wrong

*Book: The Conservation Professional's Guide to Working with People.
Scott A. Bonar (I review chapter 3 regularly)*

Questions - Discussion



Jim Bonesteel, Executive Director, Rensselaer Plateau Alliance (RPA)
(518) 712-9211, jim@rensselaerplateau.org

Thank you to:

Julie Renaud Evans, Director of Forestry, Northern Forest Center
jevans@northernforest.org

Scott Stewart, Forest Legacy Program Manager and Community Forest Program Manager,
U.S. Forest Service