

BATTENKILL VALLEY FOREST

Current Property Status

The Battenkill Valley Forest property was acquired by a subsidiary of The Conservation Fund, Bly Hollow LLC, in 2017 as part of a 23,000-acre forestland acquisition that included the former WJ Cowee forestlands situated on the Rensselaer Plateau in New York and within the Taconic Mountain Range in Vermont and Massachusetts.

Since then, The Conservation Fund has sustainably managed the property in accordance with its forest management plan. As The Conservation Fund has maintained the private recreational licenses that existed when TCF acquired the land, the property has continued to not be open to the public for recreational uses, such as hiking or hunting. The Conservation Fund's goal is to identify and implement a conservation strategy that will ensure that the property's wildlife habitat, water resources, forest resources, and historical and cultural resources will be maintained and stewarded sustainably in perpetuity. The initial strategy to permanently protect the core portion of the 1700's settlement connected to Daniel Shays, of Shays' Rebellion, was achieved in 2022 when The Archeological Conservancy acquired approximately 89 acres around the heart of the remaining settlement.



Proposed Conservation Strategy

Currently, The Conservation Fund and the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation (FPR) are exploring an acquisition of the property by FPR. If acquired by FPR, the property would become a new State Forest, which would protect the property's natural resources, including headwater streams of the Battenkill River and wildlife habitat, ensure that the property will continue to be managed sustainably for forest products, and secure permanent public access to the property for outdoor recreation. FPR would purchase the property from The Conservation Fund using federal funding from the Forest Legacy Program.

Frequently Asked Questions

When land ownership is changed from private to public ownership, questions arise. Based on previous conversations that have occurred to date here are answers from the State to a few of the key questions that have been raised:

- **How are State Forests managed?**

Many of Vermont's State Forests support active forest management. Forest management on the property will be developed through a [Long Range Management Planning](#) process that will include public input. Forest management not only generates forest products, but also improves wildlife habitat, carbon sequestration, biodiversity, forest health, and water quality. Every year, FPR's District Office will prepare an annual stewardship plan for the property, which will describe all planned stewardship activities on the property for the upcoming year, including forest management.

- **What recreational uses are allowed on State Forests?**

Vermont State Forests are open to the public to use, enjoy, and explore for dispersed public pedestrian recreational uses, such as hiking, skiing, snowshoeing, hunting, and fishing. Recreational uses beyond dispersed pedestrian uses will be considered through a public long range management planning process. Snowmobile use is permitted on designated trails on State Forests. Motorized all-terrain vehicles are prohibited on State Forests, pursuant to 23 V.S.A. §3506(b)(4).



- **How would the public access the State Forest?**

Existing access points will be maintained and open to public use. FPR monitors and manages all official access points for State Forests. Additional access points will be assessed and considered through a public long range management planning process, and then developed and managed once the Long Range Management Plan is adopted. If any questions or concerns arise from access to State Forests, FPR will respond and address the issue accordingly.

- **How do State Forests help protect historic values?**

State lands are managed to document and protect all historical and archaeological values. FPR works closely with the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation, and other partners such as The Archaeological Conservancy, to manage historic resources on State lands.

- **What happens if there is an emergency on State land?**

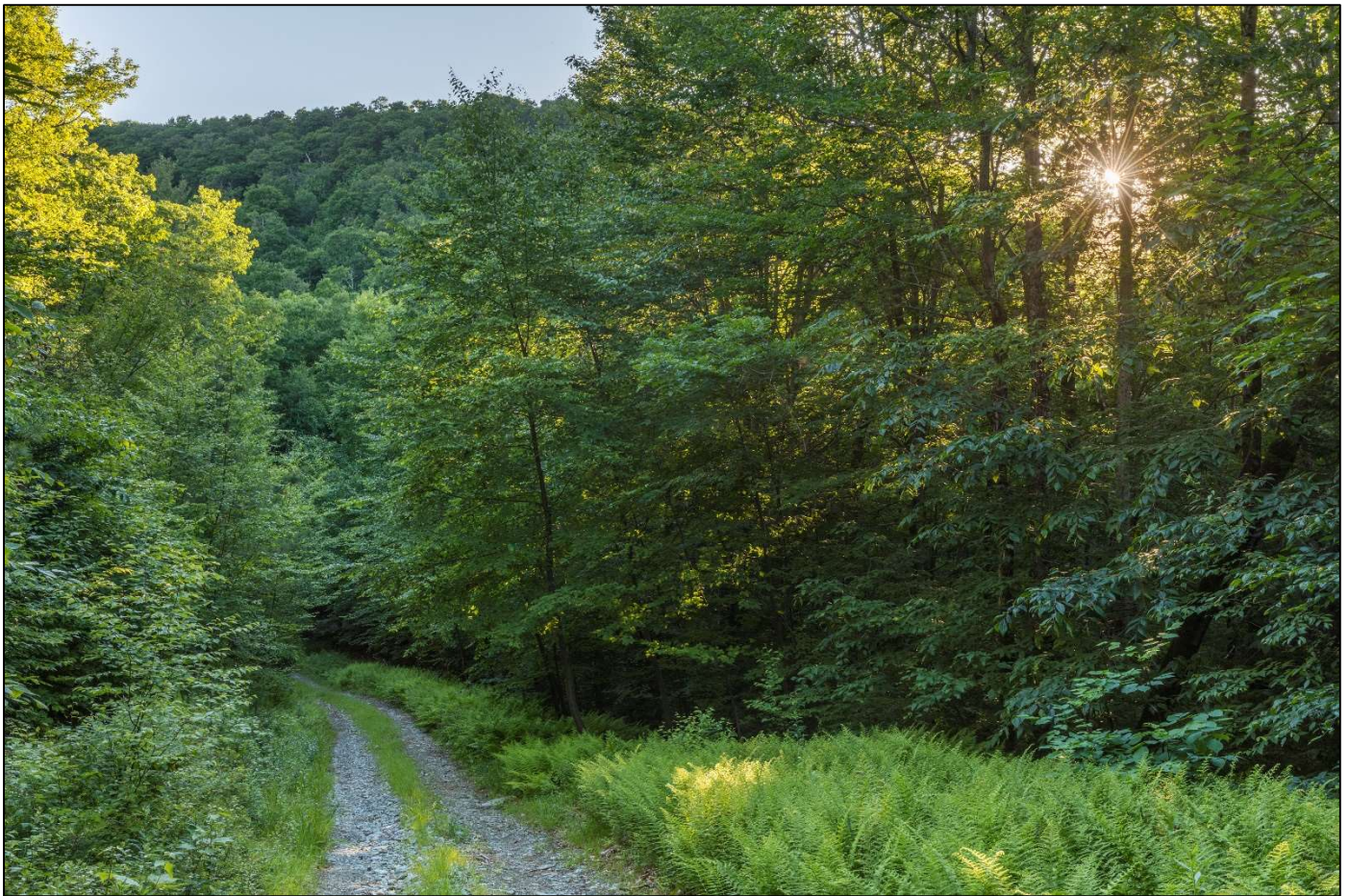
Emergencies on State land are rare. If a Search and Rescue team is mobilized, the Town is not responsible for this expense. If local services are mobilized, FPR does not pay the costs of local emergency services that respond to an emergency on State land. These costs would be the responsibility of the Town, which is the same for State land as it is for private land.

- **How do State Forests contribute to local tax revenue?**

Since land in public ownership is not subject to property tax, FPR makes an annual Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) to each town in which it owns and manages land. This program annually compensates towns for tax revenue lost as a result of State ownership. FPR's Lands Administration and Recreation Division administers the PILOT program for the Agency of Natural Resources. The base payment for each new acquisition, such as this, is determined by multiplying the most recent municipal tax rate by the property's value as assessed by the town on April 1st in the year of acquisition. Therefore, for the first few years following acquisition, FPR will annually fund the towns what they would have received under private ownership of the property. Because the non-residential tax rate is set statewide, and because the non-residential school tax is paid into the State Education Fund, the loss of the school tax on a newly acquired parcel will be made up by all property taxpayers throughout Vermont.

- **How are State lands protected?**

FPR is able to acquire interests in land to be held and administered as State Forests through 10 V.S.A. § 2606. Within state statute, FPR is also tasked with sustainably managing forestland for forest health, scenic, hydrologic, wildlife, and recreational values. State statute does give FPR the ability to convey State lands. However, this is extremely rare and requires the approval of the General Assembly. If the Egg Mountain property were to be acquired by FPR, FPR would use funding from the federal Forest Legacy Program. The Forest Legacy Program provides an additional layer of protection over the property, ensuring that the property will forever be owned or managed by the State or a municipality and sustainably managed as forestland.



Battenkill Valley Forest - FY25 Forest Legacy Project

