

FAIRLEE FOREST FACTS

The Fairlee Town Forest:

- is one of the Upper Valley's largest town forests, @ 1573 acres (ca. 2.5 sq. mi.)
- was assembled from three adjacent forest properties acquired between 1940 and 1984. These were combined in 1997 under the contractual terms of the parcel donated in 1980 by the Lange family and matched by a grant from the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service (Dept. of Interior, administered by the Vermont Dept. of Forest Parks and Recreation), *namely that these lands be maintained primarily for recreational purposes, especially hiking, snowshoeing, snowmobiling, skiing, and hunting.*
 - per terms of the Lange/HCRS grant contract, *no taxpayer dollars or road funds may be used to pay for forest costs.* Income from timber harvests would be used exclusively for trail maintenance, maps, and signs, etc., not as general fund revenue. For the period 2010-2019, timber sales resulted in a net loss of \$1,339 (compiled from annual reports). If we include 2020, preliminary net losses exceed \$15,000 due to road improvements and repairs.
- is the nucleus of a 44-sq.mi. Audubon priority forest block known collectively as the Brushwood Forest. It contains a 42+ acre Class 2 wetland system, significant beaver, bear, moose, bobcat, and deer habitats, and prime nesting habitats for threatened migratory songbirds.
- includes Bald Top Mountain's 1776' summit, the 80' cascade of Glen Falls, the views of the Connecticut River Valley from Eagles Bluff, and several historic archaeological sites.
- includes over 20 miles of forest access, logging, and skid roads, and several hiking trails in FTF, including the Bald Top section of the Cross Rivendell Trail.
- is among the only public forests in the Upper Valley to tolerate unrestricted access by motorized vehicles. The costs of maintaining these badly damaged tracks in the face of worsening erosion is leading now to a reevaluation of the open-door policy and the closing of trails through wetlands and across steep mountainsides.
- is owned by the Town of Fairlee, managed by an appointed 5-member Forest Board, under the authority of the Fairlee Selectboard

Concerns about erosion from logging operations and trails, and the need to resolve questions about recreational use of the forest in general are the issues precipitating the Fairlee selectboard's Public Town Forest Meeting on Nov. 3.