

To: Berlin Selectboard
From: Berlin Conservation Commission
Date: June 6, 2022
Subject: Berlin Town Forests: Project Application and Project Application Review Questions

The Berlin Town Forests' Project Application and Review Questions creates a standardized, transparent process for submitting proposals for projects in the Berlin Town Forests and for evaluating the proposals. It may also be used to guide discussions and possible modifications to a project proposal. This process establishes a method for reviewing Town Forest applications and making decisions that is somewhat similar to the process used by the Development Review Board with a known process and set of guiding criteria.

A project is defined as an activity that may impact existing visitors, natural resources, or both for a season or year round. Examples could include a new activity; a change in location or timing of an existing activity; a new trail or structure; a modification to a trail or structure; or a request to extract resources such as maple sugaring. A Project Application could be submitted by an individual or group of Berlin residents, an organized group such as MAMBA, or by a Berlin board, commission or committee. The review will be conducted by the Berlin Conservation Commission. The Selectboard and the Recreation Committee will be notified of any new request. Final recommendations will be submitted to the public and the Selectboard.

Why?

- Berlin owns several valuable pieces of property with state significant natural communities. These properties are an important resource for recreation, connecting people with nature, and providing homes for wildlife and native plants. Most local, state and national forests throughout the state and region are experiencing increasing pressures from increased visitor demand, climate change, invasive plants and animals, among other things. Decisions on Town Forest management need to be made in a thoughtful manner guided by current best practices, balancing a variety of recreational options with the preservation of natural resources so that we can leave intact natural areas for future generations to enjoy.
- All people or groups making a request for the Town Forest should have their requests considered and evaluated in a consistent, standardized, public manner using published, predetermined criteria. Criteria will be based on current best practices for managing recreation and natural resources.
- A standardized process gives structure and guidance for making forest management decisions through time as members of Berlin boards and commissions change.
- This proposed process is a living document that can be modified as Best Practices evolve.

The Proposal Process helps the review committee answer three questions:

1. Does Berlin want this project in the Town Forests? Is the project compatible with existing visitors and the management of wildlife and natural communities in the Town Forests?
2. Does the requesting party or Berlin have the knowledge and resources to implement this project?
3. How will the project be sustained long-term?