

Berlin Town Forests: Project Application Review Questions

Guiding Documents and Resources

1. Vermont Land Trust Easement Agreement May 19, 2008
2. Irish Hill Forest Management Plan July 7, 2021
3. ANR Atlas, Vermont Agency of Natural Resources, <https://anr.vermont.gov/maps/nr-atlas>
4. Biofinder Map, Vermont Agency of Natural Resources, <https://anr.vermont.gov/maps/biofinder>
5. Vermont Town Forest Recreation Planning: NATURAL RESOURCES GUIDE, https://vtcommunityforestry.org/sites/default/files/pictures/tf_natural_resource_guide_revised_9_23.pdf

Resources

- Community Wildlife Program, Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department, <https://vtfishandwildlife.com/node/221>
- Town Forest Recreation Planning, Vermont Urban & Community Forestry, <https://vtcommunityforestry.org/places/town-forests/recreation-planning-initiative>

Guiding Questions

Use the guiding documents and guiding questions to evaluate the proposed project. The person or organization that proposed the project, as well as the Berlin public, should be invited to all formal discussions. Additional research or consultation may be needed to determine compatibility with the property and existing uses.

Establish a Project Review Timeline

After receiving a completed Project Application, the applicant and the Berlin Conservation Commission will work together to develop a tentative timeline for project review. This timeline will vary from project to project and will be based on the complexity of the proposed project, and if there is a need to ground-truth the proposal perhaps in different seasons, to obtain public input, or to obtain outside consultation such as a wetland review..

Easements and Forest Recreation Management Plan

1. Is the Proposed Project allowed in the conservation easement and is it consistent with the primary purposes of the conservation easement?
 - a. Is the project consistent with the “conservation of natural resources” purposes of the easement?
 - b. Is the project consistent with the “non-motorized, non-commercial recreation opportunities” purposes of the easement?
 - c. Is the project a “permitted use” of the property?
2. Is the Proposed Project consistent with the current Forest Recreation Management Plan or would the Plan require an update to allow this project?

Public demand and support for project

3. What is the evidence for public demand and support for this project, especially support from Berlin residents? Is there a need to determine the level of support using hearings, surveys and other methods?
4. Are there any potential impacts on abutting properties?

5. Are there nearby opportunities for the same activity? Please list.
6. Does the town or region have an established need for this project or activity in community plans or documents?

Natural Resource Impact

7. Use the ANR Atlas, the Biofinder Atlas and field visits to understand possible Natural or Cultural Resource Impacts.
 - a. Is the proposed project location on or near any of the following natural features?
 - Vernal Pools
 - Deer Wintering Areas
 - Ledges/Cliffs/Talus
 - Mast stands
 - Interior forests
 - Significant natural communities
 - Wetlands
 - Rare, threatened, or endangered species habitat
 - Floodplain forests
 - Streams/rivers
 - Early succession forests
 - Lakes and ponds
 - b. What is the “Natural Resources Atlas, Vermont Agency of Natural Resources” guidance for the project and any nearby natural features?
 - c. Will the project impact any cultural resources such as stone walls?
 - d. Is further research or consultation needed to determine impact?
6. Are there best management practices, project alternatives, or design criteria which can be implemented to mitigate or minimize adverse impacts on natural resources?

Visitor Management and Existing Visitor Impact

7. How would the project impact the existing forest user experience? Are there potential conflicts with existing uses/users of the forest?
8. How would the proposed project specifically impact non-motorized users of the forest?
9. Are there any safety concerns around the new use?
10. Are there best management practices, project alternatives, or design criteria which can be implemented to mitigate or minimize adverse impacts on other recreational experiences?

Construction

11. Will this project require any new trails or structures, or any modifications to existing trails such as relocations, modifications of the tread, drainage changes, increased width or height?
 - a. If yes, who would be responsible for construction and what is their experience?
 - b. What standards will be used to guide the work?
 - c. What equipment will be needed for the project including motorized vehicles?
 - d. Are there any potential dangers or safety risks during construction? If an organization, is it insured?
 - e. Are there any costs and how will they be covered?

On-going Maintenance

12. Will this project require any on-going maintenance?
 - a. If yes, describe on-going maintenance activities and frequency.
 - b. Who would be responsible and what is their experience?
 - c. What standards will be used to guide the work?
 - d. What equipment will be needed including motorized vehicles?
 - e. Are there any potential dangers or safety risks during maintenance? If an organization, is it insured?
 - f. Are there any on-going costs and how will they be covered?

Approved by the Berlin Selectboard June 6, 2022