

Scale: 1:225,000

Vermont Town Forests

Municipal Forest Types

- TOWN FOREST
- TOWN CONSERVATION AREA
- TOWN WATERSHED
- TOWN FIRE DISTRICT
- TOWN PARK
- TOWN SERVICES
- TOWN GRAVEL PIT
- SCHOOL FOREST
- SCHOOL CONSERVATION AREA

Additional Protection Other Conserved Lands

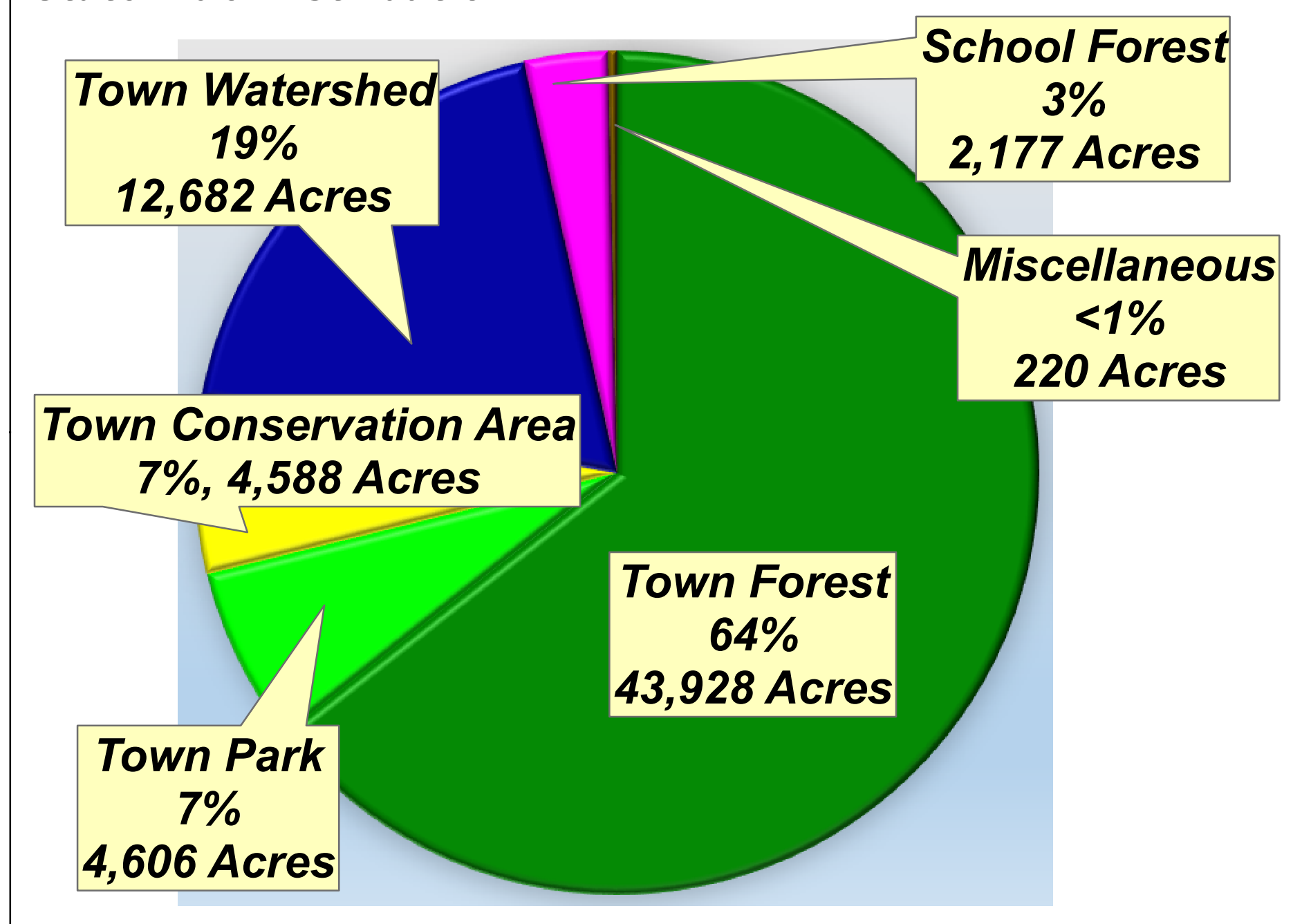
- Conservation Easement
- Federal, State, and Private

Sources: Vermont Agency of Natural Resources; Vermont Land Trust; The Trust for Public Land; and individual Vermont towns.

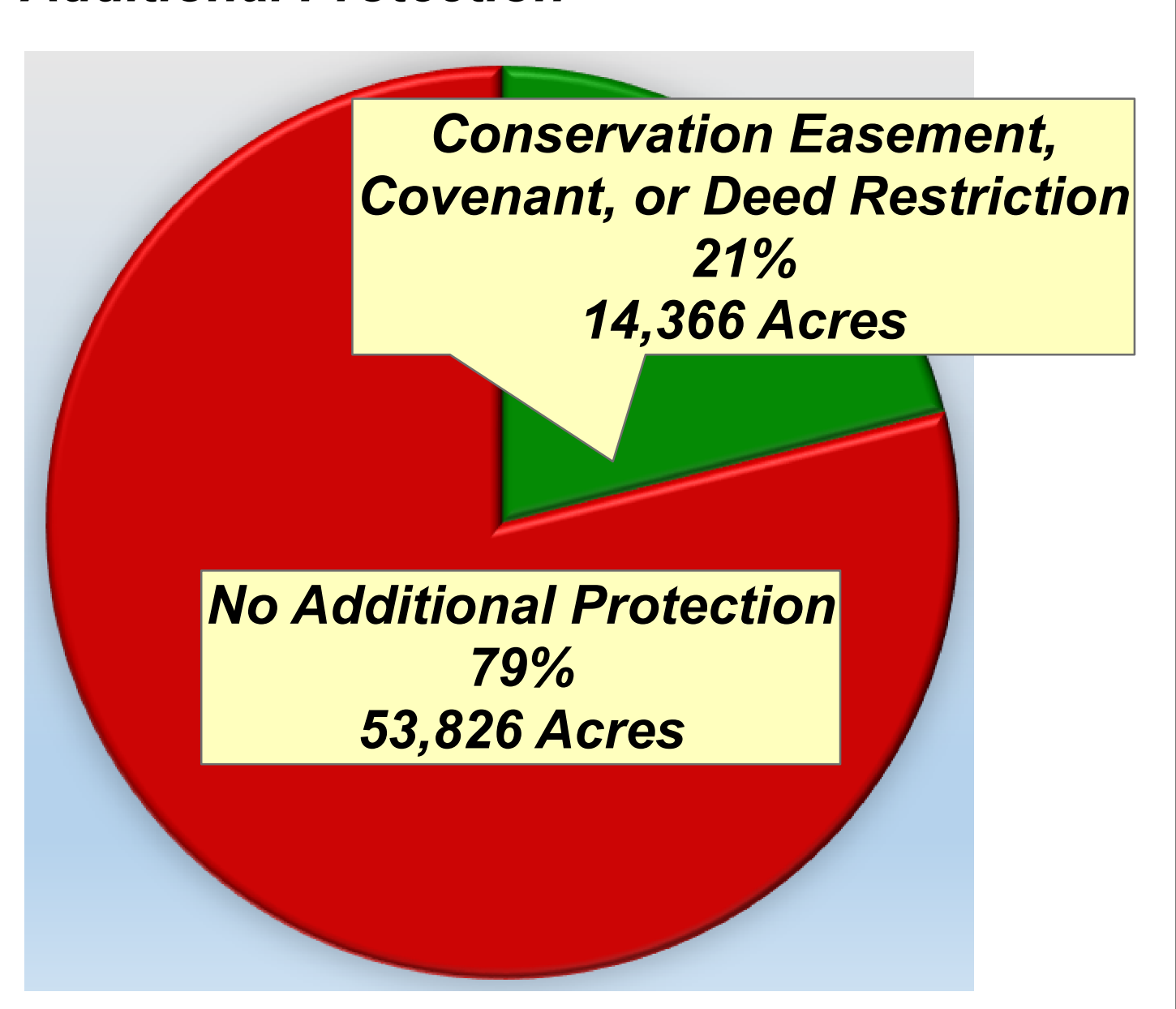
Abstract

Municipally-owned properties form an important part of Vermont's forested landscape, and they also contribute to the state's matrix of conserved lands. However, these lands are often little recognized and appreciated, and many are not permanently protected from conversion to other land uses. To better understand the distribution, extent, and uses of municipal forestlands, the Vermont Town Forest Database was created in 2009 and includes a geographic information system (GIS) layer and accompanying database describing the uses and conservation status of each known property. These lands include properties that are officially labeled as town forest, but municipal forestlands also include natural areas, parks, school forests, watersheds, fire districts, and other designations. As these labels suggest, the uses of town-owned forests vary widely, often encompassing some combination of timber management, recreation, education, water-quality maintenance, and protection of sensitive ecological features. The GIS map and database are currently being expanded and improved to reflect changes during the previous five years and to address omissions in the original version. The updated map and revised statewide summary will help highlight the value of these forestlands, facilitate establishment of additional town ownerships, and encourage long-term protection. Funding support for this project was provided by the Northeastern States Research Cooperative (NSRC), a partnership of Northern Forest states (New Hampshire, Vermont, Maine, and New York), in coordination with the USDA Forest Service (<http://www.nsrcforest.org>).

Statewide Distribution



Additional Protection



Conclusions

As of December 2014, the database contains 349 properties constituting 68,202 acres; 168 municipalities (of 255) are included. This acreage total represents a 4.3% increase in the total area of municipal forests in the database since 2009, with 5 additional towns listed as containing one or more forest ownerships. Revisions to the database include 24 additions, 2 deletions, and various improvements to descriptive fields. Currently, at least 4 known municipal forestland holdings are omitted from the database, including town forests in Danby and Mt. Tabor and a town park in Barton, and other errors of omission and commission may exist. Of the properties represented in the database, 21% are conserved by additional protection measures such as a conservation easement, covenant, or deed restriction. About half of the properties are known to have management plans. These results suggest that municipal forests remain an essential component of the Vermont landscape, and more towns are establishing forests as opportunities arise. The motives for creating and maintaining forests include a mix of economic, social, and environmental factors. However, the lack of permanent, third-party protection for many properties remains a concern; it is possible that some town forests will be sold and converted to other land uses in response to short-term municipal exigencies.

To submit missing properties or other suggestions for improving the database, please contact the University of Vermont Spatial Analysis Laboratory (Sean.MacFaden@uvm.edu; 802-656-3007).

