

VERMONT FOREST FUTURE STRATEGIC ROADMAP



The Vermont Forest Future Strategic Roadmap planning process has created a high-level roadmap that lays out a future direction for Vermont’s forest products sector and forest economy.

It is a forward-looking and comprehensive roadmap that takes a “**big picture**” **approach**, reflects the complexity of today’s world, and responds to the challenges and opportunities facing the industry. The process included many voices and different perspectives, all coming together to focus on **growing a strong Vermont forest products sector and prosperous forest economy** that recognizes the broad range of values and benefits provided by our forests.

PILLAR 1: FOREST MANAGEMENT AND LAND USE

OBJECTIVE: Sustaining a diverse forest economy and contributing to climate change mitigation by supporting the health, resilience, and productivity of Vermont’s forestlands through stewardship and management.

STRATEGY: Manage for increased forest health.

- Action 1: Provide robust data on forest health trends.
- Action 2: Build a community of practice.
- Action 3: Demonstrate best practices for increasing forest health.

STRATEGY: Promote land use policies to maintain working forestlands.

- Action 4: Promote working forests in land use planning.
- Action 5: Support resilience and biodiversity planning.

STRATEGY: Empower landowners to maintain working forests by reducing barriers and creating incentives.

- Action 6: Support Vermont’s Use Value Appraisal program.
- Action 7: Boost capacity to assist landowners.
- Action 8: Provide incentives to landowners for forest management.

PILLAR 2: BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT AND CONDITIONS

OBJECTIVE: Creating a business environment and workforce that supports the competitiveness of the Vermont forest products sector.

STRATEGY: Enhance capacity for industry adaptation.

- Action 9: Adopt climate resilience strategies.
- Action 10: Strengthen industry service providers.
- Action 11: Build greater situational awareness.

STRATEGY: Build strong connections to the next generation workforce.

- Action 12: Boost the next generation of forest workers.

STRATEGY: Create a “problem-busting” approach focused on the forest economy.

- Action 13: Create a governmental interagency taskforce focused on solutions.

PILLAR 3: RESEARCH, INNOVATION, AND TECHNOLOGY

OBJECTIVE: Promoting innovation and adaptability in the Vermont forest products sector by supporting technological development, cross-sector collaboration, and processing capability for both new and existing forest products.

STRATEGY: Pursue new development opportunities for Vermont forest products.

- Action 14: Anticipate and respond to new consumer demands.
- Action 15: Recognize new economic development opportunities.
- Action 16: Leverage the success of the maple industry.

STRATEGY: Accelerate the adoption of technical innovation.

- Action 17: Build financial tools to help drive innovation.
- Action 18: Invest in accelerating innovation.

PILLAR 4: INDUSTRY REPUTATION AND MARKET PROFILE

OBJECTIVE: Strengthening positive market and consumer perceptions by communicating the importance of working forests and promoting the benefits and contributions of Vermont’s forest products and forest economy.

STRATEGY: Strengthen and maintain the social license of the forest products sector.

- Action 19: Promote the forest industry’s critical role as an ecosystem manager.
- Action 20: Educate land users and landowners about working forest landscapes.
- Action 21: Highlight professionalism of the forest industry.

STRATEGY: Encourage the demand, use and appreciation for Vermont forest products.

- Action 22: Elevate the importance of modern and efficient wood energy.
- Action 23: Leverage national wood promotional programs.
- Action 24: Encourage the use of Vermont woods in specialty products.
- Action 25: Stimulate local demand for use of wood in construction and building.

PILLAR 5: FOREST ECONOMY AND VERMONT COMMUNITIES

OBJECTIVE: Protecting and enriching the positive impact of the forest economy on the communities embedded in the Vermont forest landscape.

STRATEGY: Build stronger linkages between forest users and the forest products sector.

- Action 26: Connect recreational and other forest users with the forest products sector.
- Action 27: Demonstrate working forest landscapes and the forest economy.

STRATEGY: Imagining the forest community of tomorrow.

- Action 28: Empower Vermont communities to view local forests as an integral part of their future.
- Action 29: Engage indigenous groups, including Vermont Recognized Tribes, to expand the range of communities involved in forest management approaches.
- Action 30: Promote the economic contribution of the forest economy to Vermont communities.



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PILLAR 1: FOREST MANAGEMENT AND LAND USE



IMPORTANCE OF STRATEGIC PILLAR

This pillar places a strong focus on supporting **management to improve forest health** and promoting policies that support the **stewardship of working forests**. Throughout the survey work and industry stakeholder engagement, there was an expressed interest in exploring more intentional policy interventions and public investments to optimize conditions for healthy forests and forest landscapes. There is widespread agreement that the overarching approach to forest management should focus on **maintaining healthy forests that are resilient to climate change** and capable of supporting a viable and diverse forest economy. Previous research suggests that forest management practices over the past three decades have improved the overall condition of Vermont's forests (Morin, et al. 2020). However, Vermont's forest landscapes are facing new and emerging challenges, including climate change and more extreme weather events, shifting priorities for land use, and changing ownership of forestlands. For example, extreme rain events have been most pronounced in the Northeast, where the frequency of such events has increased by 74% (Dockry, Bengston, & Westphal, 2020).

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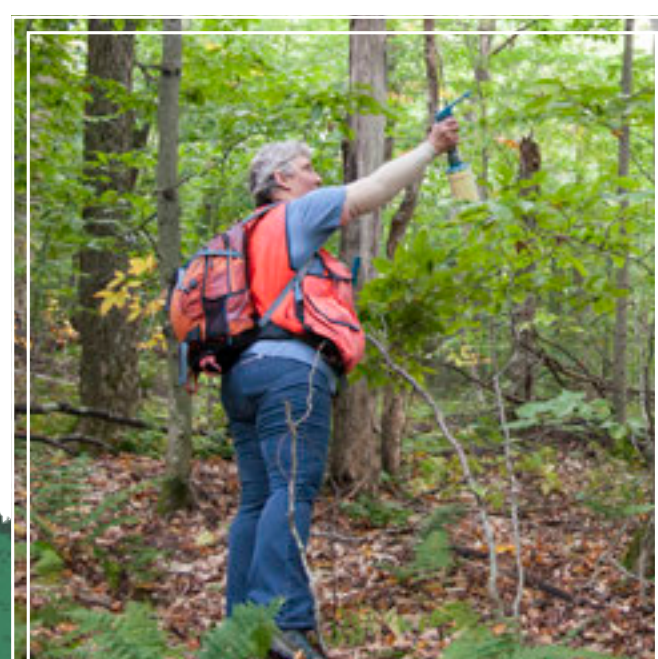
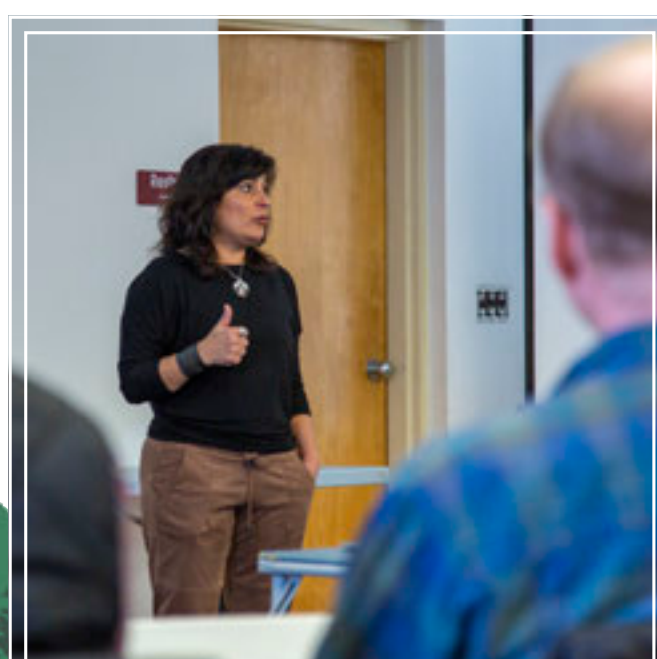
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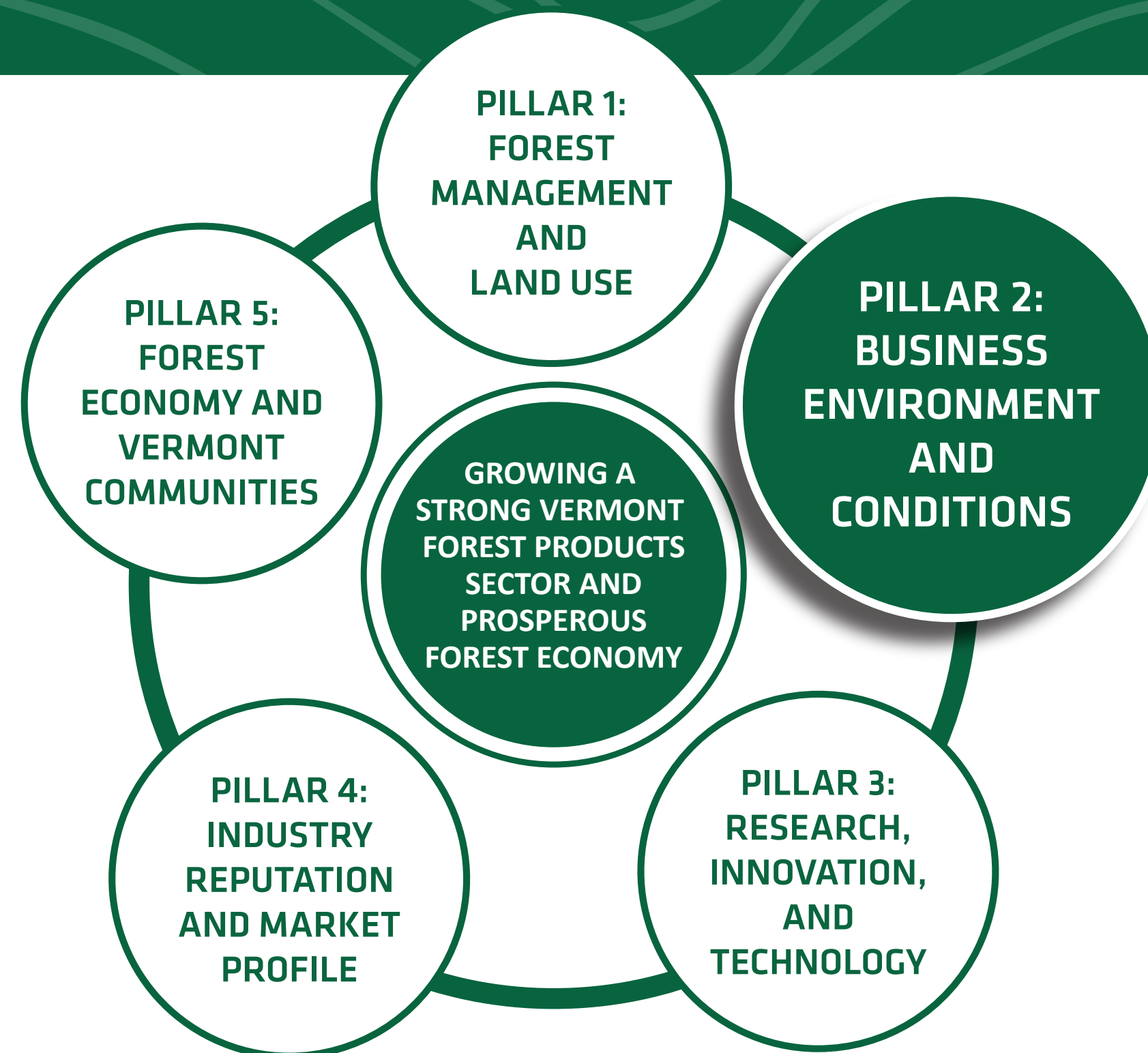
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VERMONT FOREST FUTURE STRATEGIC ROADMAP

PILLAR 2: BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT AND CONDITIONS



IMPORTANCE OF STRATEGIC PILLAR

This pillar aims to **strengthen the industry's ability to adapt to change** and to guide government in finding creative solutions. The stakeholder engagement process has highlighted the challenges facing Vermont forest products enterprises. Global competition and supply chain challenges have added to these competitive pressures. The stakeholder engagement work has highlighted concerns that wood processing in Vermont is becoming increasingly challenging. This covers the spectrum of processing from loggers to sawmills to furniture makers. The shrinking size of forest parcels and changing land ownership patterns add complexity to forest management. In addition, the pace of automation in many industries is accelerating, putting additional pressure on smaller operations that may not have the financial capacity to make major investments in upgrades. The forest products sector, like most resource economy sectors, is also **facing immediate and future workforce constraints**.

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PILLAR 3: RESEARCH, INNOVATION, AND TECHNOLOGY



IMPORTANCE OF STRATEGIC PILLAR

This pillar aims to **boost the pace of innovation and to seize new opportunities** as they emerge. The stakeholder engagement process has revealed a desire for a more proactive investment of public and private resources to help spur innovation and build strong cross-sector collaborations and linkages. The forest products sector has a long-standing and important role in Vermont's economy. There is a prevailing sentiment that additional support for innovation in new products and uses (e.g., mass timber) could help solve some long-term economic challenges and bring new economic vitality to the sector. However, the process of change and innovation can take time and often results in failures as well as successes. It requires a robust culture of risk tolerance, access to "patient capital," and the ability to absorb setbacks. **New England is an epicenter of industrial innovation**, but there is a need to build better connections between Vermont and this regional innovation ecosystem.

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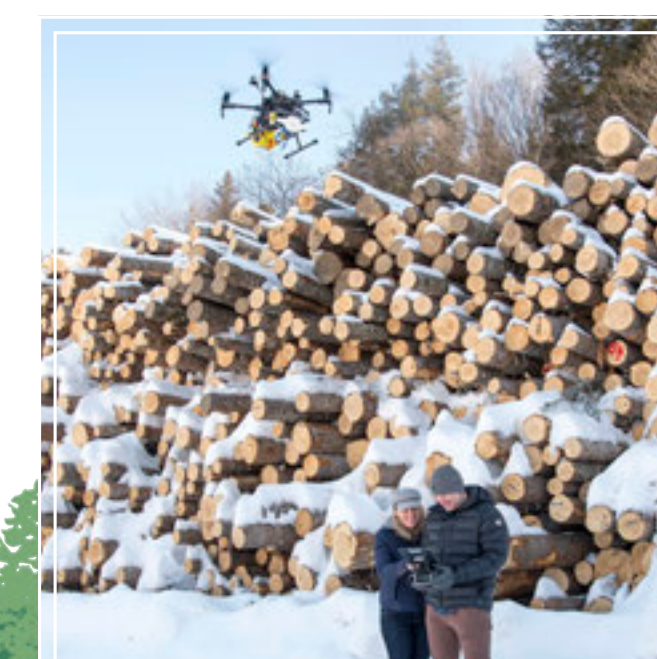
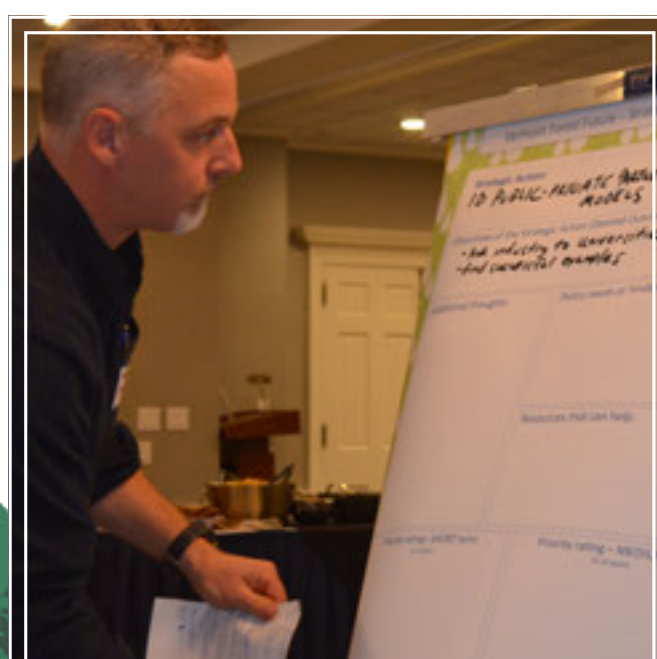
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PILLAR 4: INDUSTRY REPUTATION AND MARKET PROFILE



OBJECTIVE: Strengthening positive market and consumer perceptions by communicating the importance of working forests and promoting the benefits and contributions of Vermont's forest products and forest economy.

IMPORTANCE OF STRATEGIC PILLAR

This pillar focuses on building support and appreciation for Vermont forest products and the forest economy. Stakeholder discussions have highlighted the **need to better promote the inherent sustainability** of Vermont wood products and the forest products sector. The general public is becoming more aware of sustainability issues, including climate change and other stressors on forest health. To maintain support, Vermont's forest products sector must better communicate its approach to sustainability and sound forest management. The industry is well positioned to do this due to the key role that the forest products sector plays in ecosystem management. There is also a desire and opportunity to **boost the appreciation and use of Vermont forest products** and to find ways to capture a premium for unique and specialty wood products.

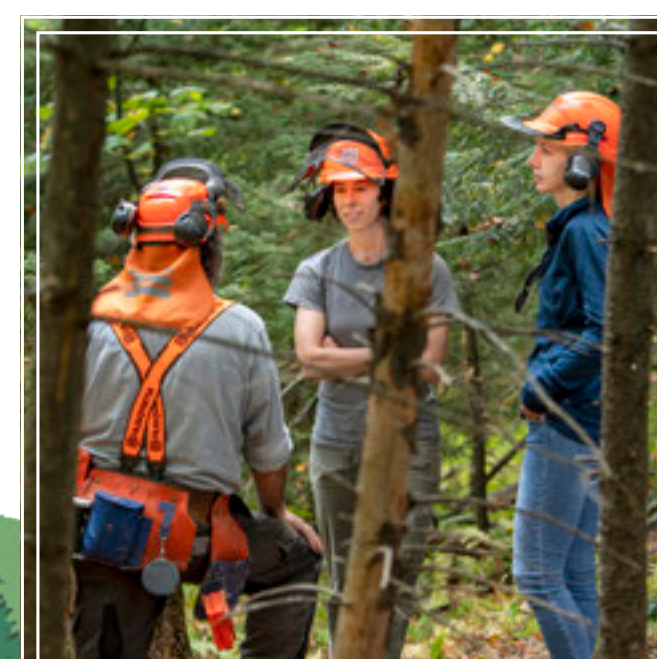
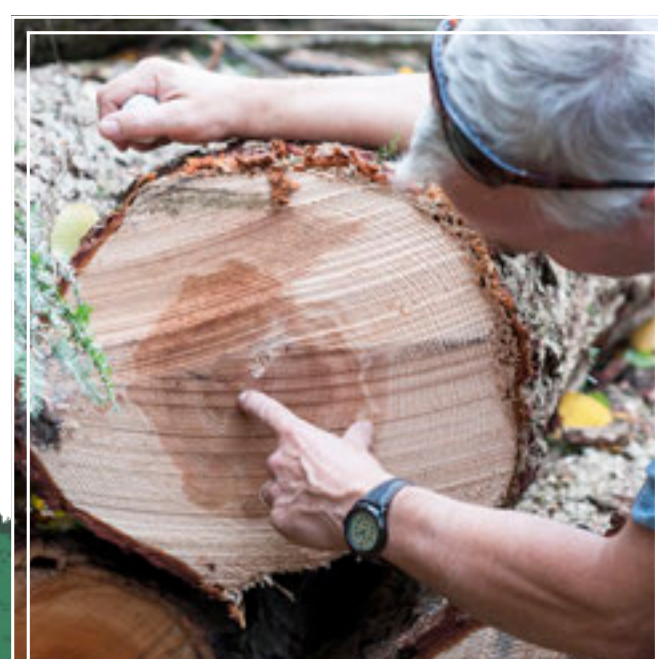
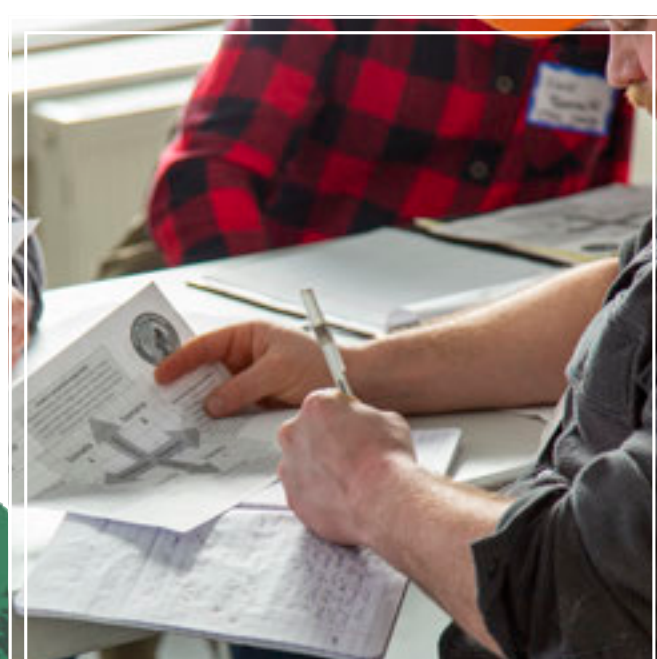
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PILLAR 5: FOREST ECONOMY & VERMONT COMMUNITIES



IMPORTANCE OF STRATEGIC PILLAR

Vermont is called the Green Mountain State for good reason: **more than 75 percent of our land is forested**. Vermonters and visitors alike value our forests for their environmental, cultural, and economic benefits. Sawmills were some of the earliest economic engines in many of Vermont's rural towns, which continue to benefit from the forest economy that grew up around them. The Vermont Forest Future Strategic Roadmap provides a **vision for how towns can maintain a strong forest culture** and take advantage of the many ways that forests contribute to our economy and well-being.

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