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The Forest Community

The relationship between the people of Vermont and our land has long been a balance amid the value found in its resources and the value derived from its existence. The citizens of Vermont have made a conscious choice to live here, and the majority of us made that choice because we find worth in the rolling forested landscape we call home. The forests here are extremely important to the state's economy, natural health and the public. It is because the wild areas of Vermont provide us with so many services that it is our responsibility to care for them in a way that preserves their integrity for both human and ecological posterity. The best way to keep the forests of our state whole is to educate the people. Every citizen of Vermont has the capacity to become a steward of the land through the culture of awareness and appreciation that education cultivates.

While skiing through the trails and weaving around tourists at the Trapp Ski Center one may experience both the concrete and abstract benefits of well treated private forests. The allure of that area is incomparable and so it attracts many people who've never seen such places. It's wealth in beauty is cause to rejoice, and like the state in general, the beauty brings in money through tourism. Our forests contribute to our physical and mental wealth through their beauty, their material resources, and recreation they provide. The forests brought the state 1.5 billion dollars in 2005 through these things alone, but some of their most important services go unmeasured. Healthy forests provide clean water, clean air, habitats, soil erosion prevention, and they act as carbon sinks. The most important idea for Vermonters to learn is that the well-being of forest ecosystems is beneficial to all living things.

Vermonters have learned from our past mismanagement of land how to better balance the need for resources and the need for healthful land. Obtaining equilibrium in how forests are used is essential to their continuation. We can assure clean watersheds, air, and habitats without halting the yield of goods from the forest. For instance timber can be harvested sustainably. Practices such as selective cutting are endorsed by the Forest Stewardship Council because they help forests become equitable and healthy. Implementing methods of using the forest that are either beneficial or cause little degradation is the best form of management. These methods of harmonious interaction exist, and people must be educated about them.

Most Vermont forests are privately owned. This means that the landowners have the power to do many things with their property. How can more Vermonters come to use this power in order to preserve our states incredible beauty, health and natural wealth? I would begin with education. Helping the public to learn about just how necessary the forests are will strengthen the state's already well-established appreciation for the natural world. I would attempt to mainly educate two groups of people. The best way to encourage future stewardship of the land is to have children become involved and invested. This will maintain a culture of people who know they are responsible for the earth. I would also help teach landowners the methods of using the land that are most sustainable. Vermont is a community that has already shown such integrity in how it regards its forests. In educating our literal successors and current landowners we can further our community's desire, and knowledge of how, to care for the land we love.