

Vermont Woodlands Association Celebrates 100 Years of Vermont Town Forests



2015 marks the centennial anniversary of Vermont's Municipal Forest Act, authorizing towns to purchase land for producing wood products, maintaining wildlife habitat, protecting water supplies, and providing forest recreation and conservation education. Town Forests are owned by municipalities and open to the public. In Vermont, 168 towns currently own 67,000 acres of forestland.

To help celebrate this important milestone and highlight the importance of these community assets, Vermont Woodlands Association's annual Essay Contest will focus on Town Forests and their contributions to community, culture, and way of life. However, we are asking high school students and/or classes to expand both thinking and approach to the typical "essay contest." For this year, students are not constrained by writing an essay but rather have the opportunity to choose other forms of expression to tell a Town Forest story. Video, audio, social media, website, and other forms of digital and print presentations are all acceptable.

The Town Forest Centennial Celebration is based on three key concepts that may help to guide student's thinking:

- Vermont town forests make our communities a better place to live, work, and play. Create One Today!
- Vermont town forests are valued public places that contribute to our health and well-being. Explore One Today!
- The health of Vermont's town forests relies on balancing many uses and benefits. Care for one today!

Regardless of whether your town has a Town Forest now or may be interested in creating one, there are ways for every high school and student to be involved. Vermont Urban and Community Forestry has created a website (<http://www.vtcommunityforestry.org/celebrate/town-forests>) where much useful information can be found. County Foresters (www.vtfpr.org) and Project Learning Tree (www.vermontplt.org) are also important resources.

This is an excellent opportunity for students to engage with community members, elected officials, conservation commissions, foresters, and others who are interested in stewardship. It's also an opportunity for collaboration with other disciplines within the school. **The official announcement with additional details of this year's Contest will be distributed in early August but we hope that prior notice will allow you to fit this into your curriculum for the Fall.**

This contest is open to all high school students in Vermont. Entries will be accepted by an individual, a team, or a class until February 1, 2016. Cash prizes of \$1,000, \$750, and \$500 will be awarded to the top three entries selected by our panel of judges. Submission details will be provided with the full announcement. Questions can be directed to 802-747-7900.

This contest is sponsored by the Vermont Woodlands Association, Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation, and the French Foundation.

