

Community Forest Fund

Strengthening Communities by Protecting the Land



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The Open Space Institute's Community Forest Fund was developed to catalyze the creation of community forests, supporting economic stability, providing access to the outdoors, and protecting wildlife, water, and other natural benefits. OSI's Fund, created in 2010, was the first, and to this day, the only, private grant fund focused solely on nurturing and supporting these community-driven forest conservation projects.

Over the past decade, OSI's Community Forest Fund supported the creation and expansion of 25 community forests, conserving more than 40,000 acres across Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont. **The Fund also helped towns and local land trusts raise money from public and private sources — leveraging \$6 for every \$1 invested.**

From 2010-2020, OSI's Community Forest Fund supported the creation and expansion of 25 exemplary community forests across Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont.

The Community Forest Fund expands on OSI's two decades of commitment to conserving the vast forests of Northern New England, building on the \$12.5 million Northern Forest Protection Fund that supported the conservation of 1.5 million acres. The foresight and commitment of Jane's Trust and Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, along with essential support from other donors, enabled the success of OSI's Community Forest Fund.

The Renewal of Community Forests

Beginning in the late 1980s, global market forces led timber companies to sell millions of acres of forestland. This transformation upended local economies and threatened to fragment the vast wild forest stretching across northern New England. Towns saw lands that had long been open — for hunting, fishing, camping and boating — divided and sold to distant landowners.

By giving towns control over their own natural resources — and by building civic participation across town leaders, nonprofits, and citizens — community forests became a powerful force for strengthening rural communities and ensuring long-term forest conservation in the region.

What Is a Community Forest?

In this land-use model of the 19th and 20th centuries, towns and community-based organizations own and manage forestland, and citizens benefit directly from its many natural, cultural, and economic values. Sustainably managed, community forests can provide jobs, wood and other forest products, clean drinking water, outdoor recreation, and revenues to support forest management, education and other town services.



Value of Community Forests

These projects combine land protection with community action to provide economic benefits to rural communities.

“After years of talk, the Cooley-Jericho Community Forest came to life because of OSI’s commitment to feasibility planning, and later to actual funding of the purchase. Now we have a great forest, and an even greater place for building community.”

– Rebecca Brown, Executive Director of the Ammonoosuc Conservation Trust



Page Pond Community Forest, NH (Jerry Monkman)

Open Space Institute
1350 Broadway, Suite 201
New York, NY 10018
info@osiny.org
www.openspaceinstitute.org

New England Office
53 Depot Street
Freeport, ME 04032
207-846-9700

Community Forest Projects

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