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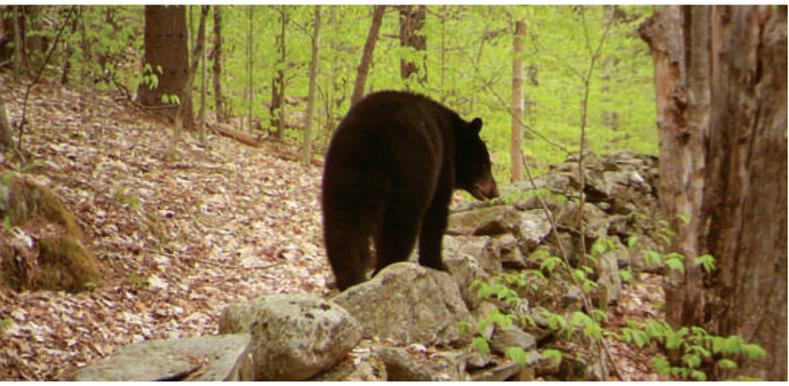
# The Center for Northern Woodlands Education

Strategic Plan 2018-2023





a voice  
for our  
forests



There's a woods I know where stone walls serve as raised paths for bobcats and bears. Neatly spaced mounds tell of an extreme wind event when big trees fell together and tilted their roots to the sky. Downslope in sandy pasture, blackberry canes spread on what was once the shore of a glacial lake.

The Northeast's forests are dynamic. They always have been. Yet the scope and speed of changes now underway present challenges to how we think about stewardship. Traditional notions of conservation and forest management are shifting to accommodate a warming climate, species and habitats on the move, and significant changes in how people live, work, and recreate on the land.

It's impossible to know what forests will look like in a hundred or two hundred years, but this much is certain: we can be champions for those future forests. In this period of transition, we can work to ensure that wooded land remains physically connected and ecologically diverse. We can support sustainable uses of forestland that build economic resilience in the face of sprawl and other threats. And, most importantly, we can expand the community of people who cherish our region's forests and take part in their stewardship.

For more than two decades, the Center for Northern Woodlands Education has welcomed people into the woods and into each other's company. Our focus is communication and our greatest asset is our reputation as an inclusive, trusted source on forest issues. Through *Northern Woodlands* magazine, our weekly *Outside Story* ecology series, special publications, and our popular annual conference, we have developed an informal network of organizations and individuals across the region.

In other words, we are well positioned – and I believe, obligated – to be a voice for proactive forest stewardship at a critical moment. Over the next three years, we intend to increase our organizational capacity and strengthen our magazine as the heart of a growing communication and education program. By putting greater focus on collaboration and strategic partnerships, we will amplify the voices of others who work in – and on behalf of – forests.

This next step in our organization's development represents a major investment by our board of directors, staff, and supporters. I'm excited for the opportunities it will create to grow the community of people who connect with and care for the land. Thank you for being part of this work.

Elise Tillinghast, Executive Director

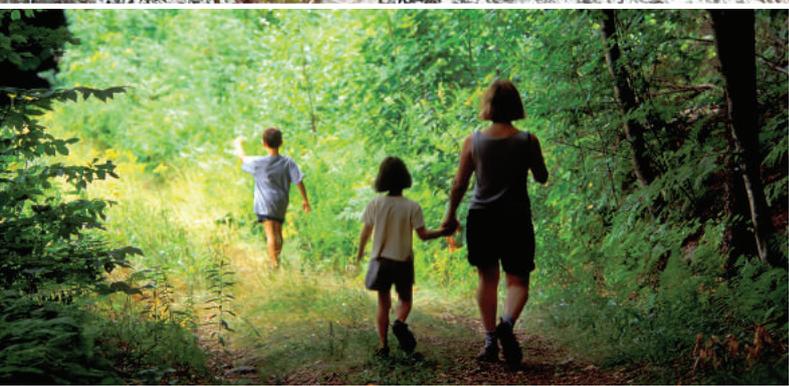
The mission of the Center for Northern Woodlands Education is to advance a culture of forest stewardship in the Northeast and to increase understanding of and appreciation for the natural wonders, economic productivity, and ecological integrity of the region's forests.





We envision a bright future in which all people value forests and work together for their stewardship.

To realize this vision, we foster awareness of the social, environmental, and economic benefits of woodlands, sound management and conservation practices, and solidarity among people who care about forests. By connecting people with the land, we contribute to the health of communities and ecosystems.



## Our Core Principles

An **open exchange** of information and ideas promotes understanding among people with different perspectives on forest stewardship.

**Science** illuminates the importance of forests and generates strategies to enhance their benefits.

**Education** builds awareness and commitment to positive action.

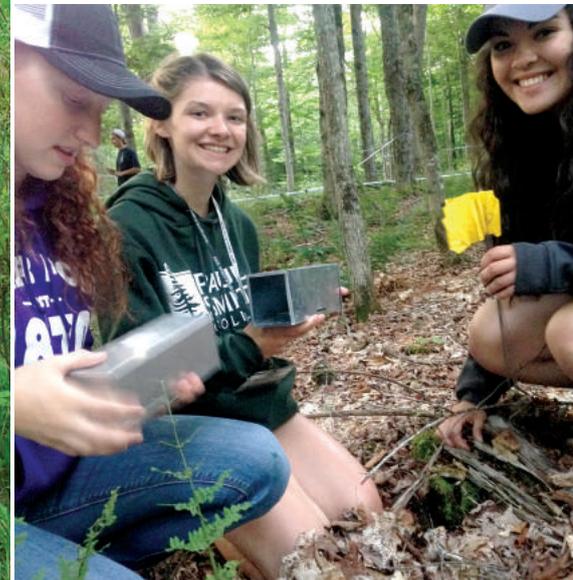
**Stories** unify people from diverse backgrounds by revealing what we have in common.

**Art** inspires new ways of looking at and seeing the forest.

A **healthy and diversified forest economy** is integral to maintaining forested landscapes.

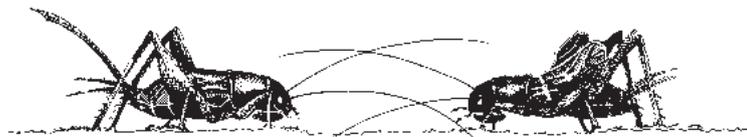
A **collaborative community** of forest stakeholders has the power to shape the future.

A **focus on the future and appreciation for the past** encourage sound stewardship today.



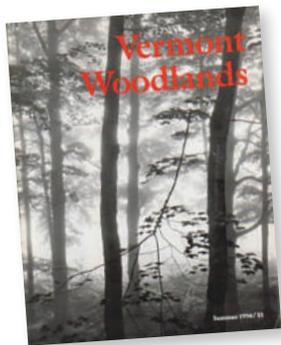
# Our History

In 1994, forester Virginia Barlow and writer Stephen Long published the first issue of *Vermont Woodlands*. From the beginning, the magazine celebrated forests for their ecological values and also encouraged readers to explore the economic and cultural importance of forests. As Long recalled, the goal was to reach people “who were really interested in the big picture of the woods but didn’t know it yet.” That “big picture” has guided our organization over the years, as we’ve diversified our work and broadened our geographic scope.



**1999**

*Vermont Woodlands* becomes *Northern Woodlands* to expand its coverage to all of New England and New York.



**2002**

*The Outside Story* first appears in newspapers across the region. This weekly ecology column now reaches approximately 250,000 readers in print and many more online. Two “best of” book compilations follow in 2006 and 2016.



**2003**

The Center for Northern Woodlands Education incorporates as a nonprofit and attracts a committed and diverse board of directors, making it possible to expand our mission.

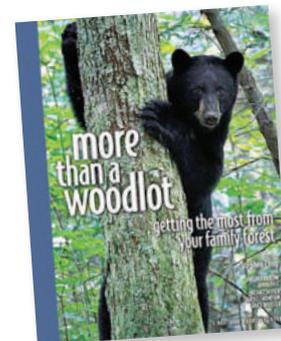
**2006**

*The Place You Call Home* is launched as a series of region-specific stewardship manuals, first customized for the Catskills and for the Upper Valley region of Vermont and New Hampshire. Later titles in the series include Vermont, New York, Massachusetts, and Connecticut.



**2012**

*More Than a Woodlot* is published. Written by Stephen Long with Virginia Barlow and others, the book provides a comprehensive look at management options for private forests, including timber resource development, habitat enhancement, and estate planning.



**2014**

We organize the first Northern Woodlands Conference, an annual gathering that features nationally recognized and regionally prominent speakers and workshop leaders. The conference has grown into a sold-out event attended by 140 writers, editors, artists, scientists, foresters, teachers, and others who share a love of the woods.



**2015**

*Northern Woodlands* magazine becomes available in a digital edition, which is offered free to schools. More than 6,000 students from 19 states benefit from this unique opportunity.

**2017**

We purchase a building for our new headquarters in the heart of Lyme, New Hampshire, with generous backing from our board of directors and other supporters.



## The Work Ahead

The Northeast has the ingredients for successful forest stewardship. It is home to leading forest research centers and academic institutions that offer innovative forestry and environmental science programs. Land trusts, public agencies, and the forest products industry often collaborate to achieve shared objectives. Teachers at all grade levels are taking children into the woods to nurture their curiosity and sense of place. And there is a strong tradition of peer-to-peer exchange within professional forestry and landowner associations. Meanwhile, artists and writers fuel our affinity for woodlands with creative works inspired by the forest.

Despite all these advantages, there are too few opportunities for members of these groups to come together and learn from each other. In addition, many people who benefit from forests have yet to recognize their importance. To integrate and grow our stewardship community, we need to shift to more proactive engagement. Fortunately, the diversification of media and declining costs of new media technologies now make it possible to interact more quickly and economically with a broader audience. There is also a growing interest in gatherings and special events that generate dialogue and connections among traditionally isolated groups.

Northern Woodlands has always created common ground for people who look at forests from different perspectives. In the years ahead, we will continue to promote shared understanding with our print and digital magazines, our ecology and stewardship books, and our extensive archive of web-based and mobile content. By expanding and cross-linking our communication methods, we will engage a wider and more diverse audience – from elementary school classrooms to offices of industry and government. With strengthened investment in stories, art, and events, we will motivate people to connect with the forest and with each other.



## Priority 1

Expand the community of people who value our region's forests and take part in their long-term stewardship.

**Goal: Cultivate existing and new audiences for Northern Woodlands publications and online resources.**

**Objectives:**

- Survey our community of magazine readers and website users to gather information about their connections to the land and how they use Northern Woodlands content.
- Use survey results, research, and feedback from our community to inform our content and suggest new areas of outreach.
- Identify and foster desired but under-represented audiences to advance a culture of forest stewardship.
- Build strategic partnerships with organizations that excel in serving new and existing audiences.

**Goal: Increase delivery of our content throughout the Northeast in order to foster understanding and appreciation of forests.**

**Objectives:**

- Develop and implement an updated marketing plan to promote our print and web-based offerings.
- Showcase the good work of other forest-focused organizations in our materials and programs.
- Deliver Northern Woodlands content at regional gatherings of landowners, foresters, scientists, naturalists, educators, and others.
- Engage people who influence public opinion, and others who can amplify stewardship messages and inspire action.

## Priority 2

Strengthen *Northern Woodlands* magazine as the heart of a growing communication and education program that offers people various ways to connect to the land.

**Goal: Improve our capability to produce outstanding content for the magazine and website.**

**Objectives:**

- Attract new talent to our pool of contributing writers, photographers, artists, and scientists.
- Provide the staffing and contracted support required to sustain editorial excellence.
- Grow our network of forest topic experts for guidance on editorial content and key forest issues.
- Generate new sources of advertising and sponsorship revenue.

**Goal: Produce a highly creative and engaging suite of events and multimedia products to advance our mission.**

**Objectives:**

- Create and showcase audio stories and short videos that pertain to topics featured in *Northern Woodlands* magazine.
- Organize online and in-person events that encourage people with different backgrounds and areas of expertise to come together and learn from each other.
- Incorporate in-depth, surprising, and eclectic content that captures attention and speaks to a wide range of audiences.
- Establish clear links between the magazine and our related products and events.

**Goal: Highlight opportunities to care for forests through informed participation in civic life.**

**Objectives:**

- Publish stories, profiles, and vignettes of volunteers working to sustain the community benefits of healthy forests.
- Report on regional initiatives that address current stewardship concerns, such as climate change and biodiversity loss, including information about related policy matters.
- Circulate topical content to people and organizations engaged in discussions of public policy.

## Priority 3

Increase our organizational capacity to better serve people who care about and benefit from forests.

**Goal: Build staff capacity.**

**Objectives:**

- Enhance opportunities for professional development, especially in areas that align with strategic priorities.
- Identify and address staffing needs to enable high levels of individual and team success.
- Update and introduce administrative tools that promote staff success.
- Promote workplace wellness.
- Allow flexible arrangements that enable staff to attend to personal and family needs as well as work responsibilities.

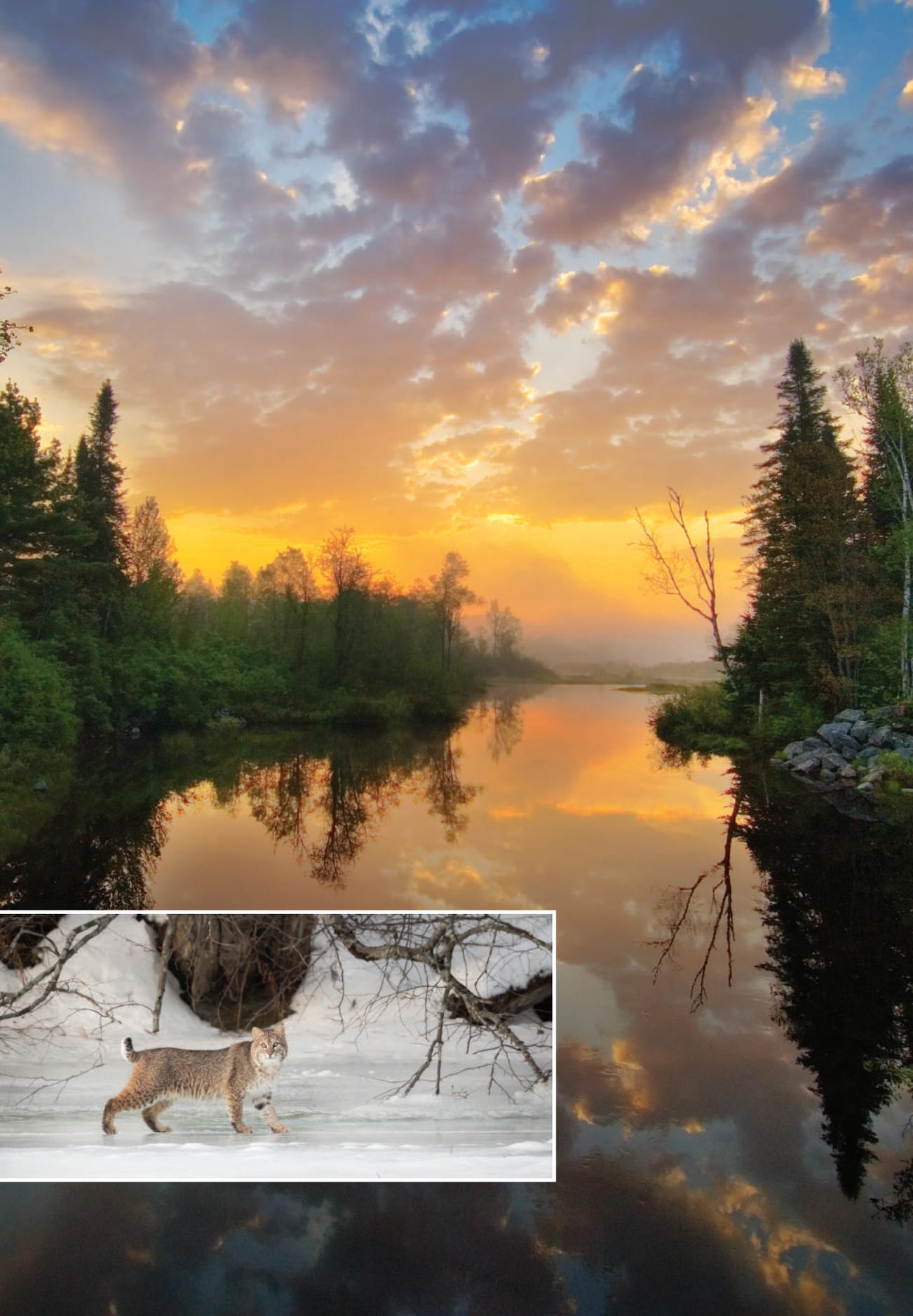
**Goal: Enhance the function of our headquarters.**

**Objectives:**

- Maintain the Northern Woodlands headquarters as a hub for creativity and collaboration.
- Meet the technological and workspace requirements of a productive and dynamic organization.

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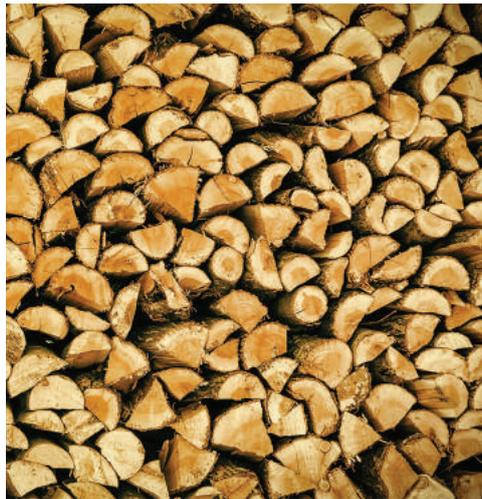


## Forests in Our Future

Forests in our region are tenacious. If left undisturbed, trees and shrubs take root nearly everywhere but bare rock and open water. Black spruce and tamarack rise from quaking bogs. Stands of chestnut oak and pitch pine grow on fire-prone ridges. And more than 130 other species of softwoods and hardwoods mix in infinite combinations across the landscape.

In many ways, these forests define our region: they provide beauty, clean air and water, habitat for wildlife, recreational and economic opportunity, and a rich tapestry of artistic and cultural traditions. From the woods we have built not just our homes but also our communities.

As society adapts to changing climatic and economic conditions, northeastern forests offer multiple pathways to a promising and resilient future. The Center for Northern Woodlands Education is committed to illuminating these pathways for the good of forests and society. Together, we can ensure that our forests thrive in the future and remain a vital part of our lives and identity.



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**Design**

Liquid Studio / Lisa Cadieux

**Photos**

First page

Forest canopy: ©KP McFarland/kpmcfarland.com

Turkey tail fungus: Charlie Schwarz

Opening Message

Fiddleheads: Nathanael Asaro/nathanaelasaro.com

Mission

Orange mycena: Frank Kaczmarek/Natural Lines Photography

Log truck: ©QT Luong/terrageria.com

Vision

Overlook: ©Chris Mazzarella/mazzphoto.com

Family in woods: ©Jim Block/jimblockphoto.com.

Our Core Principles

Forest tour: Eli Sagor on flickr

Band-winged meadowhawk: ©KP McFarland/kpmcfarland.com

Ecology students: Paul Smith's College

Forwarder: Peter C. Allen

Our History

Field crickets and red squirrel: Adelaide Tyrol/adelaidetyrol.com

The Work Ahead

Red squirrel and barred owl: ©Elinor Osborn

Priorities

Moose Bog: ©KP McFarland/kpmcfarland.com

Forester: Randy Williams/@spitzerphoto

Forests in Our Future

Johns River: ©Jim Block/jimblockphoto.com

Last page

Hunter: Roger Irwin Nature Photography

Wood pile: Tama66

Red fox: ©Sue Morse/KeepingTrack

All other photos

Northern Woodlands