

*Waitsfield, Vermont*



## Waitsfield Conservation Commission

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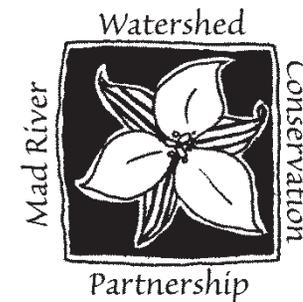
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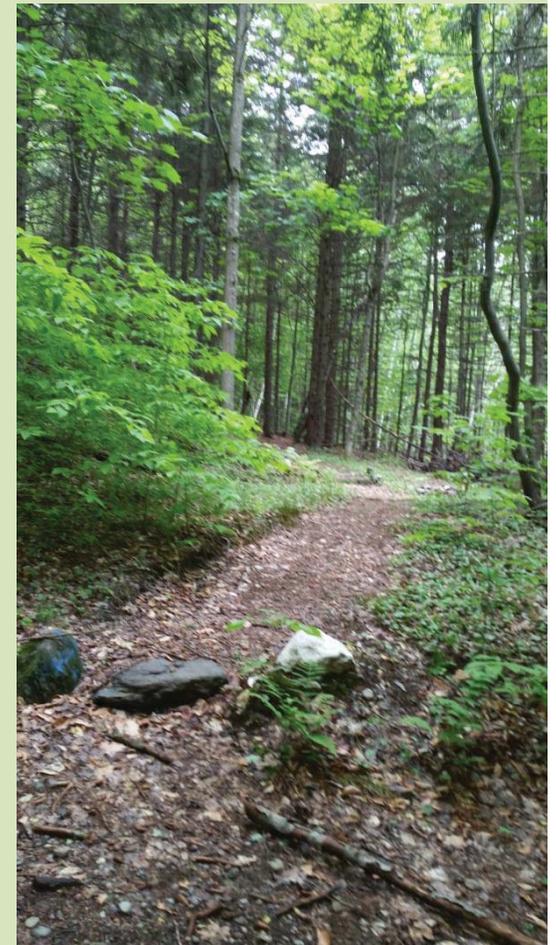
# Welcome to the Scrag Forest Gateway Project Public Forum

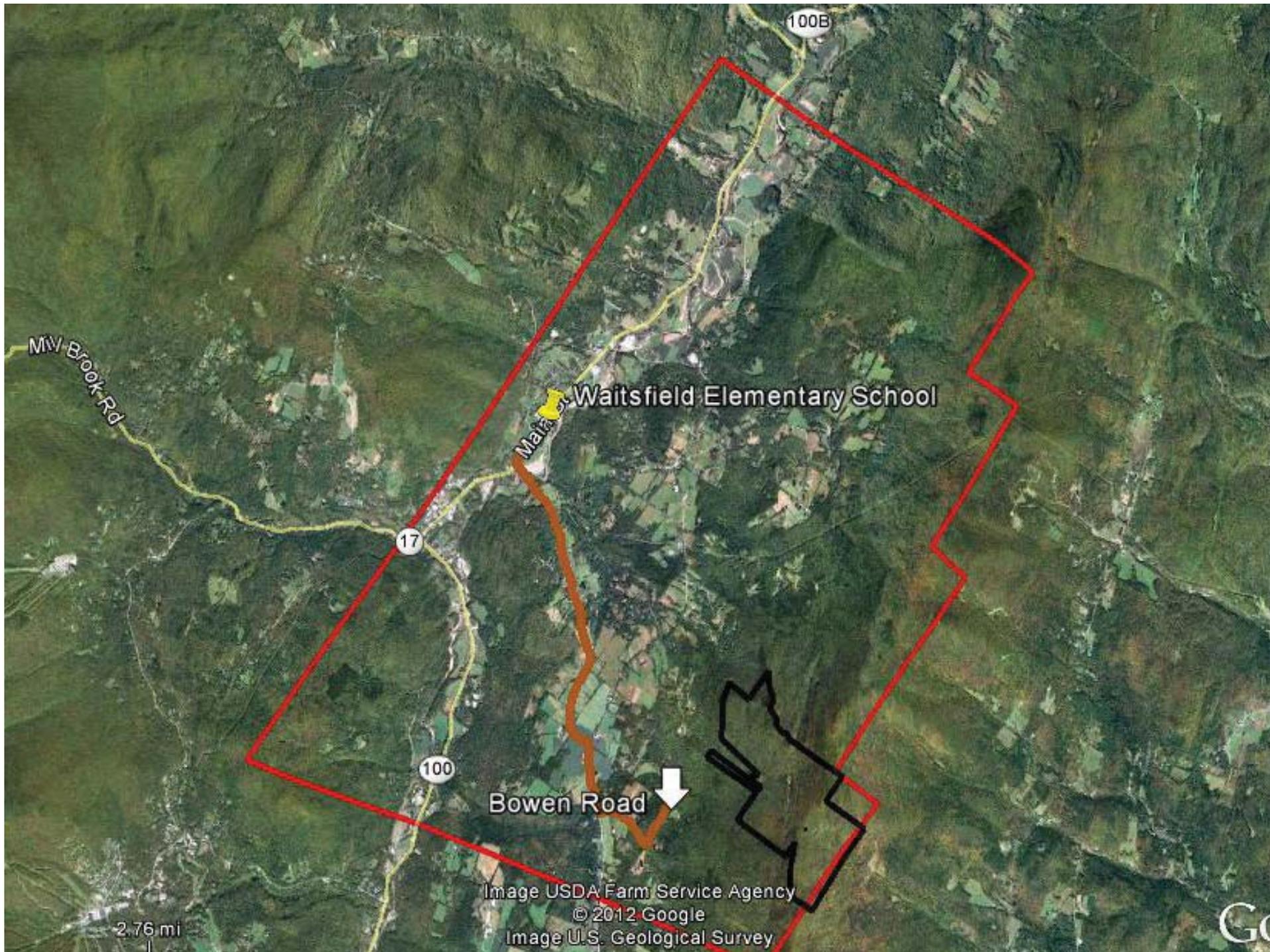


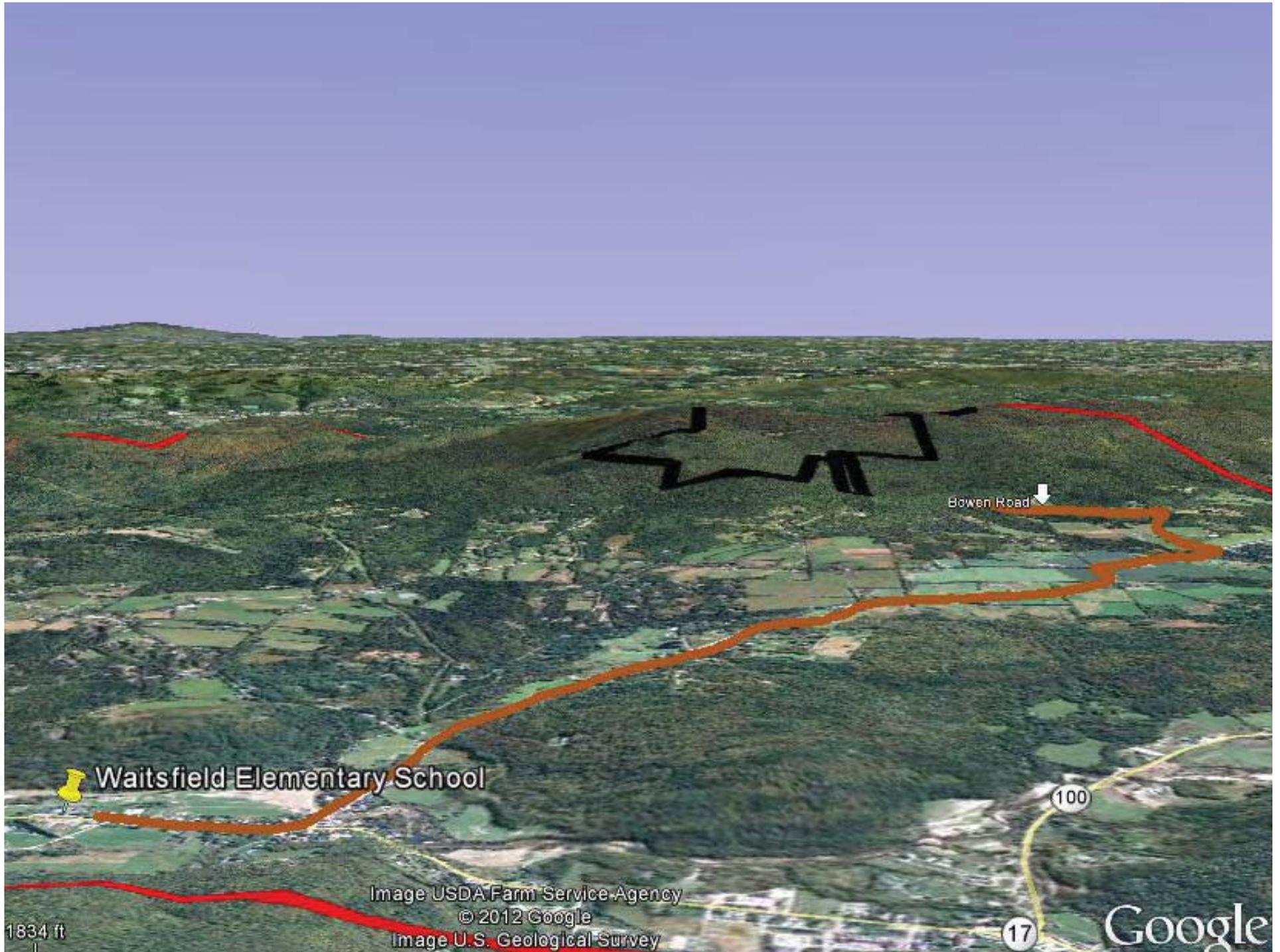
# Waitsfield's Scrag Forest Gateway Project

**A one-time, *now-or-never* opportunity to improve our Town Forest for current and future generations**

- Permanently secure much better public access
- Expand recreation opportunities for hiking, hunting, skiing, education and other outdoor pursuits
- Enable relocation and expansion of public parking area
- Conserve headwater streams, wildlife habitat, productive timber land
- Give Town more flexibility for future timber harvest access
- Provide for long-term economic benefits associated with recreation and tourism
- Gain these benefits with Town providing <10% of costs and net gain in municipal taxes







Waitsfield Elementary School

Bowen Road

100

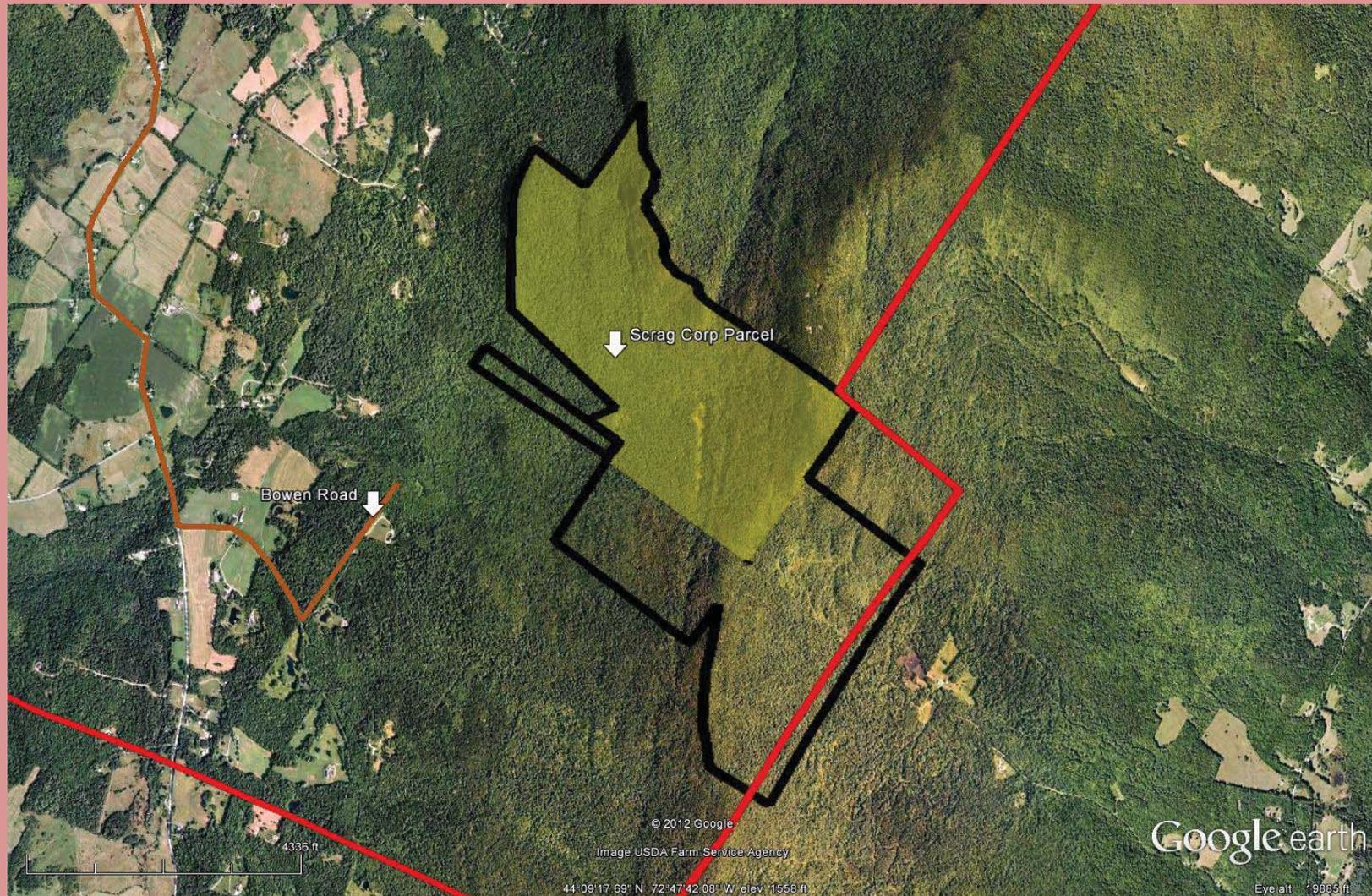
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1834 ft

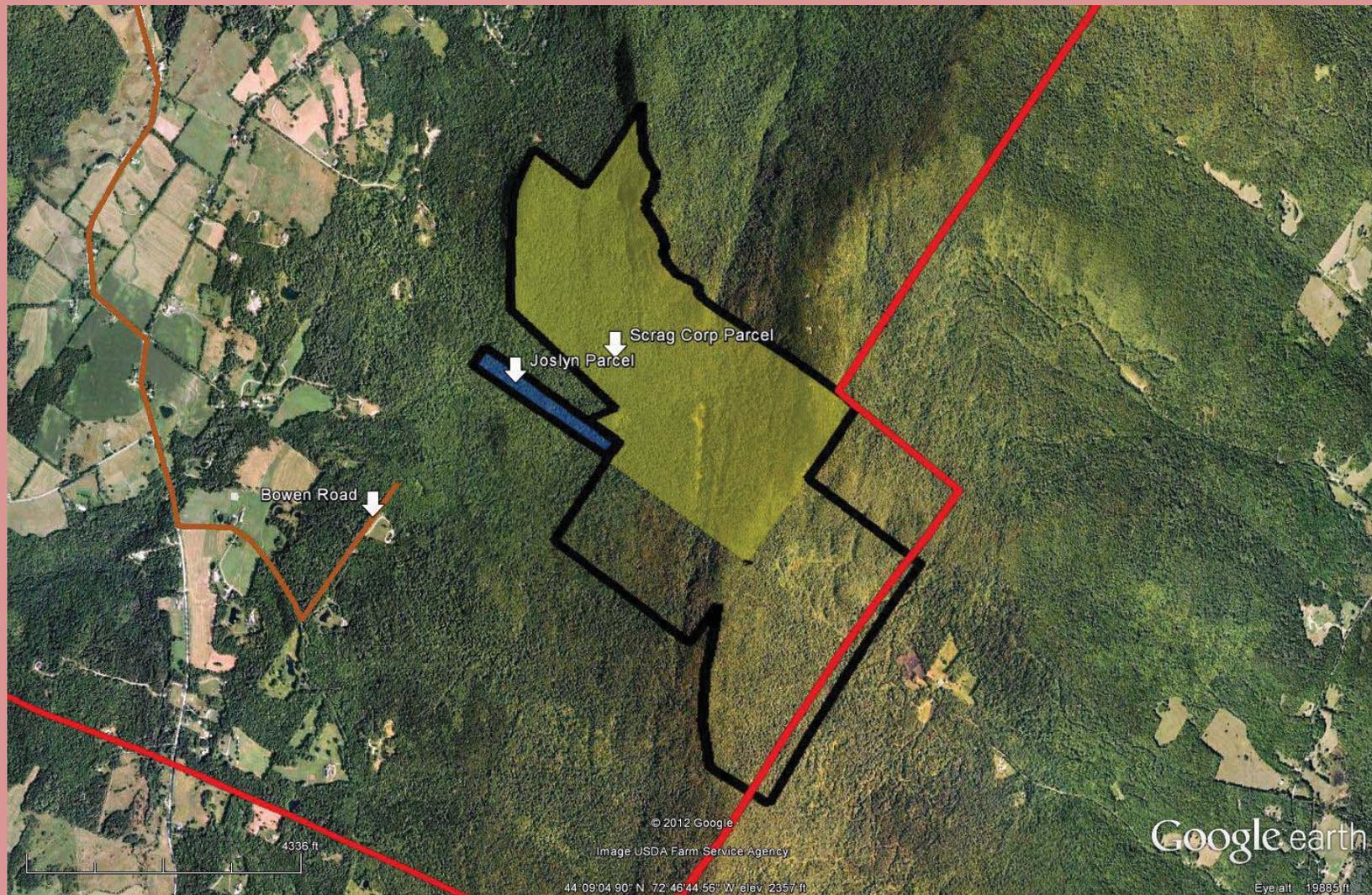
Image USDA Farm Service Agency  
© 2012 Google  
Image U.S. Geological Survey

Google

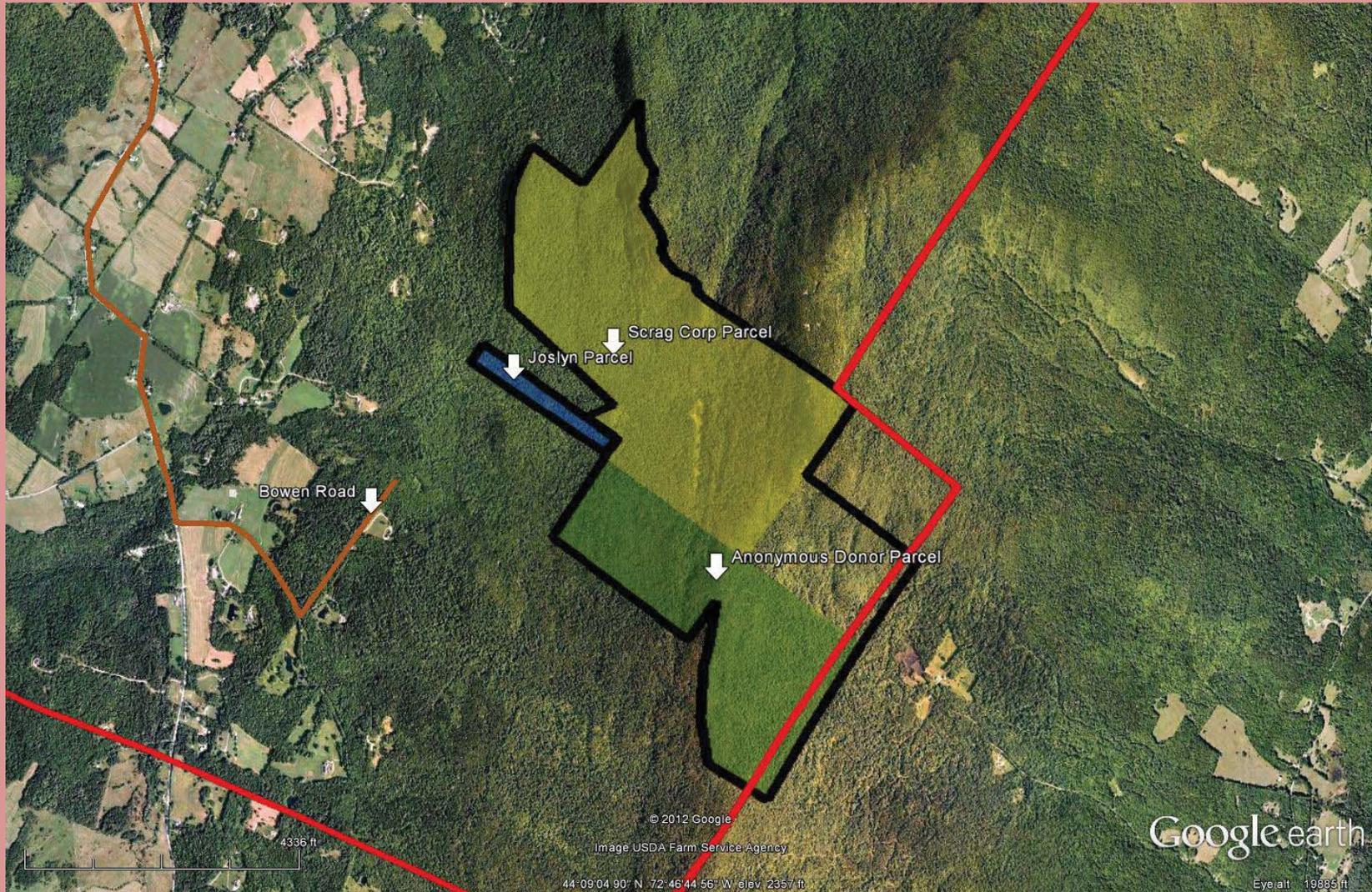
Waitsfield's Scrag Forest began with the 1991 donation of 360 acres by the Scrag Corporation – local residents who wanted to protect wildlife habitat and land for public use:



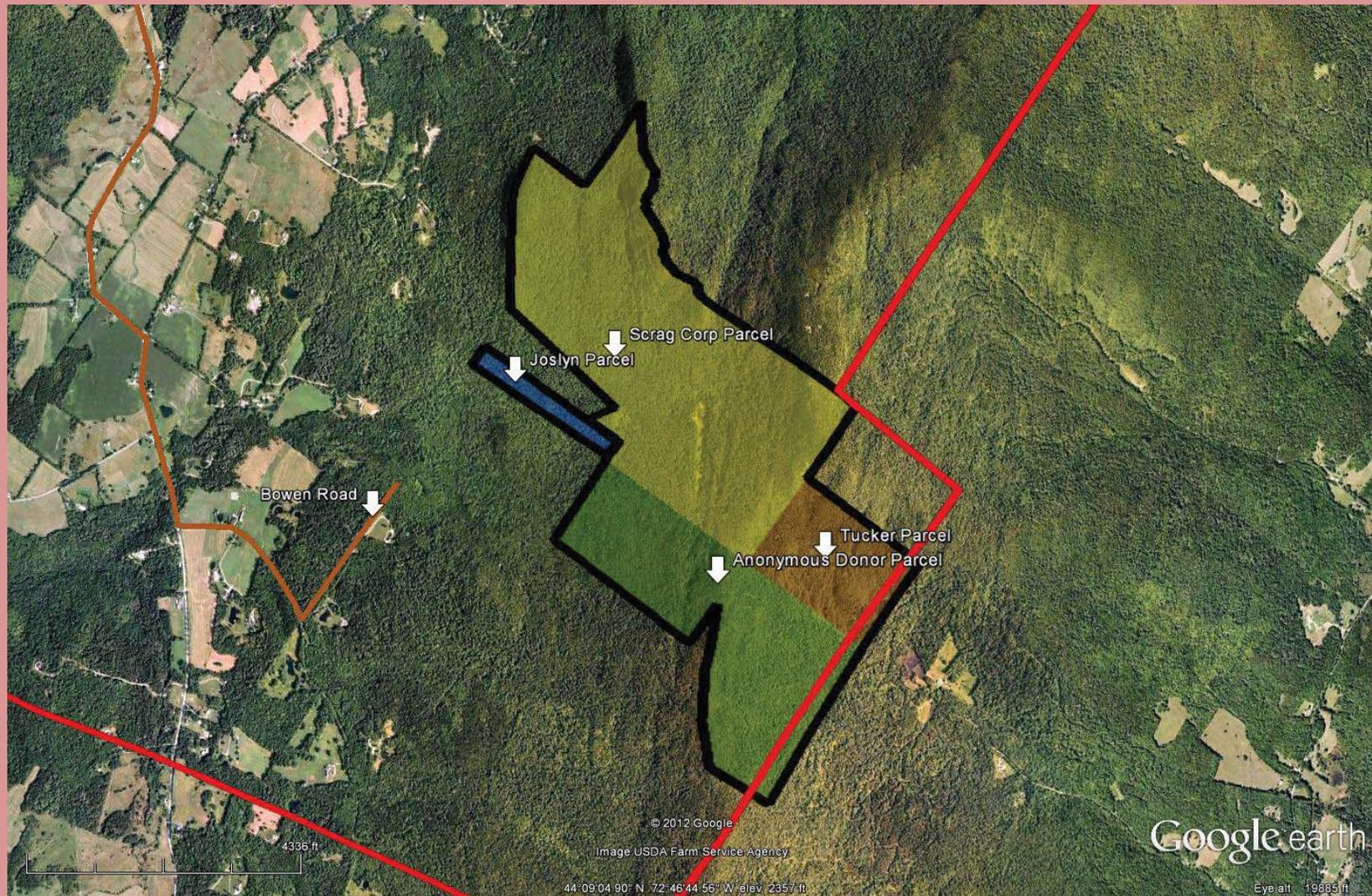
In 1997, the Town purchased 20 acres of land from Donny Joslyn



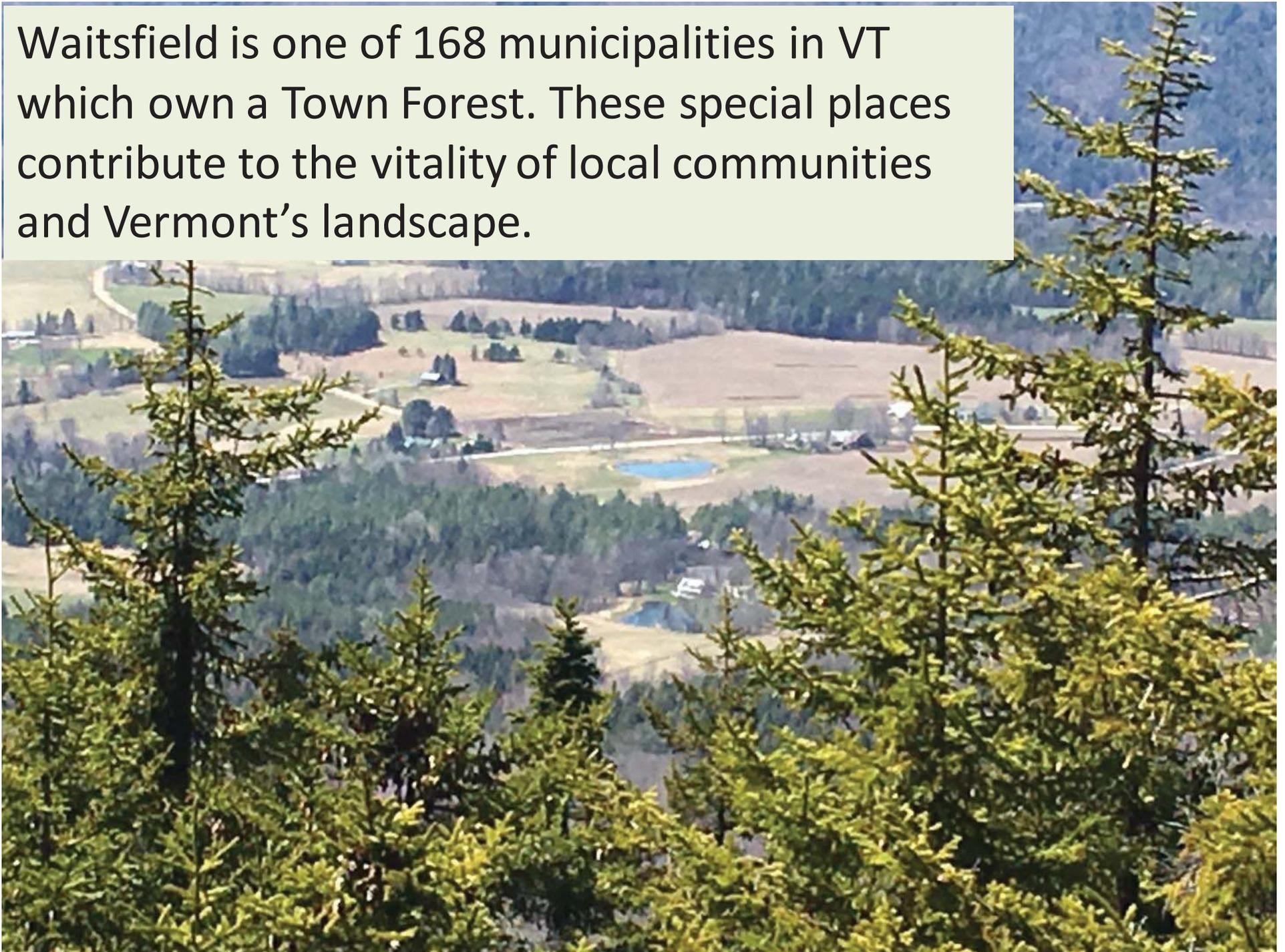
In 2006, an anonymous donor gave the Town 200 adjoining acres



In 2008, the Tucker family gave 60 acres to the Town.



Waitsfield is one of 168 municipalities in VT which own a Town Forest. These special places contribute to the vitality of local communities and Vermont's landscape.

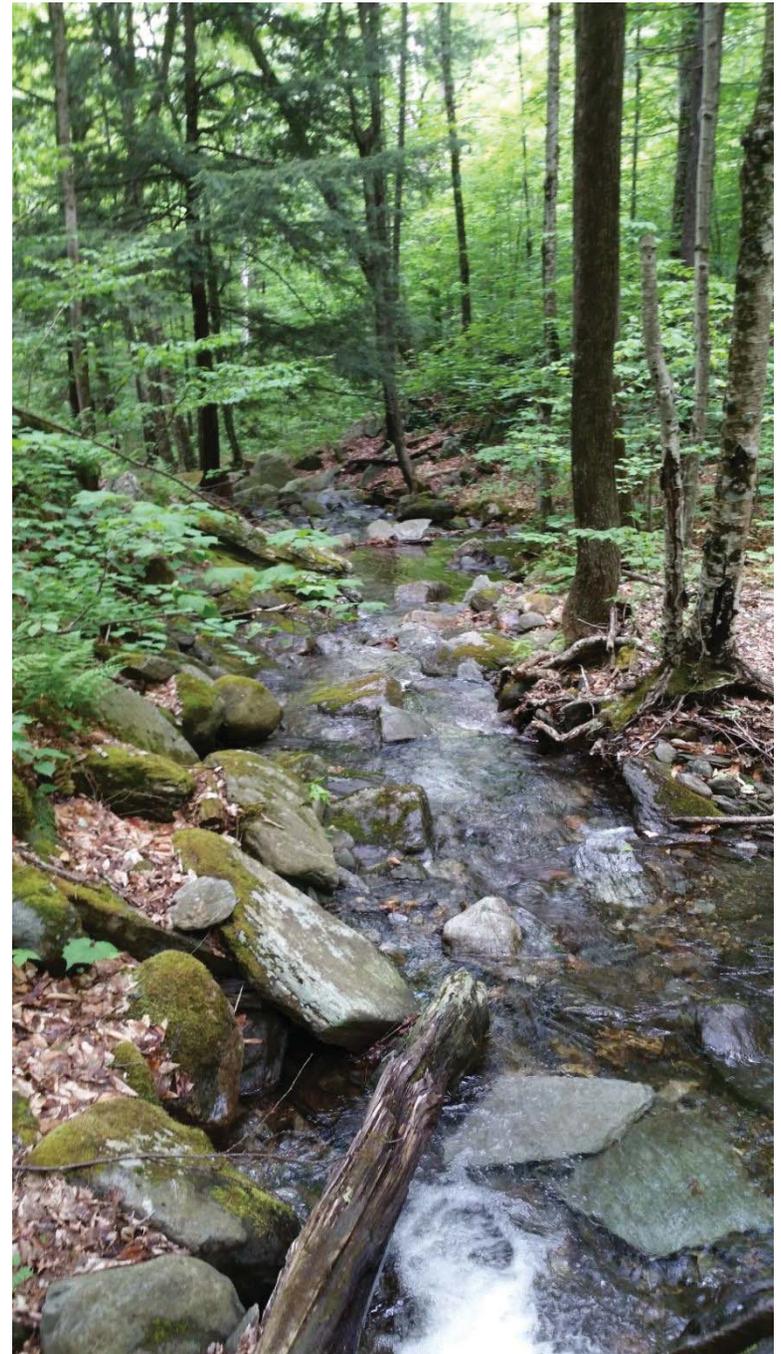


The 640 acre Waitsfield Scrag Forest protects significant natural resources and offers a unique experience for Mad River Valley resident and visitors



## The Scrag Forest provides:

Extensive headwater streams, wetlands, and forestland which support wildlife, maintain water quality, and reduce impacts from flood events in the Mad River...



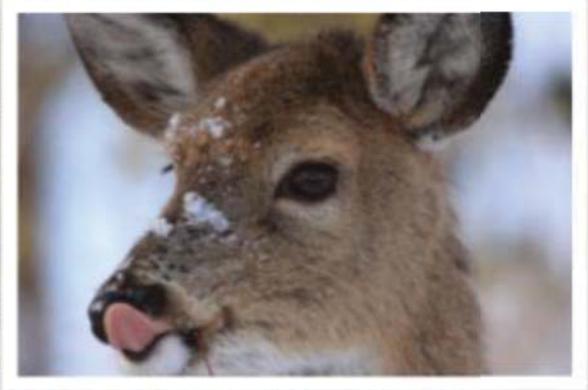
The Scrag Forest is part of the largest block of unbroken forest (4,145 acres) in the Mad River Valley, including natural communities, scenic outlooks, and a mile of ridgeline along the Northfield Mountains



The Scrag Forest provides diverse forested and riparian habitats for wildlife



AngieinTO

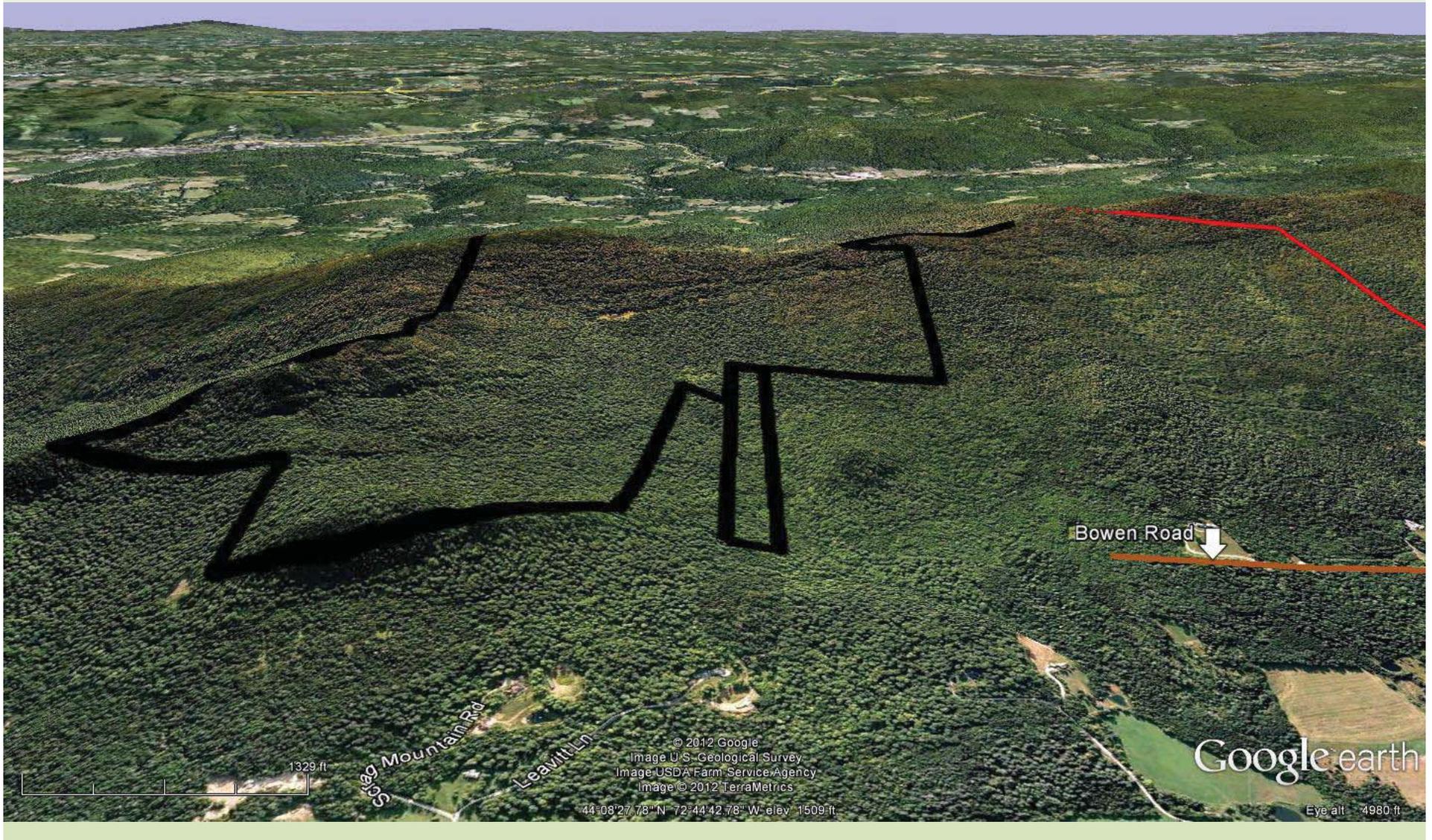


Forest Policy Research

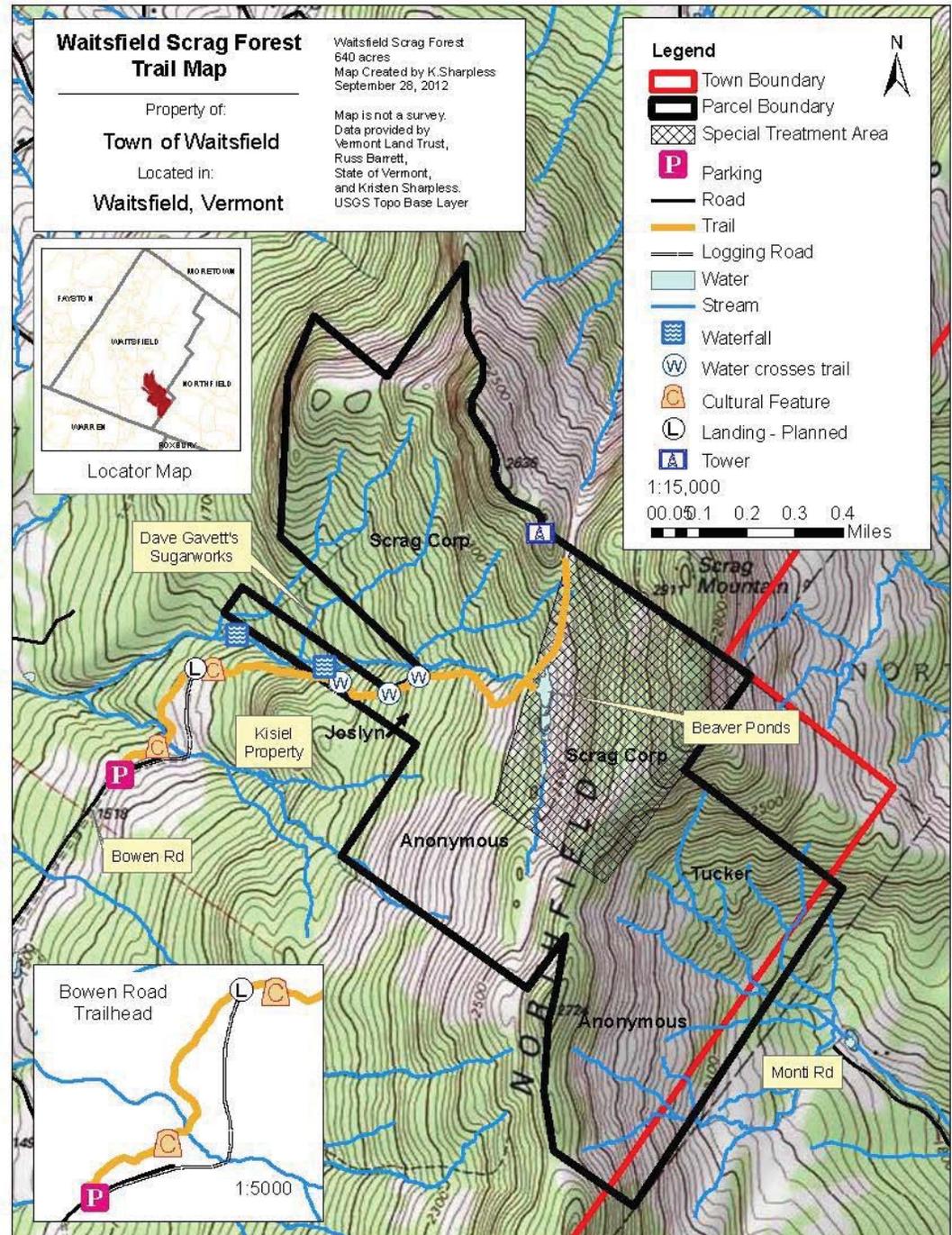


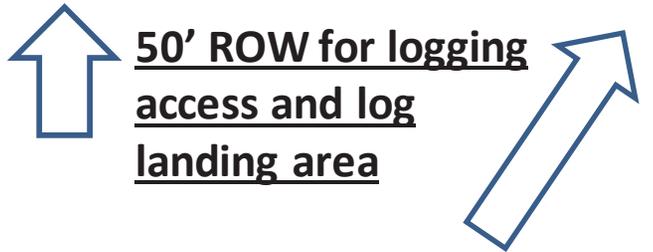


640 acres of forestland for public enjoyment, forestry, and natural heritage protection ... What more could you need?  
Access!



In 2008, the Town secured limited rights of way across the former Kisiel property for pedestrian and logging access

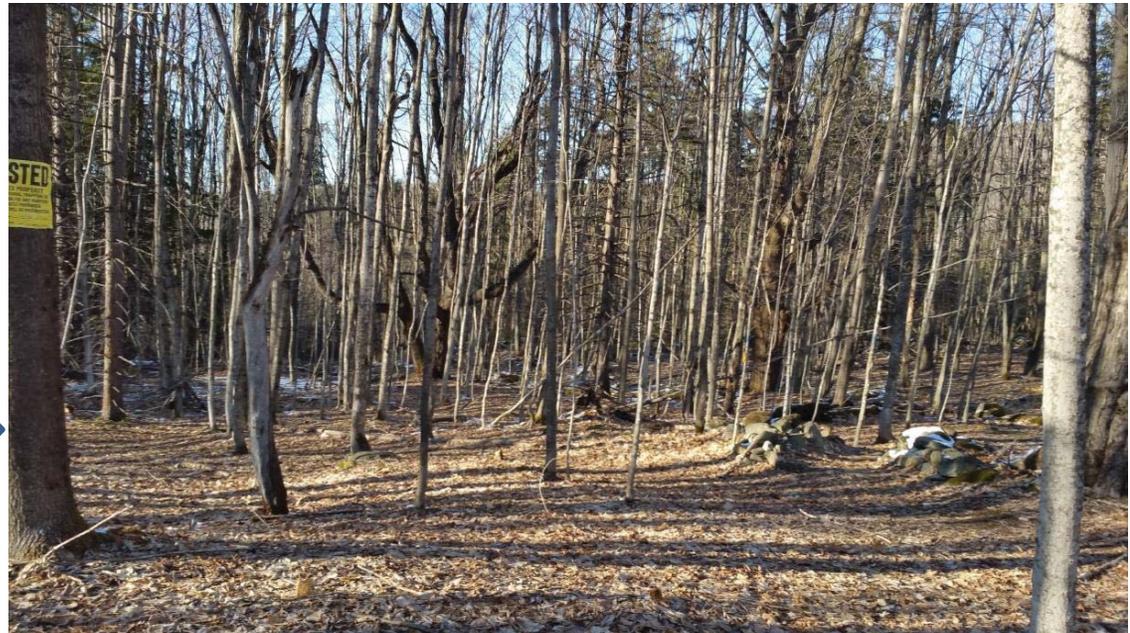
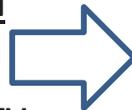




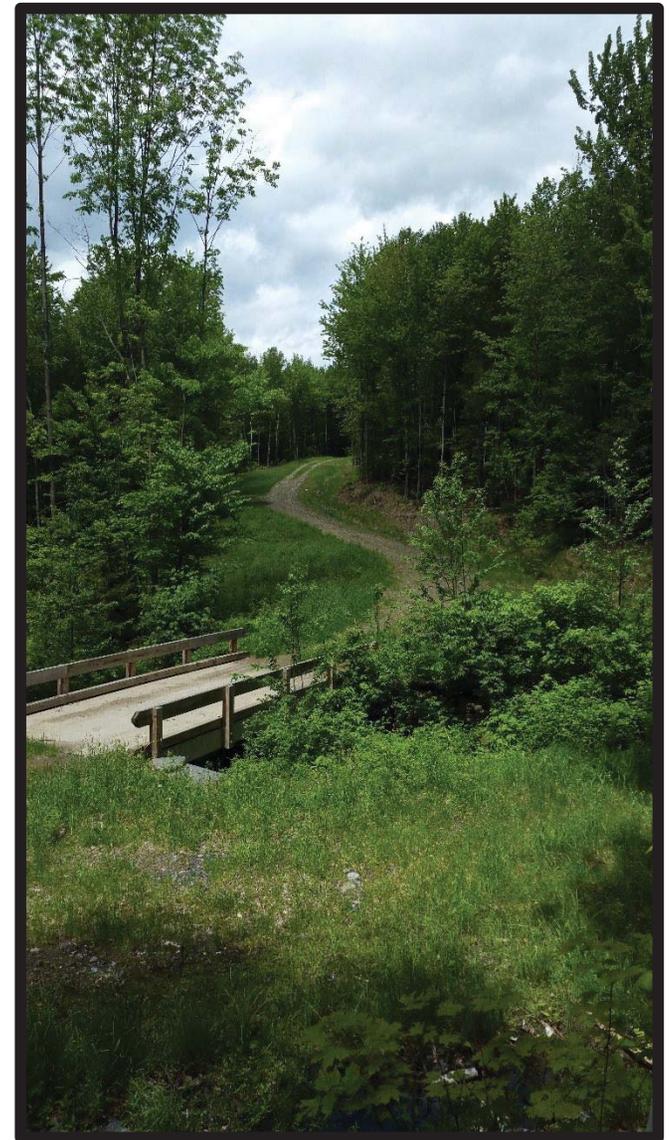
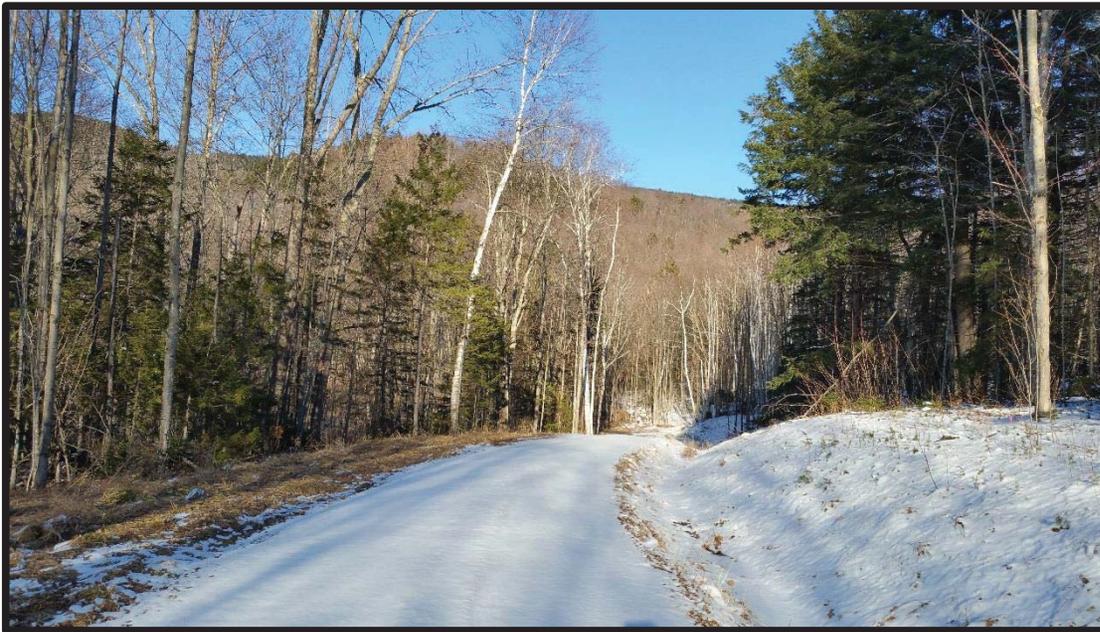
**50' ROW for logging access and log landing area**

**Parking for six cars**

**10' wide pedestrian trail for one mile**  
over private property to the town forest boundary



Still, many visitors to the Scrag Forest continued to use the private drive on Kisiel property for quicker, more convenient access to the Town land.



In 2014, Howard & Judy Saffan purchased the 160-acre Kisiel property. The property was permitted for three house sites.

The Saffans merged Lots 1 and 2 for their residence, which is under construction at the end of Bowen Road. Lot 3, still used by the public for unofficial access to Scrag, is permitted as a residential lot and has attracted interested buyers.



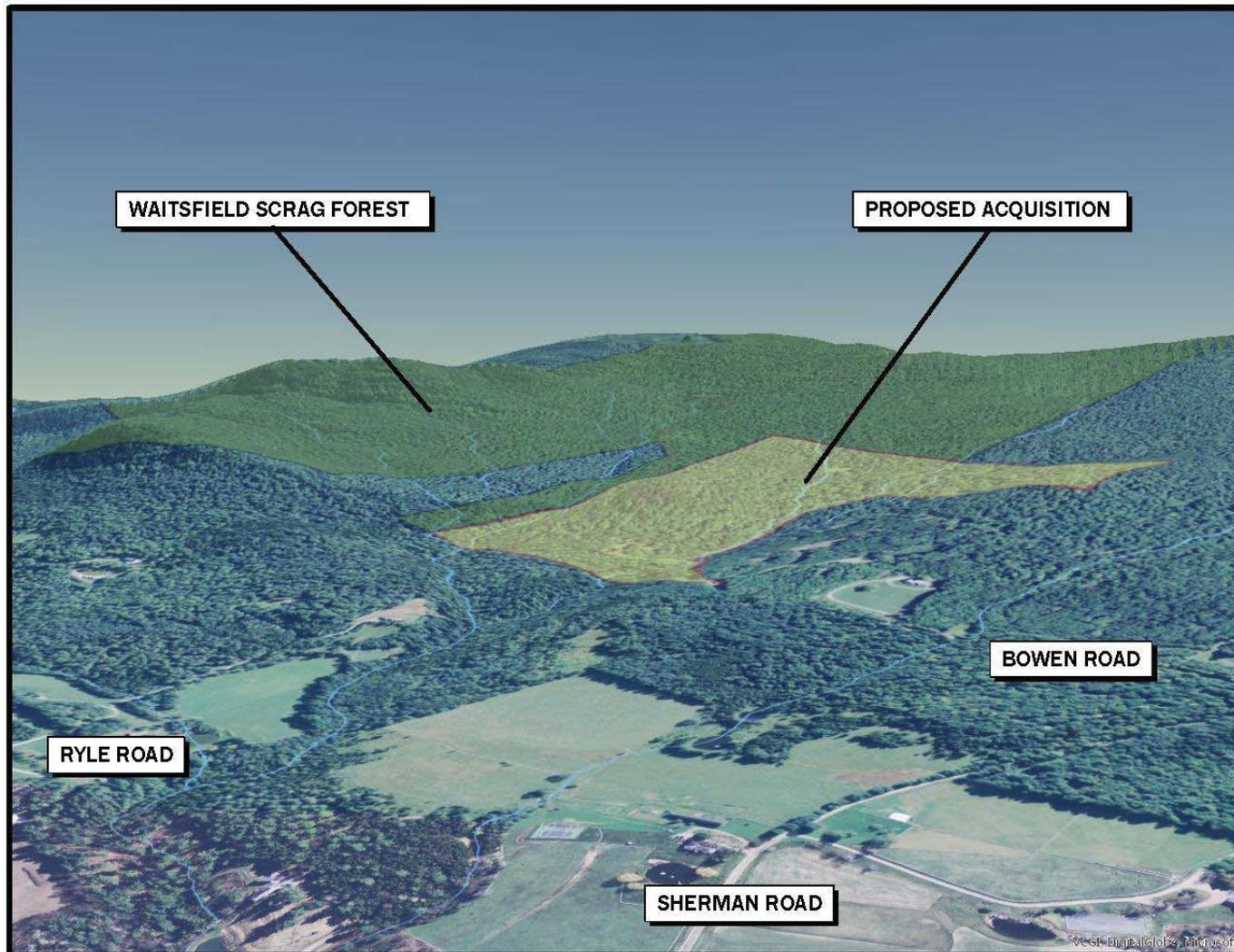
# The Opportunity

The Saffans have offered Waitsfield the chance to purchase 110 acres, including Lot 3 and surrounding forestland, for \$450,000. The property has been professionally appraised at \$650,000.



# The Missing Link

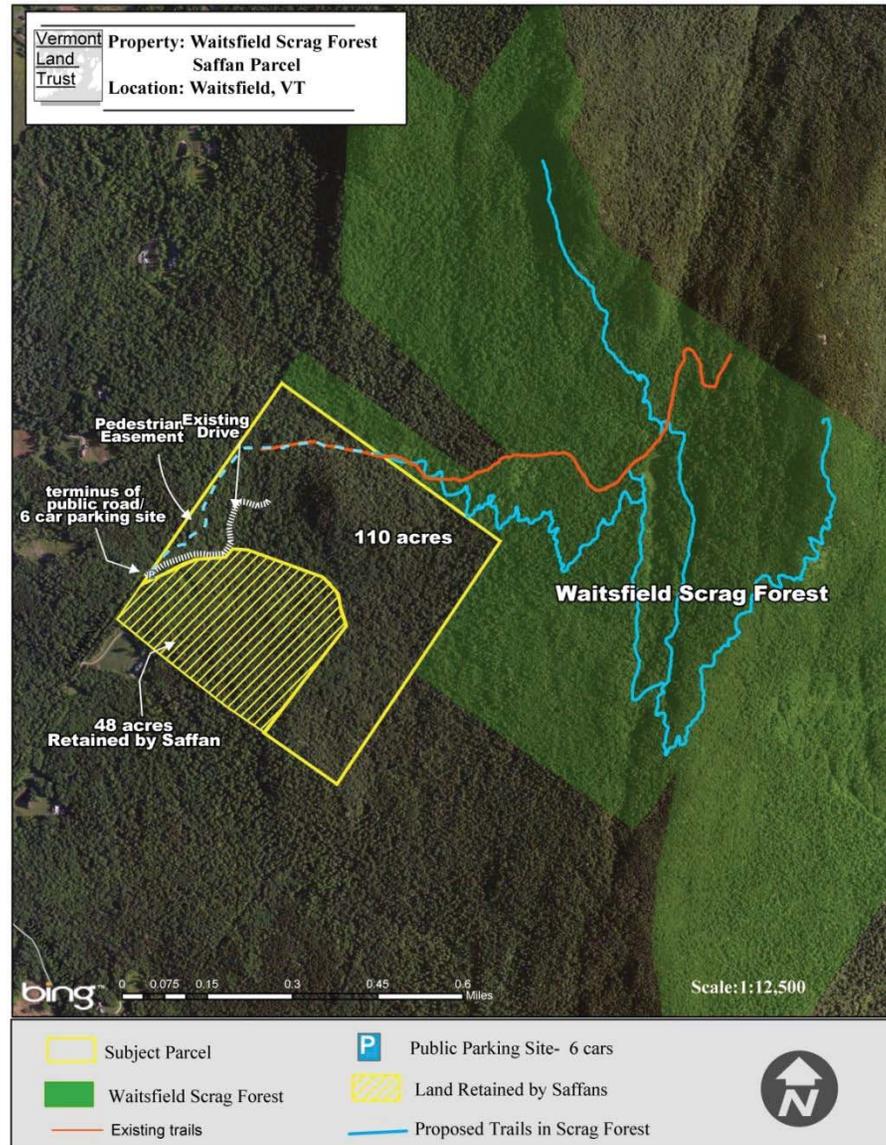
The 110-acre gateway parcel connects Waitsfield's Scrag Forest to the end of Bowen Road, a class IV town road



The 110-acre gateway parcel is mostly forested with diverse wildlife habitat, and includes the deeded footpath for public recreation and the Town's logging access.



# A Key Piece for Future Trails



## Economic Benefits - *Recreation*

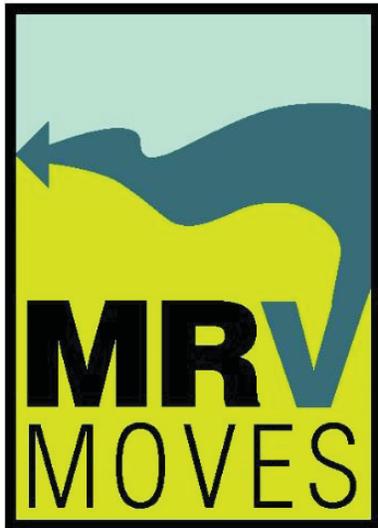
2014 MRV Economic Study identified Tourism and Recreation as one of four core components of local economy:

- *“Recreation and Tourism are the stalwarts of the MRV Economy”*
- Key recommendation to *“keep pressing in dealing with seasonality. Given climate change and the evolving mountain resort industry, a focus on supporting year-round options makes sense”*

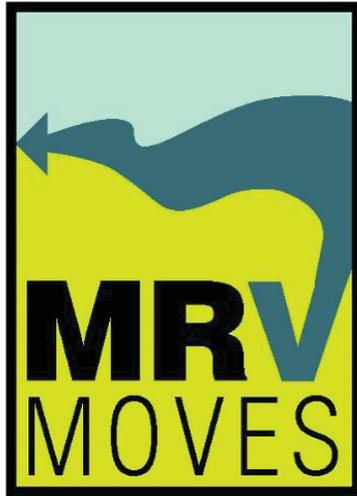


## Recreation, Tourism and Economic Vitality in MRV

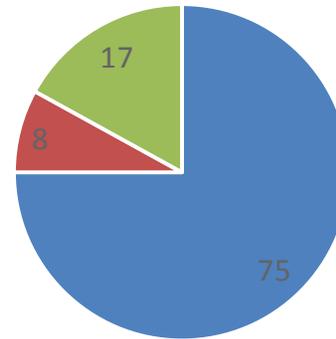
In 2016, the Mad River Valley Planning District initiated a Mad River Active Transportation Plan to develop a watershed-wide vision and strategies for trails and non-motorized transportation routes that enhance quality of life and provide economic benefits.



“From home owners choosing to live along a trail to tourists who choose their destinations based on the availability of trails and recreation, the Mad River Valley’s active transportation system is comprised of important community facilities that attract both people and dollars”



## “Trails Mean Business”



■ Local Day   ■ Non-Local Day   ■ Non-Local Overnight

Consulting team conducted trail counts and developed Trail User Spending Profiles for dollars spent on food, retail, gas, lodging, etc.

- Non-local overnight users spend \$176.98/day (17% of trail traffic)
- Non-local day users spend \$70.14/day (8% of trail traffic)
- Local day users spend \$11.32/day (75% of trail traffic)

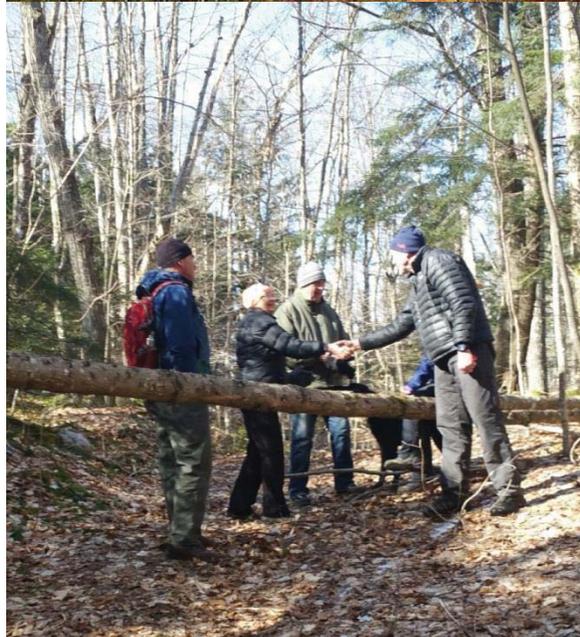
# Economic Benefits - *Forestry*

2012 Scrag Forest Management Plan calls for productive and sustainable use of timber resources:

- 2015-16 winter harvest provided \$43,000 in revenue for Town
- Forest management maintains health of forest and wildlife habitat while supporting local forest economy
- Acquisition of 110-acre gateway parcel provides recurring opportunity for additional timber harvest revenue in future



The 110 acre Gateway Parcel will provide opportunities for adequate parking, a centralized trailhead, additional trails for 4-season use, hunting and more...





## Shared Spaces: Securing the Future of Town Forests



## Protecting Family Farms and Local Food





# Waitsfield's Scrag Forest Gateway Project

## Estimated Budget for Land Acquisition

**Purchase of Land** \$450,000\*

**Projects Costs** 40,000

includes legal and “due diligence,” VLT staff time, mapping and surveying, title search and insurance, document recording fees.

**TOTAL ESTIMATED ACQUISITION COST** **\$490,000**

\* Acquisition price reflects landowner contribution/bargain sale of \$200,000, based on independent appraisal by Mcmanus and Nault Appraisal Company.

# Waitsfield's Scrag Forest Gateway Project Land Acquisition Funding Sources

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> USFS Community Forest Program (CFP)	\$256,650 (52 %)
<input type="checkbox"/> VT Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB)	\$125,000 (26 %)
<input type="checkbox"/> Private donations and small grants	\$68,350 (14 %)
<input type="checkbox"/> Town of Waitsfield – Restroom, Recreation and Conservation Fund	<u>\$40,000</u> (8 %)

**TOTAL**

**\$490,000**



## Grant funding for Scrag Forest Gateway Project approved from the United States Forest Service Community Forest Program (CFP)

- Program was established in 2008 Farm Bill, with leadership of Vermont Senator Patrick Leahy
- Unique, relatively new and highly competitive source of funding dedicated to **“protect forests that are important for people and the places they call home.”**
- Provides funding for municipal or non-profit forestland acquisitions which offer public economic, recreational, educational and environmental benefits.
- Gave \$1.9 million in grants in 2016
- Waitsfield Scrag Forest Gateway was **one of only 8 projects nationwide approved for funding in 2016.**

# Project Tasks and Timeline

- ✓ Vermont Land Trust acquires Option to Purchase 110 acres of Saffan property
- ✓ Key grant from USFS Community Forest Program secured (\$256,650)
- ✓ Public Forum for Community Input
- Public Site Visits: Summer/Fall 2016
- Additional public forum?: Fall 2016
- Seek additional grants and private donations: Sept 2016-June 2017
- Update management plan, mapping, trail planning, pre-closing tasks: Spring 2017
- Closing on Town Acquisition: Summer 2017
- Management/Implementation – trailhead, new trails, road maintenance, etc.: Fall 2017 and beyond

## Anticipated net gain in municipal tax revenue from Saffan's 160 acres

- 2016 assessed value of entire 160-acre Saffan property = \$717,600  
Municipal tax revenue = +/- \$2,469
- 2017 assessed value of Saffan property with new residence = \$1,648,900  
Municipal tax revenue = \$5,906
- Municipal tax on Saffan property if Town acquires 110 acres = \$4,376
- **Net Gain in municipal tax revenue of \$1,907 from 2016 level -  
even with Town acquisition of 110 acres**

# Doing the TAX math: How will Town ownership of 110 acre parcel affect municipal tax revenues?



## Conclusion:

Town gains \$1,907 (77% increase) in municipal tax revenue from 2016 level, even with town ownership of 110 acre Gateway Parcel

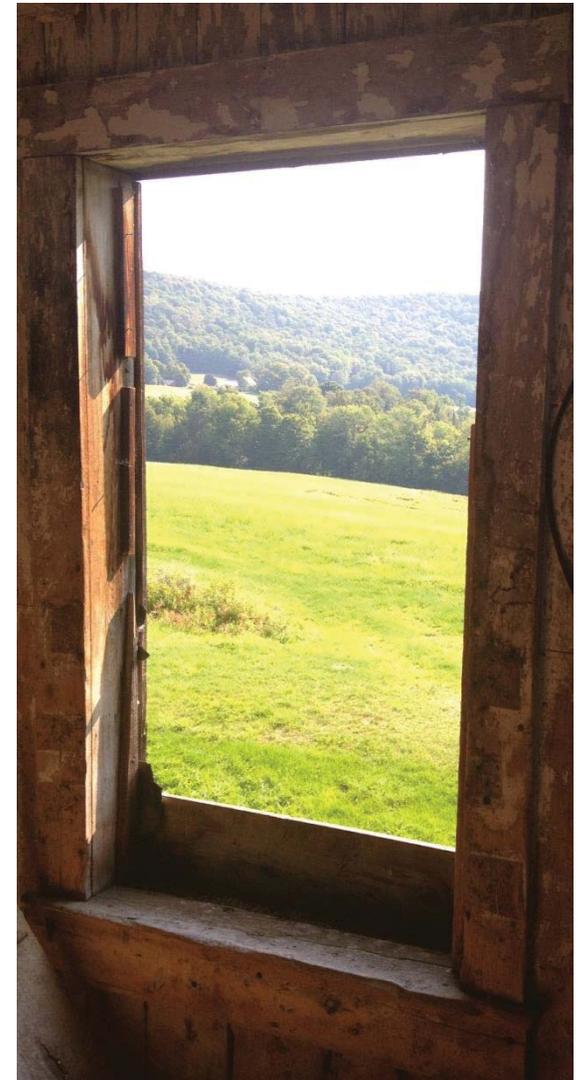
# Project Contingencies

- Public involvement
- Public and private funds secured so Town's contribution to acquisition is NTE \$40,000
- Agreement between Town (Selectboard) and private landowners on Bowen Road maintenance

Looking Ahead –  
10-year management/implementation budget  
for Scrag Forest and 110-acre Gateway parcel

Estimated costs = ~\$200,000-\$225,000

- Management & trail planning
- New parking area/trailhead/informational kiosk
- Trail construction
- Restoration of old logging road
- Creation of early successional habitat
- Signage & brochures
- Town's share of Bowen Road winter maintenance contract



Looking Ahead –  
10-year management/implementation budget  
for Scrag Forest and 110-acre Gateway parcel

Projected revenues = ~\$200,000-\$250,000

- Existing funds (private grants & donations, timber harvest proceeds) - ~\$65,000
- Saffan donation for parking area/trailhead - \$25,000
- VT Recreation Trails Fund - \$50,000
- Other grants - \$50,000
- Private fundraising - \$25,000-50,000
- Sugaring lease? - \$TBD

If the Town does not acquire the 110 acres in question:

- the Saffans will sell the parcel to a private buyer ASAP
- a new house will be built; the private drive beyond the end of Bowen Road likely will be gated
- legal public access to Scrag Forest will only be via the mile-long footpath from the end of Bowen Road
- parking will be available only in the 6-car parking area at the end of Bowen Road
- potential for an expanded trail network on Scrag Forest will be significantly reduced due to access limitations
- other important benefits for nature and people will be compromised – wildlife habitat, open space, forest integrity, possibly water quality, etc.
- the Town will be faced with a perpetual challenge of containing public access to avoid conflicts with owners of the property over time
- the Town will lose potential timber revenues, and its options for logging access will be constrained



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Spencer Potter

# Thank you for coming!

## Questions? Comments?



# Town of Waitsfield Land Conservation Project Expenditures

- Maple Avenue(Whittle to Defreest) \$20,000 (1992)
- Wait House \$25,000 (1996)
- Austin \$1,000 (1999)
- Woliner/Neill \$20,000 (1999)
- Tardy \$15,000 (2003)
- Hartshorn Farm \$20,000 (2009)