



Project Impacts

NSRC-FUNDED RESEARCH FINAL REPORT

Town Forest Health Check: A Forest Steward's Guide to Forest Health Assessment

PROJECT AWARD YEAR AND TITLE:

2006

*The Town Forest Health Check: Developing a
Town Forest Steward's Guide to Forest Health
Assessment*

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In 2005, Vermont Family Forests (VFF) initiated the Vermont Town Forest Project to strengthen connections between Vermonters and forests they live in and around, to encourage citizen stewardship of those forests, and to establish and expand town forests. There are over 150 town forests sprinkled throughout Vermont. Each town forest is unique and all offer rich opportunities to explore community-based forest conservation. The University of Vermont's Green Forestry Education Initiative and VFF created the *Town Forest Health Check*, a hands-on guide, providing a simple, straightforward, and enjoyable tool for town forest stewards to help them assess the health of their community's forests.

The *Town Forest Health Check* focuses on 12 best management practices that have proven effective in helping keep forests healthy by maintaining or enhancing soil productivity, water quality, biological diversity, and carbon storage, and increasing the forest's resistance to invasion by exotic plant species. The guide presents "citizen science" in step-by-step instructions for assessing each of the 12 benchmarks. The ultimate goal is a final summary of the overall health of the forest and specific management opportunities for improving forest health.

Although the *Town Forest Health Check* was created for use by Vermont town forest stewards, the guide is applicable to most community forests in the northeastern United States. For a pdf version of the *Town Forest Health Check*, demonstration videos, and how to obtain tally sheets and a tool kit, visit www.familyforests.org.