

 LIVING THE NEW FOREST FUTURE



2019 ANNUAL REPORT





The **Northern Forest Center** is a regional innovation and investment partner creating rural vibrancy by connecting people, economy, and the forested landscape.

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Note: URLs are case-sensitive

Bold Possibilities

Inclusive Prosperity

Vibrant Communities



It all comes down to vibrant communities and healthy forests.

The Northern Forest's amazing landscape – forests and mountains, rivers and lakes and oases of unspoiled beauty – is a natural draw for people who love the outdoors. But it's not enough.

With your partnership, the Center helps Northern Forest communities create what residents and businesses are seeking – economic opportunity, access to outdoor recreation, resources for success, and a sense of vitality that builds strong community.

The young people and entrepreneurs that can help the region thrive need broadband, business assistance, capital and an invitation to get involved in community life. They need the assurance of local schools, nearby medical facilities, good housing options and easy access to outdoor recreation opportunities.

This report highlights how our Forest Economy programs, Community Revitalization efforts and Regional Leadership and Advocacy are helping communities hone what they have and create what they need to retain and attract residents, businesses, and visitors who will return time and again.

Every community and every business that we assist is unique. We enter into partnerships by listening carefully and encouraging new voices to contribute. We bring resources, share expertise, and champion new ways of working together.

We are the Northern Forest's innovation and investment partner.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Brian Houseal'.

Brian Houseal, Chair

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rob Riley'.

Rob Riley, President

PROGRAM IMPACT SINCE 2005

The Northern Forest Center is a regional innovation and investment partner creating rural vibrancy by connecting people, economy and the forest landscape. Our programs enhance the lives of people that love, rely on or benefit from a healthy Northern Forest.

6,450
JOBS

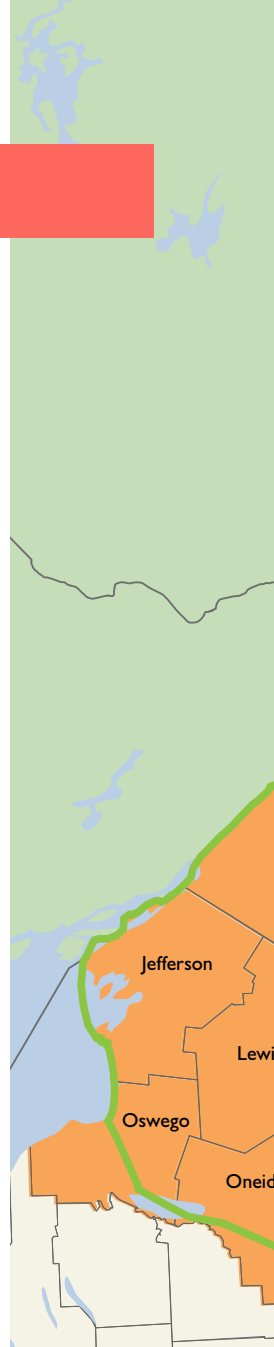
Through our Forest Economy programs – **Wood Products, Destination Development and Automated Wood Heat** – the Center has provided technical and financial assistance to create or sustain more than 6,450 quality jobs across the Northern Forest.

256,540
ACRES

The Center's **Community Forest program** and facilitation of **New Markets Tax Credits projects** have helped conserve 256,540 acres of forestland for community benefit.

202,000,000
DOLLARS
INVESTED

The Center's **Regional Leadership & Advocacy** at the state and federal levels and our ability to raise private funding have helped to secure and leverage \$202 million for projects that benefit the region's communities, the economy and forest stewardship.



FY2019 PROGRAM MILESTONES

- Leveraged **\$5.7 million** in public and private funding to support projects that **strengthen economic opportunity and environmental resiliency** across Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont and New York in 2019.
- Generated **\$4.5 million** in positive economic benefit for the region by supporting use of wood pellets instead of fossil fuels for heat.
- Raised **\$1 million** in the Millinocket Housing Initiative Fund to increase quality housing to support **community revitalization**.
- Raised **\$900,000** toward the **\$1.8-million renovation** of the Parker J. Noyes building on Main Street in Lancaster to provide **retail expansion and quality downtown apartments**.
- Facilitated more than **\$550,000** in funding through New Markets Tax Credits financing of the Millinocket Memorial Library renovation project.
- Reached **236,000** individuals through the *Feel Good Heat* marketing campaign to introduce them to the options of **heating homes and buildings with Automated Wood Heat**.

DRIVING REGIONAL COLLABORATION

The Center delivers programs and advances policies that connect economy, community and environment to accelerate inclusive prosperity.



The energy of the 170 people who gathered at the Northern Forest Symposium spoke volumes about the importance of outdoor recreation to the regional economy, local communities, and individuals enjoying the landscape.

This first-time, four-state event to explore the evolving trends in recreation, co-convened by the Center, the NH Charitable Foundation and the Northern Border Regional Commission, addressed the

opportunities and challenges within the growing outdoor recreation sector. These included workforce issues, natural resource and visitor management, market development, stewardship, technology, collaboration and recreational use of private lands.

“The Symposium was a powerful springboard for action,” said Taylor Caswell, commissioner of the NH Department of Business and Economic Affairs. “Input from the regional recreation

constituency has helped to inform the state’s economic strategy and highlighted the important role the outdoor economy plays in workforce and business development in New Hampshire.”

The Symposium led to action such as creation of the Adirondack Community Recreation Alliance (see page 22), increased federal investment in outdoor recreation development through the Northern Border Regional Commission, and support for new state-level offices



Symposium attendees met at the Mount Washington Hotel to identify new ways to increase the economic and community benefits from outdoor recreation.



STRENGTH IN REGION

of outdoor recreation in Maine and New Hampshire (now permanent in Maine and pending in the NH state budget). The Symposium reinforced for private funders and other agencies the importance of their financial support for community-led recreation development, and demonstrated the importance of increased coordination among state and local organizations.

[More online at nfcenter.org/Symposium](http://nfcenter.org/Symposium)



“ **The Symposium was an extremely valuable and timely event** that elevated the idea that **we can promote this region collectively to visitors and residents, creating more meaningful impact for all our communities.** ”

– Bridget Freudenberger,
*Bangor Savings Bank
Colebrook, New Hampshire*

From 9 to 5, Bridget manages commercial lending for Bangor Savings Bank in Colebrook, NH, but the rest of the time she’s all about outdoor recreation. She runs Coös Outdoor Recreation Events, LLC, which puts on METALLAK, a race that combines trekking, mountain biking and paddling on a stunning course in and around Colebrook, New Hampshire.



The Center partners at the federal, regional and state level to bring new ideas, capital and people together to address persistent problems facing the Northern Forest.

Putting the Northern Forest on the National Stage

The Center's long partnership with the Aspen Institute has provided us with a national platform to drive new conversations about rural communities and economies. Building on our co-facilitation of the Rural Development Innovation Group, we were on stage in Washington, DC, in April to discuss our integrated approach to rural economic development.

The Aspen Institute's Community Strategies Group profiled the Center in a report on new approaches to doing economic development work in rural places. A major focus of Aspen's research is on integrated approaches and community engagement to improve the economy and infrastructure, and to

address social needs while also pursuing equity and long-term prosperity.

"We're impressed with the Center's work and pleased to be able to highlight it across the Aspen Institute network – both to inform other practitioners and to help policy-makers understand the innovative action taking place in the field," said Dan Porterfield, president and CEO of the Aspen Institute. "It's clear to us that the Center is taking the long view for the region while delivering tangible benefits to make life better today for many of the Northern Forest's rural communities."

"We know it takes multiple, holistic solutions to revitalize rural communities," said Center President Rob Riley. "We start by listening to the community, engaging partners, and tailoring potential solutions to fit the needs of each place.

Rather than one fix, or saying 'we don't do that,' we nimbly fill gaps to bring innovative ideas and capital to foster vibrant rural communities."

[More online at nfccenter.org/RegionalStrategy](https://nfccenter.org/RegionalStrategy)

Strengthening Forest Markets through Strategic Investment

Through a recently secured cooperative agreement with the federal Economic Development Administration (EDA) and the US Endowment for Forestry & Communities, the Center is investing \$2.6 million in projects to strengthen markets for wood sourced from the Northern Forest.

"We're excited to build on all we've accomplished through our forest economy



The Center supported logger training at Paul Smith's College to prepare a new generation of woods workers.



programs over our last decade by directing this significant investment to strategic opportunities in the regional forest economy,” said Joe Short, vice president of the Center. “We need successful sawmills and traditional wood product manufacturing alongside new uses such as nanocellulose, wood fiber insulation, new construction assemblies, and so much more.”

“The Endowment is thrilled to be a partner in this effort,” said Alicia Cramer, vice president at the Endowment, a national foundation. “We see



the need nationally for targeted investments to ensure diverse forest markets, a strong workforce and new uses for wood to meet emerging technology and building needs. The Northern Forest region is primed to pilot this new way of thinking.”

Input from over 100 regional stakeholders informed the investment framework and highlighted workforce development and diversifying markets for low-grade wood as initial priorities.

“This partnership and our advocacy for creation of the Northern Border Regional Commission are examples of how the Center’s four-state approach and leadership have helped bring important new funding sources to the region,” said Riley.

This effort will complement the work of the Forest Opportunity Roadmap/MAINE, the Working Lands Enterprise Initiative in Vermont, and state economic development agency initiatives.

[Learn more at nfcenter.org/FutureForestEconomy](https://nfcenter.org/FutureForestEconomy)



STRONG FOREST ECONOMY

“The Northern Forest is a tremendous natural asset. **But we need leadership and investment to ensure that our region can develop new products and new wood markets for the good of our economy, communities and forest. Thankfully, we have the Northern Forest Center** bringing its regional perspective and expertise to provide help for wood products businesses as they work to build a stronger forest economy.”

– Patrick Leahy,
U.S. Senator from Vermont

Senator Leahy, the vice chairman of the Appropriations Committee and a leading member of the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry, **has been a leader in addressing the needs of the Northern Forest since the 1980s.** In recent years he has set aside funding within the EDA budget to prioritize funding for reviving the region’s forest economies.

The Center is leading efforts to shift from traditional tourism promotion to deeper destination development across the region.

THE BORDERLANDS

Bike the Borderlands!

The Center provides project management, financial support, and coordination to destination development initiatives – including the regional Bike Borderlands mountain biking initiative, Maine Woods destination development, and the new Adirondack Community Recreation Alliance (see page 22) – that are prioritizing community needs as they develop recreational resources and other local assets.



With financial and technical support from the Center, the seven mountain biking trail networks in the Borderlands launched their collaborative marketing effort this spring, seeking to attract visitors to the region while creating recreation opportunities for residents and boosting their local economies.

The groups – Mahoosuc Pathways in Bethel, Maine; PRKR MTN in Littleton, NH; Coös Trails in Gorham, NH; Profile Trails in Franconia, NH; Craftsbury Outdoor Center in Craftsbury, VT; Kingdom Trails in East Burke, Vermont, and Circuit Frontières in East Hereford, Québec – are increasing the quality and consistency of trails while deepening connections with the business community.

To encourage new riders, many of the organizations host regular group rides and children's programs. These trail networks also banded together to create a regional destination worthy of a multi-day visit for riders. This summer's *Tour de Borderlands* biking challenge encouraged people to ride each location and shop locally (see local Borderlands Business supporters on the back cover).

"This year was my longest and most ambitious mountain bike adventure yet, and it is purely because of Bike



Borderlands," said Paul Fafard, who lives in Austin, Texas, but grew up in New Hampshire. Over his multi-day day adventure, Paul supported local campgrounds, farmers' markets, local stores, restaurants, parks, trail networks, gas stations, breweries, and bike shops. "I will certainly be back, and I will bring my wife and kids on the next trip!"

A great crowd turned out for the *Tour de Borderlands* ride at Profile Trails in Franconia, NH.



“The Borderlands buzz is attracting new riders and new visitors to the region,” said Maura Adams, program director for the Center. “It’s exciting to meet people who see a business opportunity in outdoor recreation – whether it’s brewing beer or servicing bikes – and to see the Borderlands initiative help their businesses grow.”

[More online: www.bikeborderlands.com](http://www.bikeborderlands.com)



Destination Development in Maine

In Maine, the Center partnered with the Office of Tourism through the Maine Woods Consortium to create the Community Destination Academy, which helps communities realize the economic benefits of Rural Destination Development.



Piloted in the Moosehead Lake region and recently offered in Rangeley, Maine, the Academy combines professional training with technical and financial assistance to build community capacity and advance local infrastructure, marketing, and coordination projects.

[More online: http://bit.ly/DestinationDevelopment](http://bit.ly/DestinationDevelopment)



ACTIVE OUTDOOR LIVING

“ Since we formed the Borderlands collaborative, our trail system has come up several levels. I now have a place I can take beginner mountain bikers, and I know our customers will have a good experience on the trails.

My sales are up 25% so far for 2019, and I know a good portion of that is due to Borderlands. ”

– Dave Harkless,
Littleton Bike and Fitness

Dave is a strong advocate for active outdoor living and regularly volunteers in Littleton and surrounding communities to get people out biking, skiing and being active. He teaches bike safety in local schools and caters to both road cyclists and mountain bikers at his shop. He’s involved with both PRKR MTN in Littleton and Profile Trails in Franconia and is a **very engaged member of Bike Borderlands.**

Photos: (Left) © Sara Thompson/Franconia Area NEMBA.
(This page) ©Joe Klementovich, courtesy Littleton Bike & Fitness and The Conservation Fund.



DRIVING TRANSITION TO WOOD HEAT

The Center advances Automated Wood Heat to reduce greenhouse gases, create markets for low-grade wood, and support forest jobs.

Since 2011, the Center has provided funding or other assistance to help install more than 165 wood pellet boilers in communities across the Northern Forest. Already, these boilers have displaced 887,000 gallons of fossil fuels, had a \$4.5-million positive impact on the region's economy and kept 5,300 tons of greenhouse gases out of the atmosphere. They have also helped sustain jobs and diversify markets for low-grade wood, which is essential to forest stewardship.

Yet many people don't know that heating with wood is a viable, low-carbon, whole-home heating option. "We launched the *Feel Good Heat* marketing campaign to

let people know they can be warm and comfortable using Automated Wood Heat systems and cut their greenhouse gas output by more than 50% compared to fossil fuels," said Maura Adams, program director for the Center.



"What separates the *Feel Good Heat* initiative is that it focuses on the demand-side of the industry," said Chris Brooks, CEO of Vermont Wood Pellet Company. "I feel good about the direction of the campaign and the impact it will have on my company and the broader renewable energy movement."

The first phase of the *Feel Good Heat*

campaign tested our digital advertising strategies and website, and earned support from 50 official partners. After reaching 230,000 potential customers and motivating hundreds of people to contact boiler and pellet suppliers, we're working to scale up the overall marketing effort across the Northeast to ensure that Automated Wood Heat becomes a clear choice for consumers.

[More online at FeelGoodHeat.org](http://FeelGoodHeat.org)



Wood Pellet Heat Reduces Greenhouse Gas Emissions

To understand the greenhouse gas benefits of using state-of-the-art wood

Chris Brooks employs 19 people manufacturing wood pellets at Vermont Wood Pellet in Clarendon, Vermont, and gives 80 loggers a steady market for low-grade wood, which helps support sustainable forestry.





heating systems instead of fossil fuels in the Northeast, the Center commissioned an independent life-cycle analysis in 2015. The study considered all the impacts of fuel sourcing, extraction, processing and combustion, and concluded that using regionally-produced wood pellets immediately reduces greenhouse gases by 54 percent when it replaces heating oil, and by 59 percent when it replaces natural gas.

Given the extensive use of fossil fuels to heat buildings in the Northeast, Automated Wood Heat has tremendous ability to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions contributing to climate change.

[More online at nfccenter.org/GHGstudy](http://nfccenter.org/GHGstudy)



WOOD HEAT LESSONS

“**We’re proud to be keeping our school warm and comfortable using local, renewable wood pellets.** The community supports our efforts to use natural resources and renewable energy. We really appreciate the financial support the Center provided to help us switch.”

– Cheryl Stevenson,
Head Custodian,
Peacham Elementary School

Cheryl is a native of Peacham, Vermont, who decided to put down permanent roots there.

She volunteers in many community activities, but especially likes taking the children out on the school’s nature trail for time in their forest classroom to learn about nature.



The Center leverages the potential of emerging technologies, activities, and markets to reinvigorate the region's industries.



The Center's Wood Products Innovation program assisted an all-time high of 23 companies and one college this year to support quality jobs in the industry.

"We offer each business the help it needs," said Dave Redmond, director of Wood Products Initiatives for the Center. "We advise on financial management, business development and organizational issues, and provide financial support so companies can procure tailor-made training and assistance."

This year, the Center created the Northern Forest Board Forum to give CEOs and other top executives from the industry the opportunity to discuss management

issues with their peers and experienced business development coaches.

Seven companies have participated in the Board Forum, and more are considering joining the group. In confidential and facilitated discussions, members of the group are free to raise any issue. Topics have included workforce development, retail marketing, online design systems for customers, wood supply, personnel, succession planning, and much more.

"The Board Forum is very helpful," said Gary Marini, president of New England Woodcraft. "We all use forest products as raw material, but are diverse in the products we market and the size of our businesses. That said, we all have similar

challenges to share. We discuss actionable solutions for marketing, operations, goal setting, accountability, incentive plans, etc. After each meeting, I have fresh thoughts and solutions to bring home to our team."

The Forum has served companies that – all together – employ 365 people, sell \$73 million of wood products and use almost 8 million board feet of wood every year, most of which comes from the Northern Forest.

All members of the Forum so far have been based in Vermont, including Appalachian Engineered Flooring of North Troy, Andrew Pearce Bowls of Hartland, J.K. Adams of Dorset, Lyndon Furniture of Lyndonville, and Treehouse Hardwoods and Millshop of South Burlington.

[More online: nfcenter.org/WoodProducts](https://www.nfcenter.org/WoodProducts)



The Center's Wood Products Innovation program has helped more than 90 companies, including Vermont Farm Table, to strengthen their businesses by introducing new systems, marketing, and organizational development.

© Peter Cirilli Photos, courtesy of Vermont Farm Table

Wood Product Companies Assisted This Year

Andrew Pearce Bowls, Hartland, Vermont

Appalachian Engineered Flooring, North Troy, Vermont

Bourgeois Guitar, Lewiston, Maine

Built by Newport, Newport, Vermont

Clearlake Furniture, Ludlow, Vermont



Delta Hardwood Flooring, Boonville, New York

F. E. Hale, Frankfort, New York

Gagnon Lumber, Pittsford, Vermont

Go Lab, Belfast, Maine

Hancock Lumber, Casco, Maine

Jamaica Cottage Shop, South Londonderry, Vermont

J.K. Adams, Dorset, Vermont

Kangas, North Anson, Maine

Kirby Mulch Company, Kirby, Maine

Lathrop's Maple Supply, Bristol, Vermont

Lyndon Furniture, Lyndonville, Vermont

Maine Dovetail, Westbrook, Maine

New England Woodcraft, Brandon, Vermont

NorthWoods Manufacturing, Lancaster, New Hampshire

Paul Smith's College, Paul Smiths, New York

Shackleton Thomas, Bridgewater, Vermont

Treehouse Hardwoods and Millshop, South Burlington, Vermont

Vermod, Wilder, Vermont

Vermont Artisan Wood Shop/Imhotep, Cornwall, Vermont



GROWTH IN LEADERSHIP

“**The Northern Forest Board Forum has far exceeded my expectations.** The opportunity to learn from one another’s experience is at the heart of this group, providing me with invaluable personal growth as a leader. **It has been a pleasure to have this network of peers to challenge and encourage me as I strive to grow and strengthen our company.**”

– Julie Laforce,
President and Director of
Organizational Development,
Built by Newport

Julie co-owns Built By Newport (BBN) with her husband Dave Laforce, and lives in Derby, Vermont, where they’re raising two children. She received extensive training in organizational development through the Center’s Wood Products Innovation program. Julie leads the cultural development of BBN, recognizing that a healthy work environment is critical to success.

2019 PROGRAM MAP

COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION

COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION

Partnering with community leaders to implement projects that attract and retain residents who value quality of life and connections to the forest.

COMMUNITY FORESTS

Helping communities create locally-owned and managed forests that conserve forestland and generate economic and community benefits such as timber income, outdoor classrooms, and recreational opportunities.

TAX CREDIT FINANCING

Facilitating use of New Markets Tax Credits (NMTC) to finance projects that conserve working forests, increase use of renewable energy, and strengthen the wood products manufacturing and tourism sectors.

FOREST ECONOMY

AUTOMATED WOOD HEAT

Catalyzing market demand for high-efficiency, Automated Wood Heat systems to support the forest economy, reduce heating costs, reduce greenhouse emissions, and generate positive economic impact in the region.

WOOD PRODUCTS

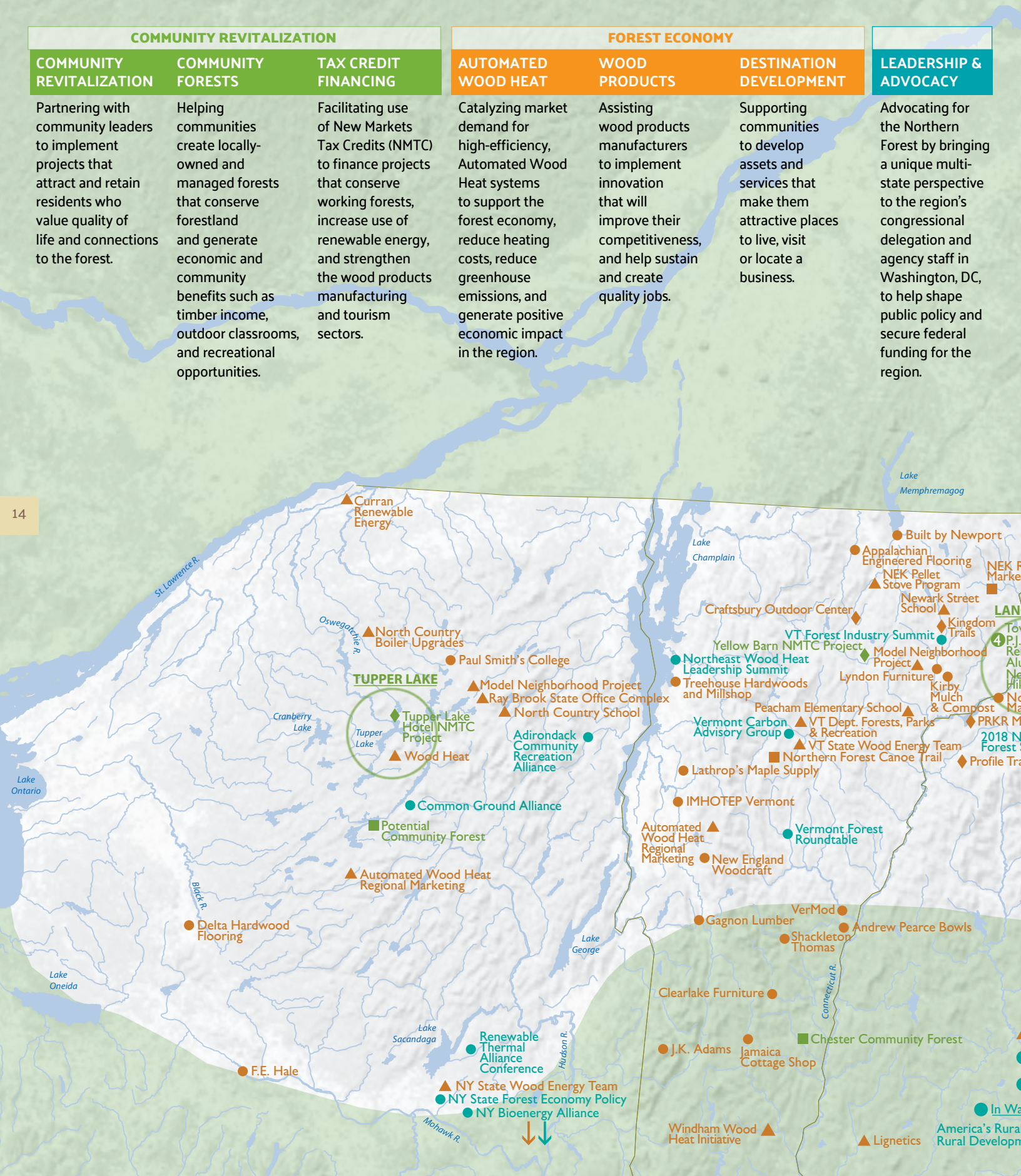
Assisting wood products manufacturers to implement innovation that will improve their competitiveness, and help sustain and create quality jobs.

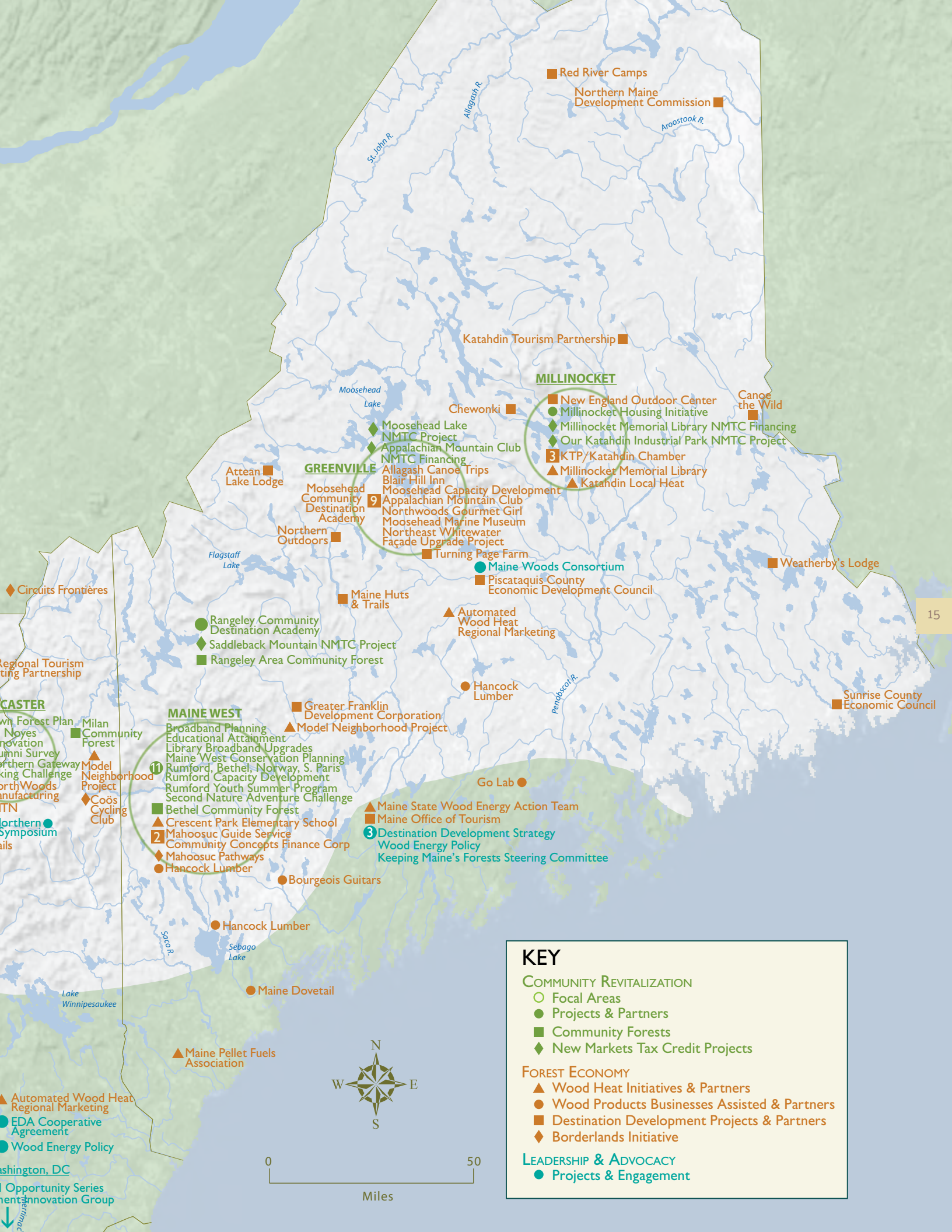
DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT

Supporting communities to develop assets and services that make them attractive places to live, visit or locate a business.

LEADERSHIP & ADVOCACY

Advocating for the Northern Forest by bringing a unique multi-state perspective to the region's congressional delegation and agency staff in Washington, DC, to help shape public policy and secure federal funding for the region.





Red River Camps
Northern Maine Development Commission

MILLINOCKET

New England Outdoor Center
Millinocket Housing Initiative
Millinocket Memorial Library NMTC Financing
Our Katahdin Industrial Park NMTC Project
KTP/Katahdin Chamber
Millinocket Memorial Library
Katahdin Local Heat

GREENVILLE

Attean Lake Lodge
Moosehead Lake NMTC Project
Appalachian Mountain Club NMTC Financing
Allagash Canoe Trips
Blair Hill Inn
Moosehead Capacity Development
Appalachian Mountain Club
Northwoods Gourmet Girl
Moosehead Marine Museum
Northeast Whitewater Façade Upgrade Project
Turning Page Farm

MAINE WEST

Broadband Planning
Educational Attainment
Library Broadband Upgrades
Maine West Conservation Planning
Rumford, Bethel, Norway, S. Paris
Rumford Capacity Development
Rumford Youth Summer Program
Second Nature Adventure Challenge
Bethel Community Forest
Crescent Park Elementary School
Mahoosuc Guide Service
Community Concepts Finance Corp
Mahoosuc Pathways
Hancock Lumber
Bourgeois Guitars

KEY

COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION

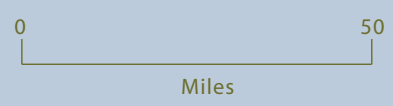
- Focal Areas
- Projects & Partners
- Community Forests
- ◆ New Markets Tax Credit Projects

FOREST ECONOMY

- ▲ Wood Heat Initiatives & Partners
- Wood Products Businesses Assisted & Partners
- Destination Development Projects & Partners
- ◆ Borderlands Initiative

LEADERSHIP & ADVOCACY

- Projects & Engagement



Circuits Frontières
Regional Tourism Marketing Partnership

CASTER
Wood Forest Plan
Noyes Innovation
Comprehensive Survey
Northern Gateway Marketing Challenge
Northwoods Manufacturing
ITN
Northern Symposium

Automated Wood Heat Regional Marketing
EDA Cooperative Agreement
Wood Energy Policy
Washington, DC
Opportunity Series
Innovation Group

INVESTING IN A COMMUNITY'S FUTURE

The Center's work gives rise to vibrant Northern Forest communities by collaborating with local leadership to develop solutions that renew pride, purpose and vitality.



Investors looking to generate social and economic benefits as well as a financial return have helped us put \$1 million to work buying and renovating rundown residences to support a community resurgence in Millinocket, Maine.

With the first phase of the Center's Millinocket Housing Initiative Fund fully capitalized, the Center launched its most ambitious Millinocket renovation – a top-to-bottom reconstruction of 100 Katahdin Avenue, a once-grand but now-abandoned home on Veteran's Park within an easy walk of downtown stores, the elementary school and the library.

Lisa Reece and Steve Williams were motivated by their personal history with Millinocket to invest in the fund. "It was unsettling to see the mill that had been so strategic in advancing our company being disassembled," said Steve, who owns Woodex-MECO, which manufactures shaft seals and wooden bearings. In the 1980s, the mill used one of MECO's prototype sealing devices on a paper-making machine. "The mill gave us a chance, in part because we were a Maine company. Today the Millinocket Housing Initiative gives us the opportunity to invest in the town's future."

Renovating homes for people who want to make a future in Millinocket

is just one piece of our broader strategy to support a strong, diverse economic future for the town," said Ailish Keating, the Center's Millinocket program manager. "We're also helping to facilitate tax credit financing for key projects (see next page), supporting recreational trail development, and helping convert buildings to wood pellet heat."

Due to the success of the fund – which pays annual interest payments to investors and will repay the capital at the end of the investment term – the Center is raising additional capital to focus on commercial redevelopment in Millinocket's downtown.

More online a nfcenter.org/MillinocketHousing



Katahdin and the surrounding lands (below) are drawing new people to Millinocket for forest related businesses, recreation and quality of life. At 100 Katahdin Avenue (left), the Center has undertaken its most ambitious home renovation in Millinocket to meet the need for quality housing.



Center Supports Local Vision for Library's Future

In August, the Center completed 18 months of work to facilitate federal and state New Markets Tax Credit (NMTC) financing for the Millinocket Memorial Library's \$1.85-million renovation. The NMTC financing provided more than \$550,000 in funding to the visionary reinvention of this key community resource, led by Library Director Matt DeLaney and a passionate cadre of volunteers.

"The state and federal New Markets Tax Credits were essential to helping us meet our goal," said Ed Girska, chair of the library board of directors. "We're so grateful to the Center for leading us through the complex process and enabling us to complete our funding for this project."

"We're creating a true community hub, a state-of-the-art learning and programming center that will serve Millinocket residents for decades to come," said Matt, who was named Maine's Outstanding Librarian of the Year in 2018. He started an innovative gear lending library with partners to provide residents access to bikes, canoes, kayaks and other gear so they can enjoy the outdoors. All they need is a library card!

This financing expands the kinds of projects the Center has facilitated. Other NMTC projects we're supporting across the region include redeveloping dormant ski resorts, constructing a major hotel to boost tourism, and creating facilities to promote the food processing and forest products industries. Across the region, the Center has facilitated more than \$80 million in NMTC financings for previous projects.

[More online at nfccenter.org/MillinocketLibrary](https://nfccenter.org/MillinocketLibrary)



DELIVERING VALUE TO LOCAL PARTNERS

“It's almost impossible to overstate the impact of what the Northern Forest Center has done.

The sheer investment in house purchases and subsequent payroll for local labor is huge to a town like Millinocket. Seeing a new roof go on or new siding go up on a building that was an eyesore is a great boost for everyone who passes by.



– Cody McEwen,
Chair, Millinocket Town Council

Cody is a Millinocket native who returned to support his community after graduating from the University of Maine. In 2016, he was elected to the town council at the age of 23, possibly the youngest public official ever elected in Millinocket. Cody works for Omega Benefit Strategies, a Massachusetts-based company that recently opened a new branch on Main Street in Millinocket. He loves the outdoors and is often on top of Katahdin.

*Photo Left: © Brian Threlkeld/
threlkeldoutdoor.com*



Architect's drawing of Millinocket Library renovation.

REVITALIZING TOWN ASSETS

The Center contributes support and expertise to projects that can be sustained by local ownership and replicated across the region.

The Center deepened its commitment to community revitalization in Lancaster, NH, by creating the Main Street impact investment fund and purchasing the historic 3-story Parker J. Noyes building on Main Street. We're securing multiple sources of capital for the project, through investment funds, tax credits, donations and more. By August 2019, we had raised more than \$900,000 toward the \$1.8-million project and had begun renovations.



When completed, the Noyes building will provide custom retail space for a nonprofit local food market at street level and six quality apartments on upper floors to attract new residents to living downtown.

The building is now on the state's historic register and our goal is to enhance its historic features as we bring it back to being a vibrant part of Main Street.

"If not for the efforts of the Northern Forest Center, this building might be melting into the ground for lack of sufficient resources to rescue it," said Peter Powell, a Lancaster Realtor who has had long involvement with the property.

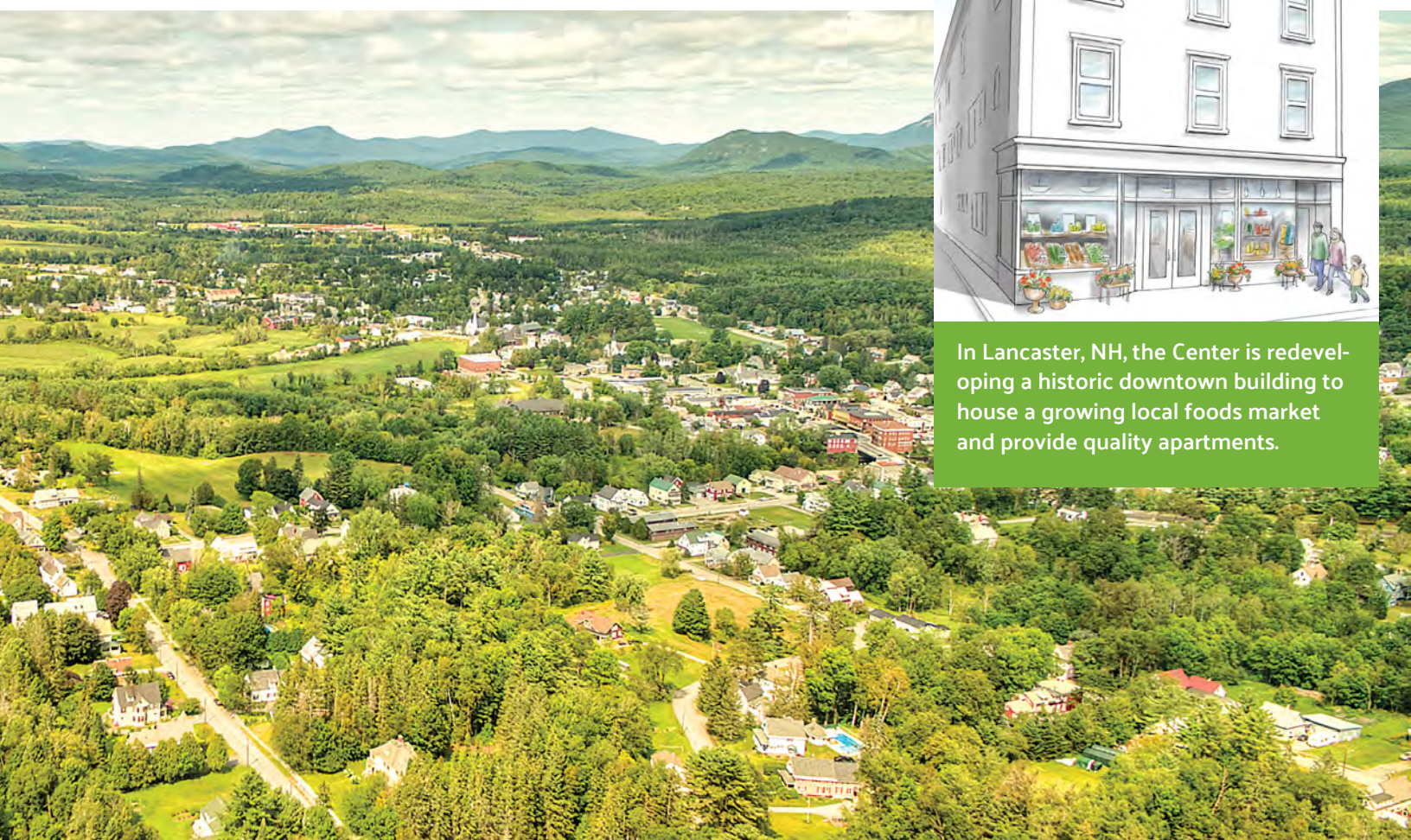
The community signaled its enthusiasm for reclaiming this underused gem when nearly 100 people turned out to tour the historic building in the spring. Many others have donated toward the exterior improvements and invested in the fund.

A local advisory group has been guiding the Center's work in Lancaster and advised on the building acquisition and redevelopment. "The Center has brought energy and ideas that are helping the town move in the right direction," said Mike Kopp, owner of North Country Ford in Lancaster. "These projects are valuable to all local business owners and residents who want the best for our community."

[More online at nfcenter.org/Redevelopment](https://www.nfcenter.org/Redevelopment)



In Lancaster, NH, the Center is redeveloping a historic downtown building to house a growing local foods market and provide quality apartments.



Center Helps Lancaster Reimagine its Town Forest

The renovation project complements a range of other projects the Center is working on in Lancaster, from encouraging active outdoor recreation to engaging community members on important town projects.



“We supported the town as it updated its stewardship plan for the Town Forest, and we’re helping them think about potential new trails and easier access from downtown,” said Julie Renaud Evans, program director for the Center.

“We also polled alumni of White Mountains Regional High School to understand which factors were most important to them in choosing a place to live, and helped coordinate a survey to gather resident input for the upcoming Master Plan revision,” said Evans.

In March 2019, the Center helped the local chamber of commerce publish the *Northern Gateway Hiking Challenge* to encourage residents to take advantage of the easily accessible hiking near town, and to entice visitors beyond Franconia Notch to check out what the northern White Mountains and Lancaster have to offer.

[More online a nfcenter.org/HikingChallenge](https://www.nfcenter.org/HikingChallenge)



PARTNERS IN COMMUNITY

“It’s been great collaborating with the Center to incorporate our needs for the future home of the Root Seller Marketplace and North Country Gleaners into their overall plan for redeveloping the Parker J. Noyes building. I’m really looking forward to the expanded space and services we’ll be able to offer when the renovation is finished.”

– Melissa Grella,
Executive Director,
Taproot Farm & Environmental Education Center

Melissa grew up in northern New Hampshire and returned to the region after many years working in the field of environmental education. She holds a Ph.D in environmental studies and founded Taproot, a nonprofit focused on food, education, and community in 2015.

CREATING NEW OPPORTUNITIES

The Center helps communities envision the possibilities of owning forestland and prepare to manage it to meet community goals.

A new 978-acre Community Forest in Bethel, Maine, is supporting destination development in the area and creating a recreation hub for all types of trail uses, including close-to-home hiking, biking, and skiing opportunities.



The Center teamed up with Mahoosuc Pathways (a Bethel-based nonprofit trails organization), Bethel residents and the Trust for Public Land to establish the Community Forest in June 2019. The land, which was threatened by proposals that included an asphalt

plant and large subdivisions, is now permanently conserved for community benefit.

“The up-front work has been tremendous,” said Julie Renaud Evans, program director for the Center. “This started five years ago with a vision, and we’ve been helping residents for two years to identify recreational uses, set management priorities, hire foresters to conduct natural resource inventories, and develop a stewardship plan for the forest. They’ve worked so hard to make this happen.”

“The Bethel Community Forest unlocks public access to the adjacent town-owned Bingham Forest, creating a 3,500-acre block of conserved land next to Sunday River Resort,” said Gabe Perkins, executive director of Mahoosuc Pathways. “We can’t wait to share these special places with people who love Bethel and the outdoors.”

Since 2008, the Center has helped conserve 256,540 acres of forestland for community benefit, including nearly 65,000 acres in 10 Community Forests.

[Details online at nfccenter.org/Bethel-CF](https://nfccenter.org/Bethel-CF)



The new Bethel Community Forest (above) connects to other conserved land, creating the opportunity to build new recreation trails on a total of 3,500 acres. A large crowd (right) turned out to celebrate the many ways the forest will benefit the town.

Maine West Initiative Strengthens Bethel, Rumford, South Paris and Norway Communities

In the Maine West region, the Center works with 14 local and regional partners to increase rural community vitality through integrated approaches to addressing economic challenges, educational opportunities, health improvement and conservation.



A major focus of the Maine West initiative is on increasing broadband access and adoption, which is critical to attracting new businesses and residents, supporting expansion of telemedicine, improving student achievement and ensuring digital equity.

Based on a digital inclusion plan the Center helped develop in 2018, the Center and local partners co-authored federal funding proposals to deliver fiber-to-the-home infrastructure in three rural communities, secured financial support for new public wi-fi hotspots as part of a broader infrastructure improvement project in downtown Rumford, and improved public computer and broadband internet access through investments in 11 local libraries.

The Center facilitates Maine West, which continues to collaborate on other community priorities, including promoting healthy active communities and raising educational aspirations for local youth.

[Details online at nfcenter.org/MaineWest](https://nfcenter.org/MaineWest)



RECREATION FOR RESIDENTS & VISITORS

“The new Community Forest will be great for better **connecting Bethel’s recreation trail networks**. The Center’s support helped make the Bethel Community Forest possible and has contributed so much to Bethel and our region.”

– Gabe Perkins,
Executive Director,
Mahoosuc Pathways

Gabe, a fifth-generation native of Bethel, Maine, is a former Center staff member who has built a career around the interconnected relationships between people and the land.

As executive director of Mahoosuc Pathways, he spearheaded the new Community Forest and runs the Second Nature Adventure Challenge on behalf of Maine West to encourage outdoor activity. Mahoosuc Pathways is a core partner in the Maine West initiative and Bike Borderlands, both coordinated by the Center.

PUTTING LOCAL NEEDS FIRST

The Center provides support and shares lessons from its region-wide experiences to help communities achieve their goals.

In November, a group of Adirondackers came away from the Northern Forest Regional Symposium on the recreation economy (see page 4) with a vision.



“The Adirondacks is rich with recreational opportunities, but we are not making the most of them, and many communities are left out of the picture,” said Aaron Woolf, an Adirondack entrepreneur spurring one such community-based recreation effort, the Elizabethtown Bike Ranch. “Our new group will highlight success stories – local ones and successes from elsewhere – that show how recreational assets can serve residents as well as visitors,” said Woolf.

Working together as the ad hoc Adirondack Community Recreation Alliance, with facilitation by the Center, the group’s agenda is to develop

community-based recreation assets, increase a shared stewardship ethic, and advance policies to help secure long-lasting community and economic benefits for Adirondack towns and villages.

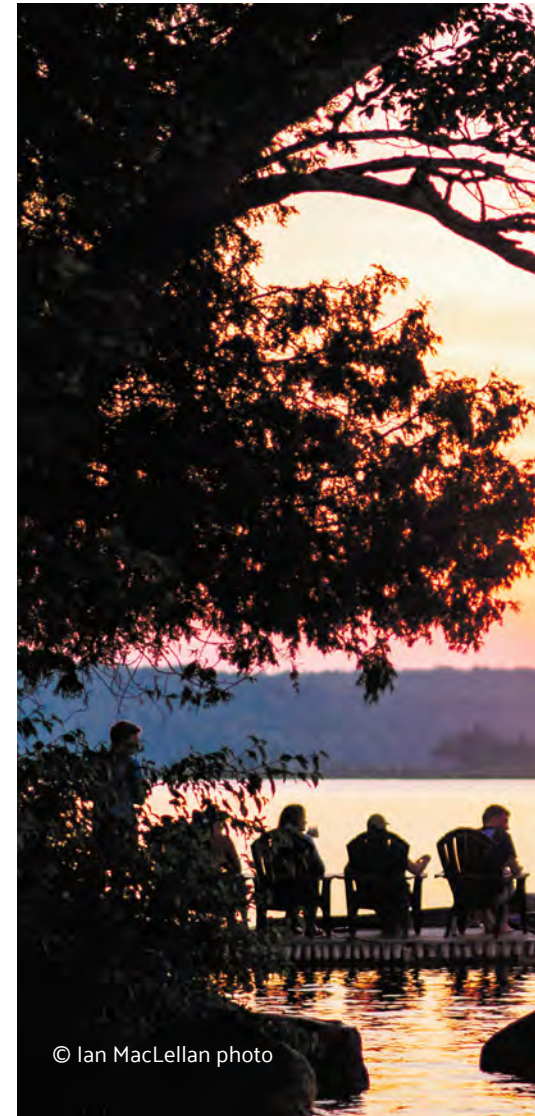
“We want to make sure that communities benefit from public lands and recreation opportunities, which is a shift away from the old model of marketing to visitors and considering community needs only as an afterthought in recreation planning,” said Leslie Karasin, the Center’s program manager in the Adirondacks. “We have new forms of recreation to consider. If we act holistically, we can unlock exciting new opportunities for our towns.”

Helping Tupper Lake Increase Appeal

In Tupper Lake, NY, a community rooted in the traditional forest economy and now emerging as an important stop for Adirondack visitors, the Center is helping advance several projects that could increase its appeal as a destination for travelers and new residents.

We’re using our expertise in tax credit financing (see page 17) to investigate possibilities of helping finance high-priority projects, such as a new hotel to

Members of the Adirondack Community Recreation Alliance (below) work on their strategy. Vacationers enjoy sunset (right) in Tupper Lake.



© Ian MacLellan photo

accommodate more overnight visitors and multi-day stays.



“Tupper Lake has made significant investments in downtown infrastructure, streetscaping, a lakefront bandstand and park and much more. New businesses are starting up. It’s an exciting time,” said Leslie Karasin, the Center’s Adirondack Program Manager.

“We’re building on this momentum and helping the community to explore wood heat, promoting expanded, year-round recreation opportunities, assisting in state and federal fundraising, engaging people for their ideas and priorities, and connecting people in Tupper Lake to the new Adirondack Community Recreation Alliance,” she said.



PARTNERS IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT

“**The Center has been a great partner, helping us explore significant new projects.** They have provided tools and insights to leverage redevelopment of our abandoned mill site, expand year-round recreation opportunities, and facilitate greater use of existing fiber optic infrastructure, all of which are essential to making Tupper Lake attractive to new residents and businesses.”

– Melissa McManus,
*Community Development
Director, Village of Tupper Lake*

Melissa’s position as the Community Development Director for the Village of Tupper Lake builds on her long history of working in community and economic development in Adirondack communities, as well as her experience in local government.

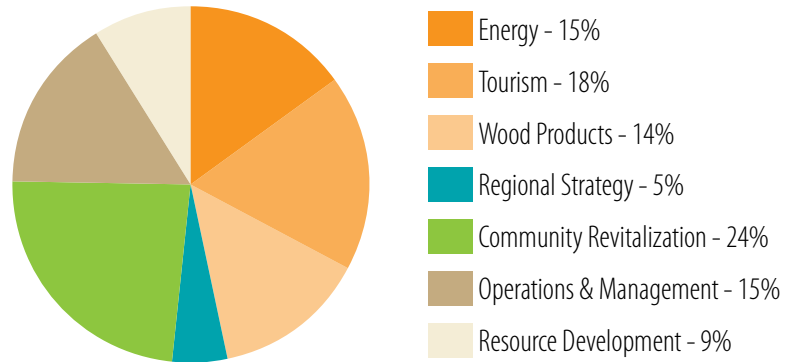


FISCAL YEAR 2019 FINANCIALS

The Northern Forest Center has a strong 20-year track record of diversifying income sources while providing consistent and ongoing program services to communities and partners. We create strong relationships and deliver on our promise.

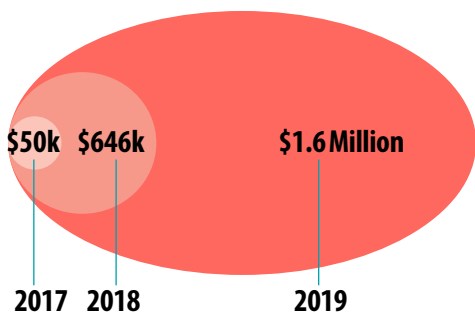
	<u>FY 2019</u>	<u>FY 2018</u>
INCOME		
Individuals	\$ 662,442	\$ 371,371
Corporations	97,977	21,906
Foundations	764,800	488,175
Public Funding	245,640	849,405
Program Income	188,971	343,864
Other	15,476	4,708
Total Income	\$ 1,975,306	\$ 2,079,429
EXPENSES		
Program	\$ 1,393,015	\$ 1,523,327
Operating	302,766	287,807
Fundraising	164,116	173,906
Total Expenses	\$ 1,859,897	\$ 1,985,040
NET ASSETS		
Beginning of Year	\$ 1,824,753	\$ 1,730,364
End of Year	1,940,162	1,824,753
Change in Net Assets	\$ 115,409	\$ 94,389

2019 EXPENSES BY AREA

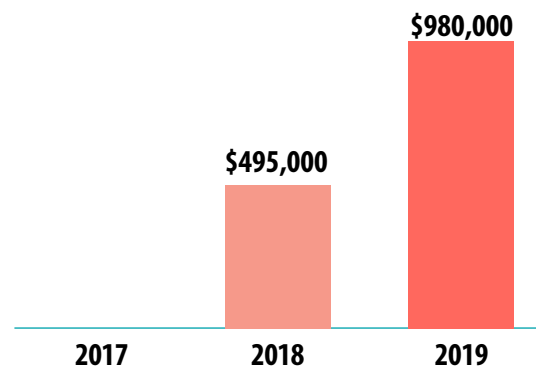


Community Impact Investment Funds

In addition to the Center's funds above, the Center's community impact funds are putting capital from individuals and foundations to work in targeted communities, producing a financial return while investing in residential and commercial property redevelopment. These funds enable the Center to implement strategies to invest in community infrastructure, diversify local economies, and retain and attract younger people and entrepreneurs.



Growth of Impact Investment Funds



Capital Invested in Community Revitalization

FISCAL YEAR 2019 DONORS



THANK YOU TO OUR GENEROUS DONORS

The Center is deeply grateful to the individuals, public agencies and foundations that invested in our work in Fiscal Year 2019, allowing us to provide direct support and expertise to people strengthening economic opportunity and environmental resiliency across Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, and New York.

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President's Council members contributed \$1,000 or more to the Center last year.

\$25,000 and above

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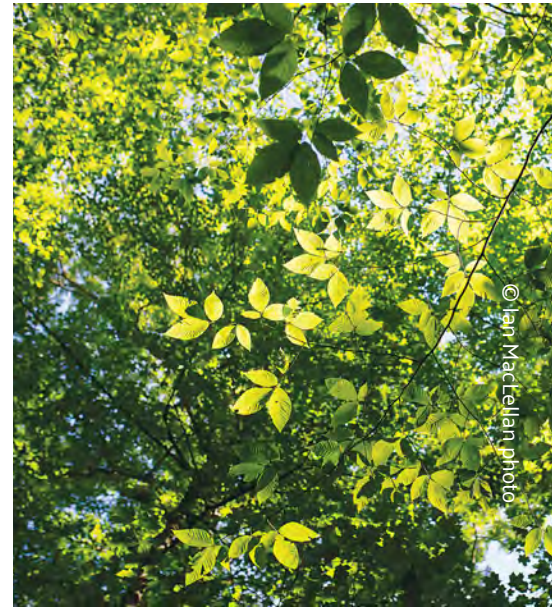
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- ★ Center Staff

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Thank you to the generous members of the Heritage Society who have included the Center in their estate plans. For help in making a bequest, or to learn about gift annuities and other ways you can earn income while supporting the Center's mission, please contact Lila Trowbridge Thorne: 603-229-0679, ext. 102 or lthorne@northernforest.org.

In Memoriam

The Center wishes to acknowledge with sadness the deaths of the friends of the organization listed below. We will miss their advice and friendship.

Bill Wittenauer
 Pat Palmiotto
 Steve Smith
 Elise Wallace

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 NH Community Development Finance Authority
 New York Wood Products Development Council
 Northeastern States Research Cooperative
 Northern Border Regional Commission
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 U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service
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 Vermont Clean Energy Development Fund
 Vermont Working Lands Enterprise Initiative

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- Steve Wight, Newry, ME

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- Mary McBryde, Norwich, VT

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- Sean Ross, Lyme, NH
- Lucas St. Clair, Hampden, ME

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Kate Williams, 1% for the Planet, Waitsfield, VT

Robin Zinchuk, Bethel Area Chamber of Commerce, Bethel, ME

For more information about the work we do across the Northern Forest, please visit www.northernforest.org.

Photo © Ian MacLellan

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SUITE 204
CONCORD, NH 03301



LIVING THE NEW FOREST FUTURE

Local businesses proudly show their support for the Borderlands mountain biking initiative. See page 8 for story.

