

# Community Forests: A path to prosperity and connection

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A case-study approach to understanding the range of economic benefits provided by Community Forests in the U.S.



TREES ATLANTA

Community forests are protected forest lands that contribute to healthy, flourishing communities. These lands are guided by local say to achieve local priorities. These unique assets are land-based economic development tools that deliver positive outcomes to the residents, visitors, and businesses located in their service areas.



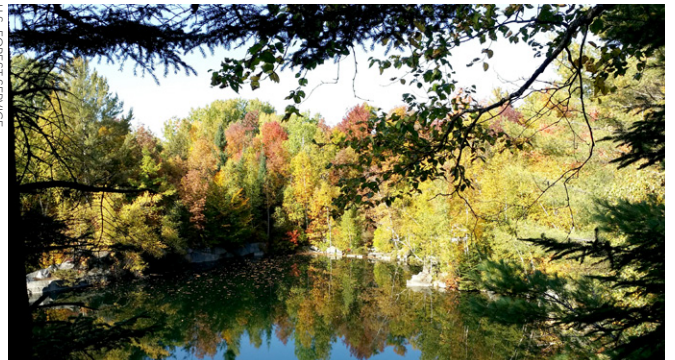
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## The **U.S. Forest Service's Community Forest and Open Space Conservation Program** (CFP) helps communities create these assets and provide benefits as envisioned by the local community. Community forests can enhance quality of life, enrich cultural and spiritual heritage, strengthen economies, and provide tangible economic value. This value occurs because these resources are designed to provide access to amenities for recreation, education, and tourism, offer forest-based products (e.g., timber, maple syrup, and firewood), produce forest-based services (e.g., carbon sequestration,

habitat, fire risk mitigation, and water quality), and foster economic development opportunities by bolstering the recreation economy and enhancing property value.

The following briefly summarizes the types of values generated by community forests and gives a few examples demonstrating the range in benefits. For a comprehensive review of the community and economic benefits each forest provides, go to the full report at [www.tpl.org/economic-benefits-community-forests](http://www.tpl.org/economic-benefits-community-forests).

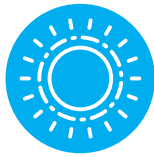
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## Cultural/spiritual heritage



Community forests can be used to protect lands that safeguard cultural and spiritual heritage. This land can be used to ensure access to educational experiences, artisan resources, and endemic, indigenous, and culturally-significant plants and wildlife.

### Hall Mountain Community Forest, North Carolina

Hall Mountain was protected by The Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indians (EBCI) to support artisanal livelihoods, tourism, education, and preserve culturally significant plants. Hall Mountain will also play an important educational role in the lives of EBCI's youth through the local Cherokee language immersion school and cultural camp.

### Amy B.H. Greenwell Ethnobotanical Garden Community Forest, Hawaii

Opened to the public in early 2020, this forest protects natural and cultural resources and provides educational and recreational opportunities.

## Recreation

Residents receive an economic benefit from community forests because they do not have to pay to access the trails



or travel to farther communities to access similar recreation opportunities. Some provide critical hunting access, while others support extensive trail systems.

### Barre Town Forest, Vermont

This town forest contains 20 miles of the 70-mile Millstone Trails Association mountain bike trail system and provides significant benefits to the community each year. The forest provides \$25,000 in recreation value to residents annually.

### Foy's Community Forest, Montana

Herron Park and the surrounding trail network receive 150,000 visits per year. With 75 to 90 percent of visits made by locals, this creates \$2.3 million of value for residents annually.

## Tourism

When tourists visit community forests, they spend money locally on gas, food, and lodging, which represents new money cycling through the economy.



### Mt. Ascension Natural Park, Montana

The South Hills Trail System, of which this community forest is a part, has been central to the community's mountain biking tourism economy and international recognition. Tourists spend \$4.1 million annually, supporting 60 jobs.



## Nine Times Community Forest, South Carolina

This community forest is a regional resource that provides recreational access to rock climbing, hiking, mountain biking, and hunting. The forest generates \$70,000 in visitor spending each year.

## Education

Community forests frequently serve as educational resources for the local community, providing opportunities for students to engage in research, participate in nature-based programming and summer camps, and learn in outdoor environments during the pandemic.



## Catamount Community Forest, Vermont

This community forest provides opportunities for students in K-12 education programs as well as the general public and the University of Vermont. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the forest offered half-day nature camps and outdoor after-school programs to complement remote learning or supplement homeschooling.

## Hidden Valley Nature Center, Maine

The Hidden Valley Nature Center is a sustainably-managed working forest and community hub that provides public access for recreation and over 40 nature-based programs that reach hundreds of children and adults in the 10-county region.



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## Forest-based services

Community forests provide essential natural services to their local communities by helping ensure water quality, sequestering and storing carbon, lowering wildfire risk, and providing critical habitat for important species.



## Pine Flats – Mt. Adams Community Forest, Washington

In addition to generating substantial timber-based forest products, this community forest sequesters \$17,000 of carbon annually and stores \$1.2 million in carbon. Wildfires pose significant risks to residential homes and agricultural operations in the region and the forest management practices on the forest lower the risk to homes by \$10 million.

## Stemilt-Squilchuck Community Forest, Washington

The community forest helps protect water quality in the region. There are 10 irrigation reservoirs on and around this forest, which provide water to four irrigation districts that service 5,400 acres of farmland. The orchards in the watershed produce 34 million pounds of cherries each year, resulting in \$76 million of economic impact. This safeguards over 1,000 seasonal jobs in the orchards.



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## Forest-based products

Community forests can produce timber-based revenues for the community, and many provide less traditional forest-based products, such as maple syrup, firewood, and food grown on trees.



### 13 Mile Woods Community Forest / Errol Town Forest, New Hampshire

This community forest safeguards the forest-based economy, producing \$1.7 million in timber revenue in the first seven years and supporting \$2 million in earnings in the logging sector. Each year, the forest supports two local jobs in forestry and logging and indirectly supports 10 additional jobs in other sectors.

### Urban Food Forest at Browns Mill, Georgia

This urban community forest is a key component of the City of Atlanta's plan to connect more neighborhoods with healthy food. The vision for this space includes plants and trees that produce fresh nuts, fruits, vegetables, and herbs for local residents.



This project was completed in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service and would not have been possible without generous support from the U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities and the U.S. Forest Service.

The Trust for Public Land creates parks and protects land for people, ensuring healthy, livable communities for generations to come. [www.tpl.org](http://www.tpl.org)

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