

The Current Use Program – Providing Stability for Vermont's Rural Land and Economy

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Demographics

- Today, more than 2.9 million acres or 62% of Vermont's forestland is owned by families and individuals.
- The demographics of these landowners are changing. Males over the age of 55 comprise over 65% of the population of forestland owners.
- Fifteen percent of Vermont's forestland is owned by people over the age of 75 (Butler et al 2015).
- According to surveys conducted by the Sustaining Family Forests Initiative, more than 17% of Vermont landowners (owning more than 10 acres) plan to transfer or sell their land in the next 5 years.

Intergenerational Transfer of Forestland Working Group Recommendations

In response to Act 171 of 2016

February 6, 2017

Developed by:

Intergenerational Transfer of Forestland Working Group

Submitted by:

Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation

Michael C. Snyder, Commissioner

Parcelization

The breaking up of land into smaller and smaller parcels, usually through subdivision.

- Increased, potentially disjointed ownership of parent parcel;
- Step toward new development, housing and infrastructure that may fragment natural resources and intact forests depending on how it occurs;
- Less viable tracts for forestry; and
- Potential negative ecological impacts.



A. Blake Gardner

Forest Loss

- While close to 80% of Vermont is forested, forest cover is actually declining. According to the Forest Service, Vermont may have lost 102,000 acres of forestland from 2012 to 2017 (Morin et al (2017)).
- In order to minimize forest fragmentation and forest loss, it is necessary to understand where parcelization and subdivision are occurring, and the rate at which they are occurring.



A. Blake Gardner

Forest Roundtable

- An ongoing policy discussion on forest policy with a focus on parcelization and forest fragmentation.
- Bringing diverse interests together to work on a common issue of concern (Over 240 interested members).
- Information sharing and networking.
- Making recommendations.



2007 Forest Roundtable Report

ROUNDTABLE ON PARCELIZATION AND FOREST FRAGMENTATION

FINAL REPORT



MAY 2007

Recommendations from a roundtable of diverse participants.

*Primary Author: Jamey Fidel, Forest and Biodiversity Program Director,
Vermont Natural Resources Council*

Includes 27 strategies to address parcelization and fragmentation.

- Tax Policy
- Land Use and Conservation Planning
- Valuation of Ecosystem Services
- Long-term Sustainability of the Forest Products Industry

Rec. # 9: The Forest Roundtable strongly endorses Vermont's Use Value Appraisal Program (UVA) including continued funding.

The UVA Program has been a very successful tool for reducing the effects of parcelization and forest fragmentation and should continue to be fully funded and supported by the Legislature.

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Rec. # 9: Track annual rates of parcelization in Vermont.

Rec. #10: Utilize existing data and develop maps to identify and prioritize forest blocks for conservation.

Rec. #11: Track and analyze rates and degree of forest fragmentation in Vermont.

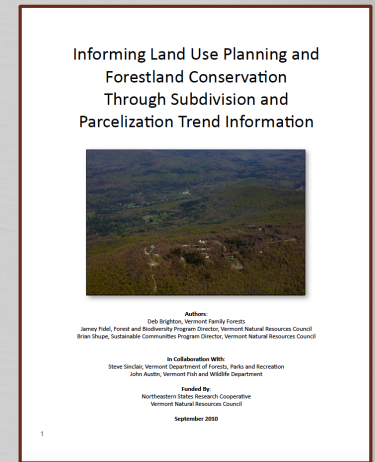
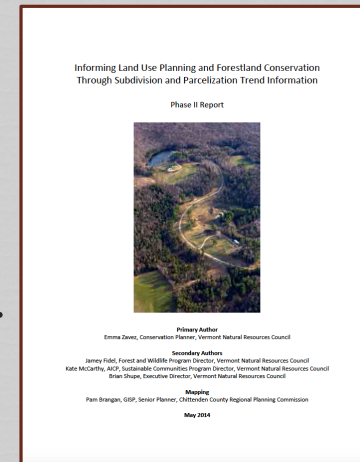
Rec. #12: Integrate existing planning efforts at the local, regional and state level to better address fragmentation.

Background on VNRC Research

Phase 1 (2010) Statewide parcelization trends,
2003-2009.

Phase 2 (2014) Subdivisions in 22 case study towns.

Phase 3 (2018) Parcelization trends, 2004-2016
(state, regional planning commission, county, & town levels)



*Funded by Northeastern States Research Cooperative (NSRC), a partnership of Northern Forest states (New Hampshire, Vermont, Maine, and New York) in coordination with the
USDA Forest Service*

Goals for Phase 3 Research

- Quantify the degree to which subdivision is affecting the **viability of large parcels** for resource management and conservation;
- Quantify the extent to which **residential development** is occurring;
- Quantify the extent to which **large undeveloped woodland parcels** are declining; and
- Document trends that may be relevant for **policies and programs** that support resource management and/or minimize the fragmentation of land, such as the **Current Use Program**.

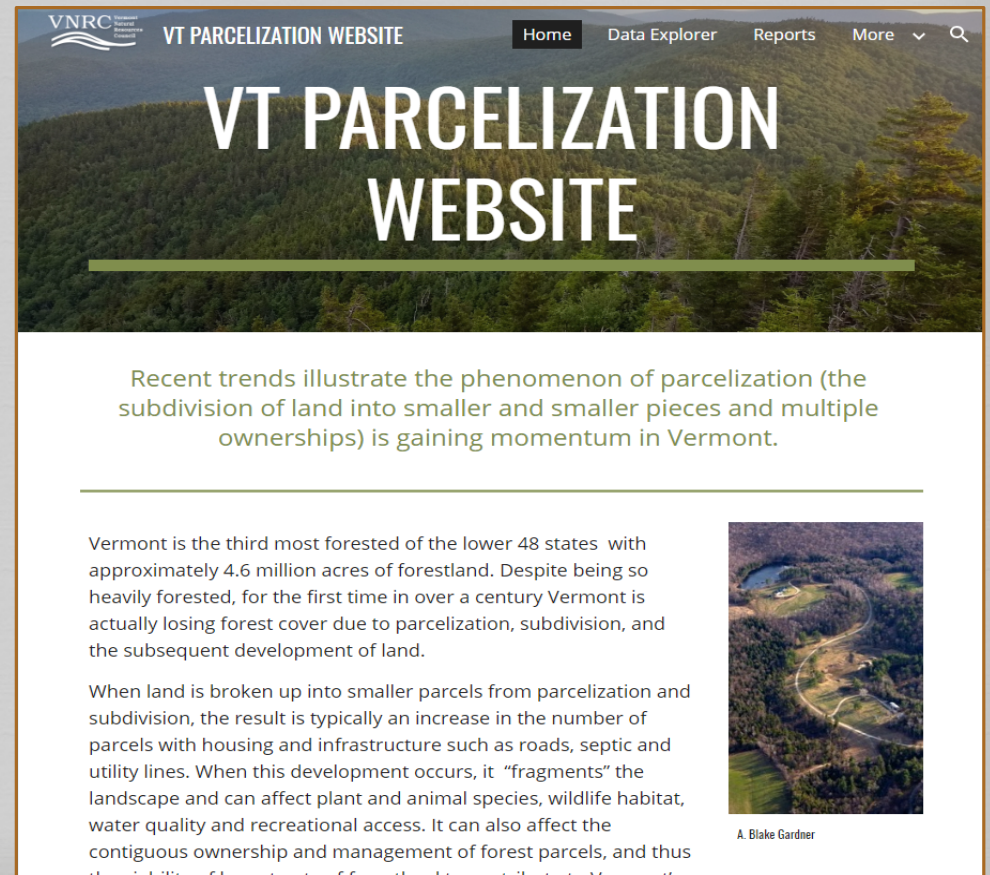
Methods

- **Vermont Department of Taxes Grand List**
Tax Years 2004 to 2016
- **Use Value Appraisal (Current Use) Data**
- **Designed Metrics to look at various trends within the data:**
 - Number of parcels
 - Acreage
 - Parcel Sizes
 - Parcel types
 - Dwellings
 - Land Values
 - UVA

Parcelization Website

Available at: vtforesttrends.vnrc.org

- Explore parcelization data at the town, county, regional, or statewide level using different tools.
- Generate geographically-specific reports.
- Download raw data.
- Download parcelization reports.



Private Land Trends

In 2016, roughly 3,350,000 acres (70.4% of the land) were in parcels 50 acres or larger.*

*residential 43.3%

*woodland 22.8%



Number of Parcels by Parcel Size

Small parcels are increasing, especially in the 2-5 and 5-10 acre categories, a size commonly used for “rural residential” house lots.

