

An economic case for Catamount Community Forest

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What do you do when a popular, privately-owned trail network in a fast-developing region of Vermont is in jeopardy of being sold and developed? Work with the town to buy the property and create a new community forest that safeguards sensitive habitat, protects longstanding recreation opportunities, and supports local businesses. Doing so can protect jobs, increase tourism, and inject tens of thousands of new dollars into the local economy each year.

The Trust for Public Land is working with the Town of Williston, Vermont to protect 393 acres of forest, fields, and wetlands that are currently part of the privately-owned Catamount Outdoor Family Center. By purchasing the land and transferring it to the town as the Catamount Community Forest, we are working to protect this historic property from the threat of development. Our success will help ensure that the property's trail system, recreational programs, and camps remain a public resource for generations to come.

In addition to securing one of the last remaining open spaces in Williston, creation of Catamount Community Forest will allow for the continued operation of the outdoor center and protect the many economic benefits this local enterprise generates.

Get to know the land

The Catamount Family Outdoor Center is a family-owned enterprise that supports 20 miles of trails for skiing, hiking, biking, and other non-motorized activities. It is comprised of hundreds of acres of dense forests, open fields, and expansive wetlands—all of which could be lost if not protected as the new community forest.

Supporting tourism and local jobs

In addition to generating many environmental and community benefits, creation of the Catamount Community Forest and the continued operation of the outdoor center will help protect the regional economy, which largely depends on tourism and recreation.

While the Town of Williston is home to just over 8,000 people, the outdoor center receives 20,000 visits each year. A recent economic analysis¹ of the property revealed that 37 percent of visits (7,400) come from visitors living outside Chittenden County who inject new money into the local economy. These new visitors are responsible for more than \$875,000 in total sales each year, which generate more than \$60,000 in sales tax and \$9,000 in income tax for the State of Vermont. The direct sales generated by new visitors to Chittenden County help support an estimated 14 jobs in the local economy, not including the five full-time positions created directly by the outdoor center.

Propelling Vermont's outdoor industry

Protection of the property's trail system, which is located within ten minutes of Burlington (the state's largest city), will also support the broader outdoor recreation industry in Vermont.

According to the Outdoor Industry Association, outdoor recreation is a key driver of Vermont's economy. Each year, the industry generates \$5.5

One in seven jobs in Vermont depends on outdoor recreation

72 percent of Vermont residents participate in outdoor recreation each year

Catamount Outdoor Family Center receives 20,000 visits annually

billion in consumer spending, which results in \$505 million in state and local tax revenue and directly supports 51,000 jobs. Creating the Catamount Community Forest will help to protect this vital industry and the culture of outdoor recreation that defines life in Vermont.

Generating additional economic benefits

In addition to extensive tourism and recreation impacts, the property provides a host of additional economic benefits, including improved human health, increased quality of life for residents and visitors, and a variety of natural goods and services, like enhanced water quality and cleaner air.



¹Walsh, Kyle, M.P.S. Candidate. "An Economic Impact Analysis of the Proposed Catamount Community Forest in Williston, Vermont," SUNY-School of Environmental Science & Forestry, 2017.



The Trust for Public Land creates parks and protects land for people, ensuring healthy, livable communities for generations to come.

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