



# Forests in Connecticut: A Low Cost, Powerful and Effective Solution

## Why Forests?

**We face unprecedented, escalating crises in climate and biodiversity.** Business as usual is not an option. More of the same is not enough. We need to forge new solutions that address these crises and, most of all, do no harm. Natural forests do not need us to be healthy, but we do need them to survive.

**We have very limited time, very limited budgets and aggressive goals** to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. We all want a high quality of life in Connecticut - with good jobs, healthy communities, and a healthy environment. Forest-based sequestration helps us reach emission reduction targets.

**Healthcare costs continue to increase, particularly for state and local governments.** A rapidly emerging area of research is the quantifiable role of forests in supporting and improving health - including brain health - in all communities, including special populations like veterans and those with chronic or difficult conditions.

**Our forests are one of our greatest assets.** We need to harness the ability of forests to mitigate climate change, serve our communities and protect biodiversity. Protecting and growing existing forests is the most rapid, low-cost and powerful way to achieve these critical goals.

## More Information

**To learn more about Connecticut's forests, contact:**

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## Proforestation

Proforestation is the practice of purposefully growing an existing, intact forest toward its full ecological potential. It is a nature-based solution whereby existing forests are protected as intact ecosystems to foster continuous growth. This maximizes carbon storage as well as ecological and structural complexity. It is practiced in areas such as National Parks and the Adirondacks and needs to be prioritized where possible.



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According to studies by the University of Vermont and others, if we let our forests grow they can store and sequester at least 2-4 times what they store now, above and below ground. In addition, older forests are the most resilient to the stresses of climate change. Protecting habitat, wildlife corridors, and especially unmanipulated areas such as wilderness prevents extinction. Right now, we need to leverage cost-effective strategies to mitigate climate change and its effects, protect biodiversity, and support long-term forest health and human health.

Today, Connecticut is approximately 60% forested, but only about 1% of the state is protected for proforestation. There is consistently high public support for forest protection. Protecting nature is urgent and essential to our best future. A balance among forests for resources, forests for research, and natural forest ecosystems will continue to provide local products and a range of jobs. Forest protection will also maximally reduce greenhouse gas emissions, prevent flooding and species extinction, protect our water and improve health now and for the long term.

**Most of all, we need a strategic network of highly protected nature.**

Trees live for hundreds of years and continue to sequester carbon, especially old-growth forests. Harvesting or manipulating a forest fragments it and results in a net loss of stored carbon for decades or more. We need control groups, baselines, and ongoing data collection. Forest ecosystems are incredibly complex, proven by the fact that we are still discovering new species in New England. The important thing is to do no harm.



### We need to:

1. Protect public forests whenever and wherever possible from any unnecessary intervention;
2. Assemble a monitoring team that includes climate scientists, ecologists, foresters and health experts for long term collaboration and assessment;
3. Quantify and maximize carbon storage and sequestration to achieve our GHG reduction targets;
4. Invest strategically in protecting more forests and more trees across the state;
5. Stop subsidizing burning woody biomass as renewable energy.