



ENVISIONING THE  
MOHAWK TRAIL  
WOODLANDS  
PARTNERSHIP  
FOREST CENTER



*Abigail Matheny & Sabine Brismeur*  
*Fall 2021*

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*Create and put forward a comprehensive vision of how the partnership's multi-functional public "Forest Center" could serve the residents and visitors of the northern Berkshire Mountains.*



*IMAGE: Sabine at the Mohawk Trail State Forest*





**LAND  
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

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# PROJECT GOALS



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## PROJECT SCOPE

- Our project acknowledged and discussed, but did not focus on:
  - The controversy over the MTWP's real or perceived mission
  - Any detailed conceptual planning or considerations beyond the project goals
- Why?
  - Project must reflect MTWP mission
  - No concrete details at this point



IMAGE: Tools at the Hall Tavern Farm sawmil.

# **PROJECT BACKGROUND**

# MOHAWK TRAIL WOODLANDS PARTNERSHIP

- Collaboration between FRCOG, BRPC, FLT, EEA
- Conceived after 60 public meetings in all municipalities, lots of community feedback
- Wanted a special designation of the region
- 2013 - MTWP Advisory Committee
  - Wanted a special designation of the region
- 2018 - Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership and MTWP Governing Board
- Currently 17/21 municipalities have opted into the Partnership

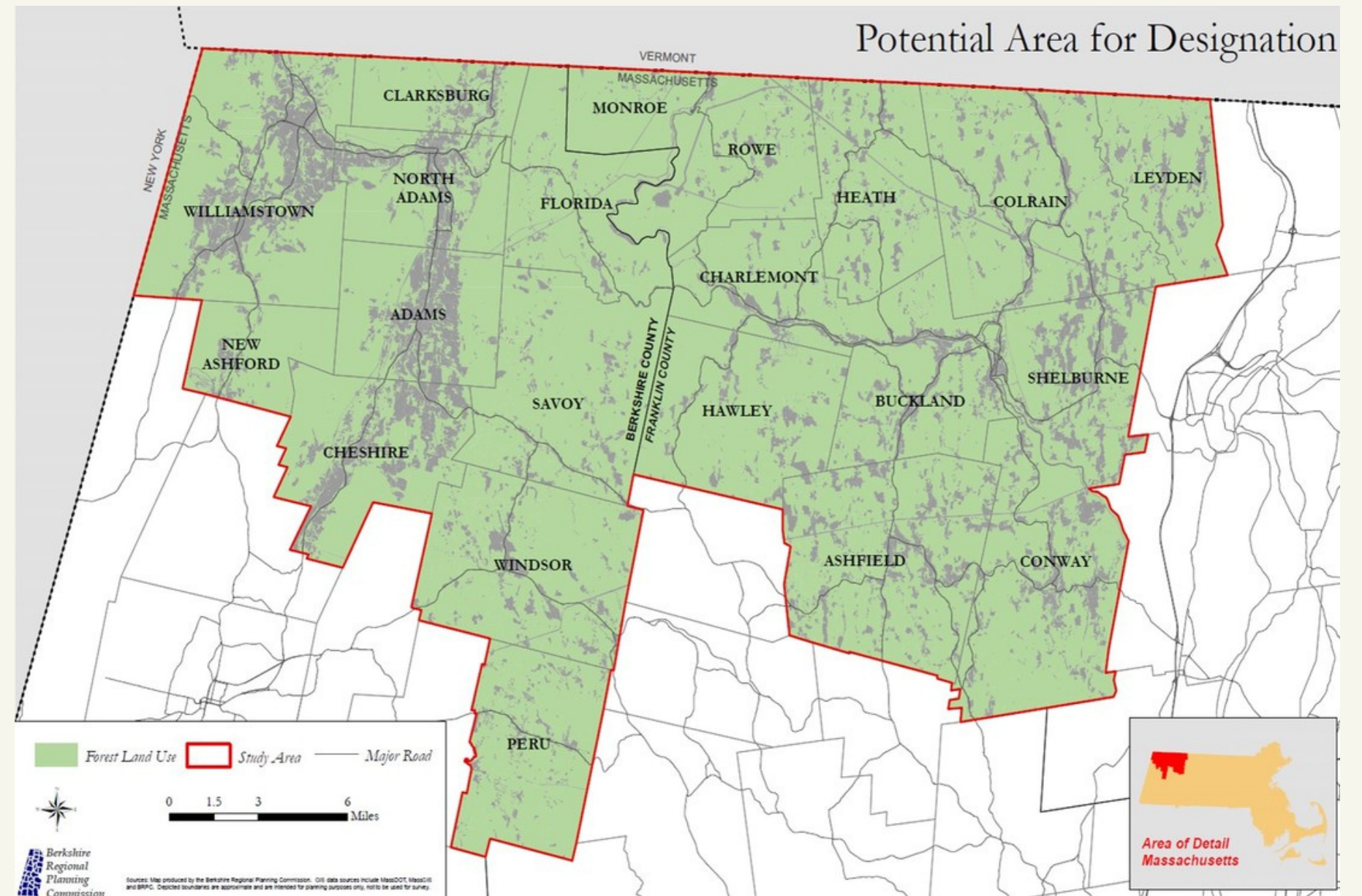


IMAGE: The MTWP eligibility area



# LAW AND POLICY

- Massachusetts State Law 209, Sections 89-91
- MTWP 2014-2015 Draft Plan
- MTWP Draft Business Plan (2018)
- Shared Stewardship Framework

FILED ON: 7/26/2018

**HOUSE . . . . . No. 4835**

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*The Commonwealth of Massachusetts*

In the One Hundred and Ninetieth General Court  
(2017-2018)

An Act promoting climate change adaptation, environmental and natural resource protection, and investment in recreational assets and opportunity.



**Shared Stewardship Framework**

Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
And the  
United States Department of Agriculture,  
Forest Service

(Eastern Region, Northern Research Station, and Forest Products Laboratory)

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## FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK

- \$30 million government contribution anticipated for MTWP
  - \$24 million at a federal level
  - \$6 million at a state level
- Establishment of a Forest Center would utilize both government funds and independently-raised funds
- No immediate plans for Forest Center development, so no financial details available



IMAGE: Fazer Visitor Center in Finland

**RESEARCH AND  
LITERATURE REVIEW**



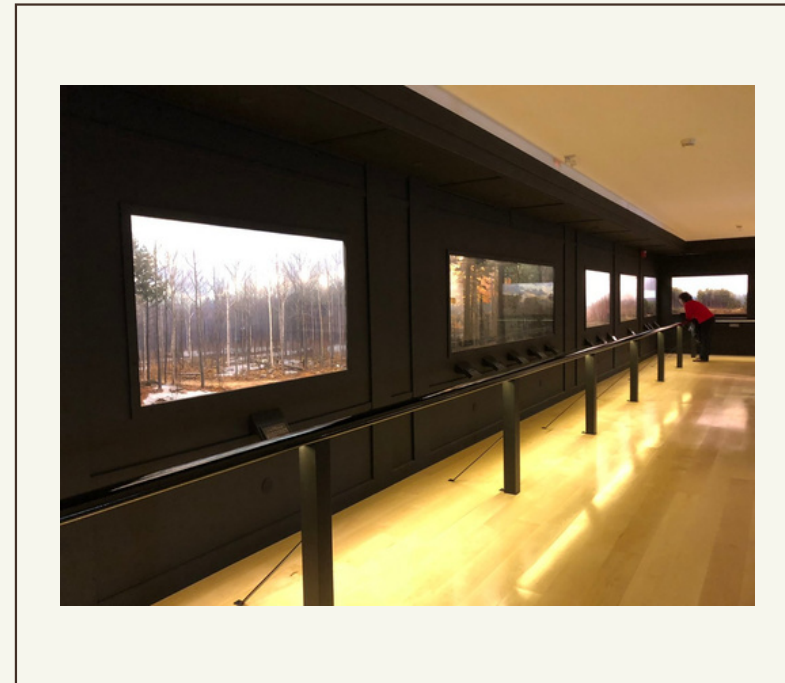
## CATSKILLS VISITOR CENTER

Mount Tremper, NY



## GREYLOCK GLEN VISITOR CENTER

Adams, MA



## FISHER MUSEUM AT HARVARD FOREST

Petersham, MA

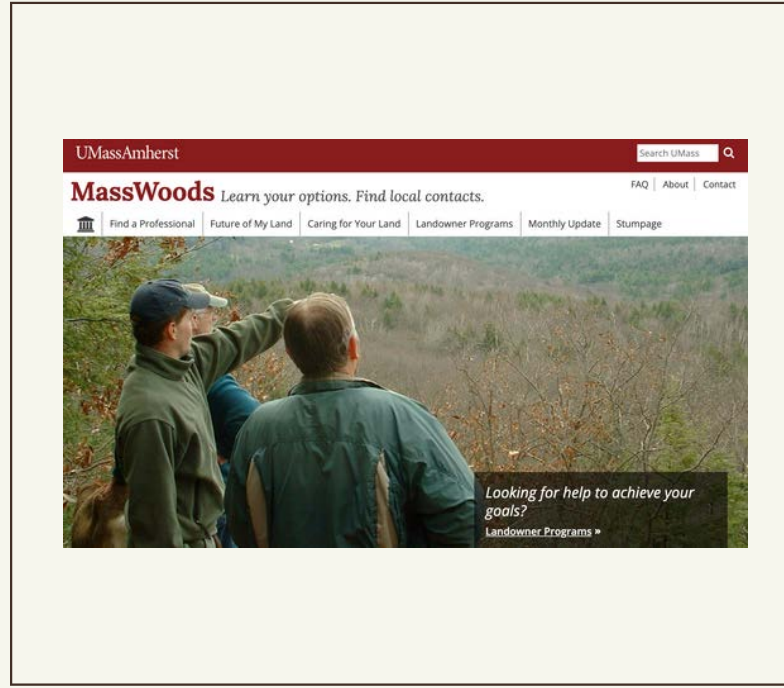


## MT. GREYLOCK VISITOR CENTER

Lanesborough, MA

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# VISITOR CENTERS



## MASSWOODS

University of Massachusetts at  
Amherst, MA



## MASSACHUSETTS GOVERNMENT FORESTRY

Massachusetts



## MASSACHUSETTS WOODLANDS INSTITUTE

Franklin County, MA



## NEW ENGLAND FORESTRY FOUNDATION

Littleton, MA

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# FORESTRY ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

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# REGIONAL SOCIOECONOMIES

- Berkshire and Franklin counties are economically stressed
- Franklin County:
  - 9.3% of the population lives below the poverty line
  - 6% unemployment rate
- Berkshire County:
  - 11.2% of the population lives below the poverty line
  - 4.5% unemployment rate



IMAGE: The view from Whitcomb Summit

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# RESEARCH FINDINGS



## RESEARCH FINDINGS 0.1

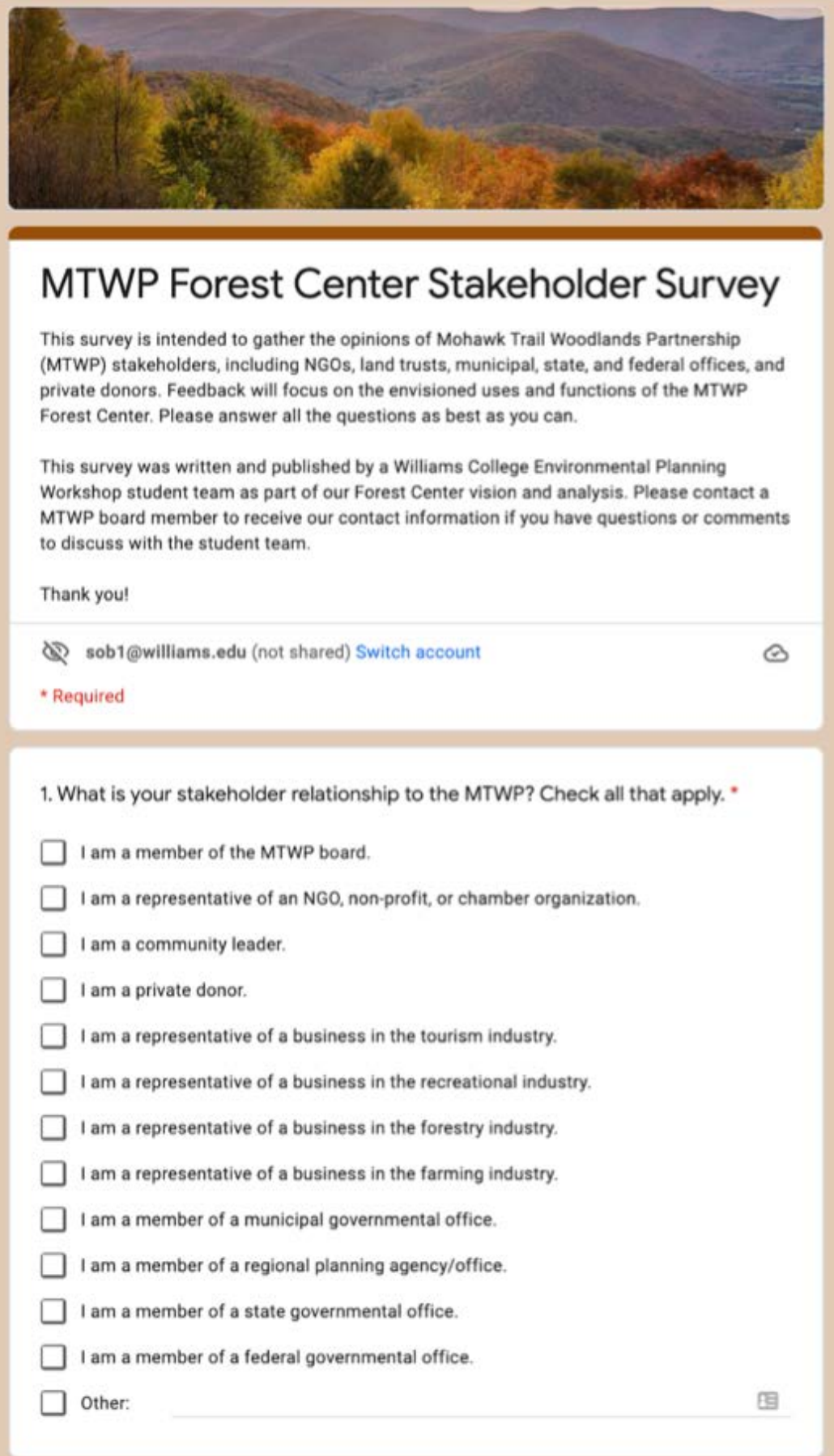
### Stakeholder Survey

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# I. STAKEHOLDER SURVEY

- 10-question survey that focuses on envisioned uses and functions
- Stakeholders were identified by the Board and emailed the form
- Feedback informed our vision of the Forest Center
- Stakeholders included:
  - Land trust representatives
  - Business association members
  - Zoning and planning boards members
  - Town councillors
  - Municipal, state, and federal representatives
  - Museum consultants
  - Private donors
  - Landowners
  - Community leaders
  - Business owners in various industries



**MTWP Forest Center Stakeholder Survey**

This survey is intended to gather the opinions of Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership (MTWP) stakeholders, including NGOs, land trusts, municipal, state, and federal offices, and private donors. Feedback will focus on the envisioned uses and functions of the MTWP Forest Center. Please answer all the questions as best as you can.

This survey was written and published by a Williams College Environmental Planning Workshop student team as part of our Forest Center vision and analysis. Please contact a MTWP board member to receive our contact information if you have questions or comments to discuss with the student team.

Thank you!

sob1@williams.edu (not shared) [Switch account](#)

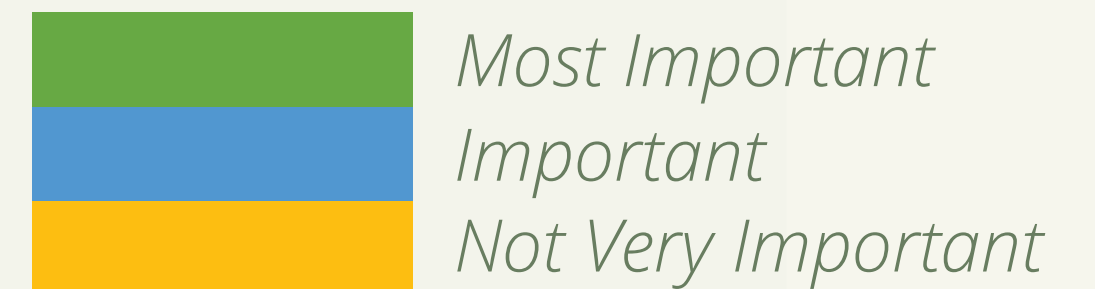
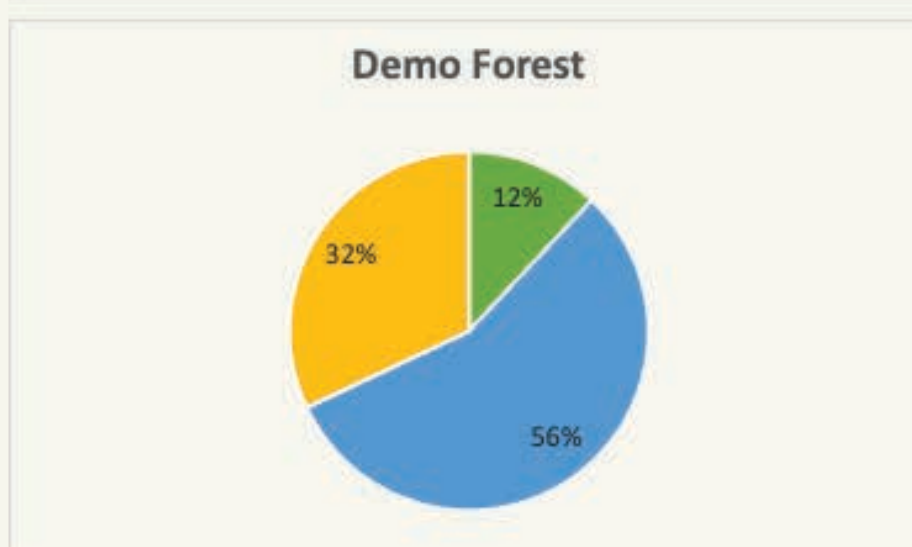
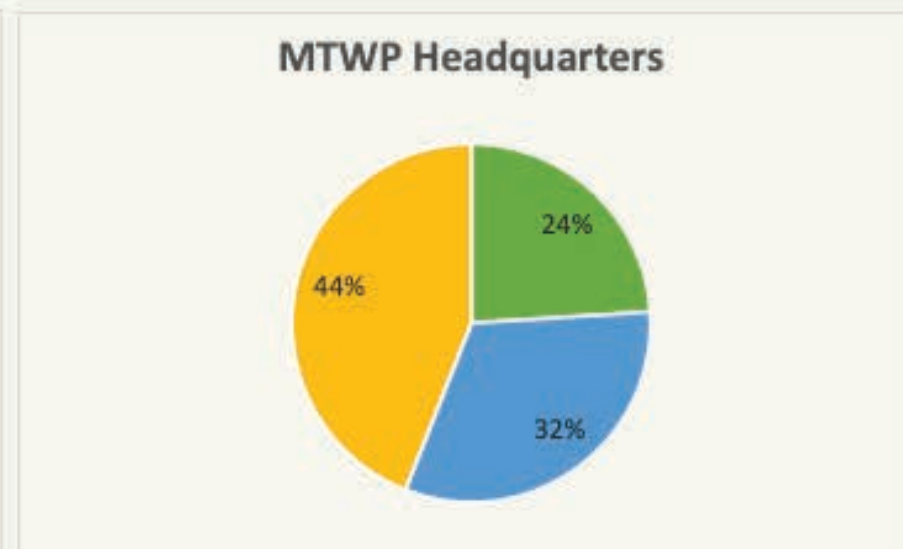
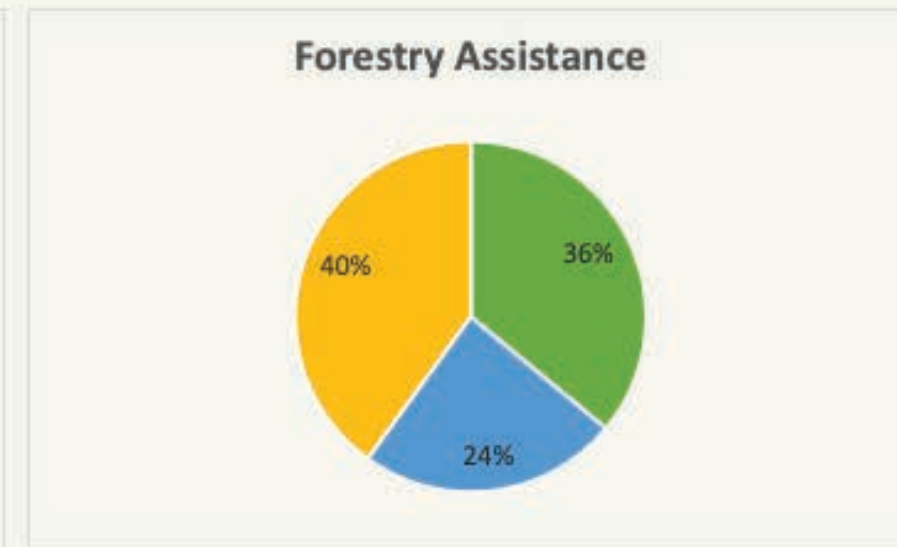
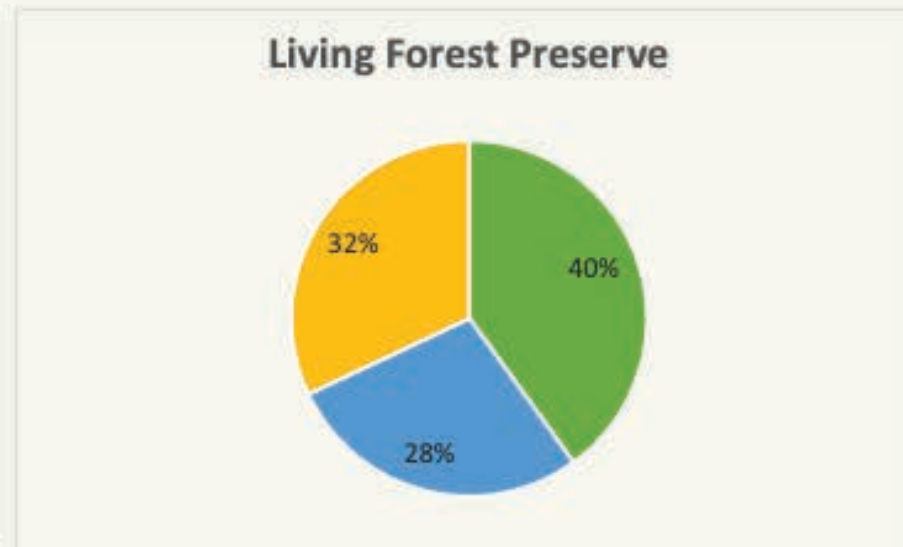
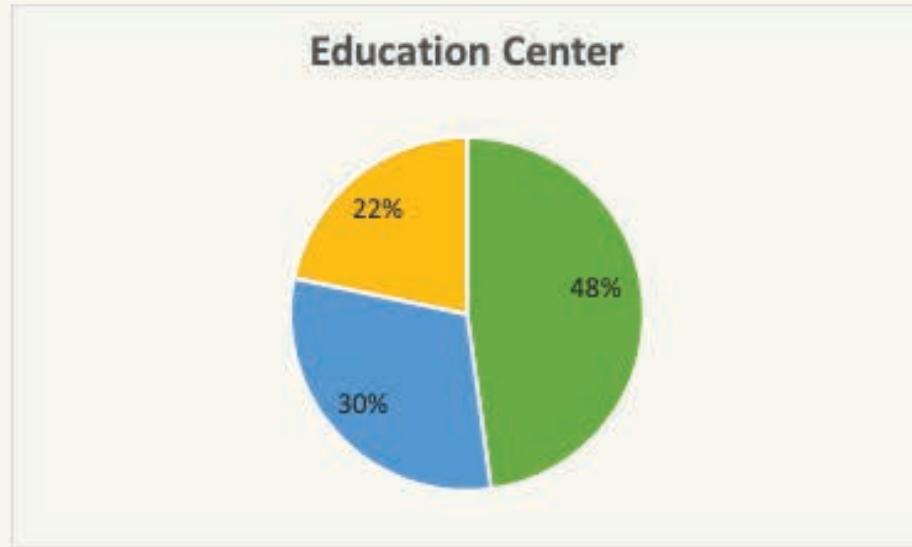
\* Required

1. What is your stakeholder relationship to the MTWP? Check all that apply. \*

- I am a member of the MTWP board.
- I am a representative of an NGO, non-profit, or chamber organization.
- I am a community leader.
- I am a private donor.
- I am a representative of a business in the tourism industry.
- I am a representative of a business in the recreational industry.
- I am a representative of a business in the forestry industry.
- I am a representative of a business in the farming industry.
- I am a member of a municipal governmental office.
- I am a member of a regional planning agency/office.
- I am a member of a state governmental office.
- I am a member of a federal governmental office.
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

IMAGE: Screenshot from the survey

# I. STAKEHOLDER SURVEY: RESULTS (PART I)





## RESEARCH FINDINGS 0.2

### Stakeholder Interview Analysis

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## II. STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW ANALYSIS

### Government Representatives

- Robert O'Connor: Executive Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs
- Sarah Reynolds: Town Administrator of Charlemont
- Marguerite Willis: Selectboard Chair of Charlemont
- Emily Johnson: Franklin Planning Board
- Peggy Sloan: Franklin Planning Board
- Jessica Atwood: Franklin Regional Council of Governments

### Forestry Experts and Associates

- Jay Healy: Former owner of Hall Tavern Farm
- Tom Kluklinski: Speciality artisan woodworker
- Drew Jones: Hopkins Memorial Forest Manager
- Pete Grima: DCR Service Forester
- Alison Wright: DCR Service Forester
- Bob Leverett: Chair of DCR Forest Reserves Science Advisory Council
- Brian Donahue: President of MA Woodlands Institute
- Meg Burrington: Pantermehl Land Clearing Company
- Julie Richburg: Regional ecologist
- Lisa Hayden: New England Forestry Foundation

### Additional Stakeholders

- Hank Art: MTWP Chair (client)
- Whit Sanford: Greater Shelburne Falls Businesses Association
- Lauren Stevens: Expertise on the history of the Mohawk Trail
- Bonney Hartley: Historic Preservation Manager at the Stockbridge-Munsee Community
- Andy Kawczak: President of the Hoosic Watershed Association
- Rick Chandler: MTWP Vice President
- Meshell Bordeleau: Visitor Services Supervisor at Mt. Greylock Visitor Center



## RESEARCH FINDINGS 0.3

### Defined Uses + Programming

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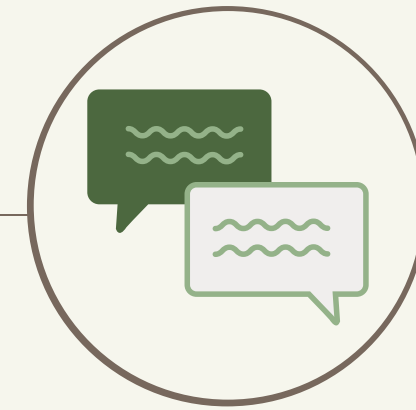
### III. DEFINED USES AND PROGRAMMING



PUBLIC EDUCATION  
CENTER



TOURISM AND  
VISITOR CENTER



FORESTRY  
ASSISTANCE



CONSERVATION  
AREA

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### III. DEFINED USES AND PROGRAMMING: PUBLIC EDUCATION CENTER

- Goals:
  - increase public appreciation for woodlands and sustainable forest management
  - advance knowledge on the region's history, landscape, communities, and futures
  - provide year-round programming and "pop-up" events



IMAGE: The interactive topographical map at Mount Greylock Visitor Center

#### COMPONENTS

- Field trip destination for local schools
- Educational programming that focus on forest land conservation
- Weekend programming events relevant to the season
- Temporary and permanent exhibits, indoor and outdoor in the conservation area

#### EXHIBIT COMPONENTS

- History of the Mohawk Trail exhibit
- Local indigenous communities and histories exhibit
- Climate change adaptation exhibit
- Natural resource protection exhibit

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Reach out to relevant expertise - Indigenous Cultural Affairs and Historic Preservation officials, local historians and elders with knowledge about the region's history, ecologists and foresters with intimate knowledge of this area

### III. DEFINED USES AND PROGRAMMING: TOURISM AND VISITOR CENTER

- Goals:
  - serve as a multi-purpose rest stop for visitors with public restrooms and free wifi
  - promote patronage of restaurants focusing on local foods, outdoor recreational opportunities, and regional museums
  - encourage eco-tourism and engagement from central and eastern Massachusetts



IMAGE: Brochures and maps at the Mount Greylock Visitor Center

- Museums
- Restaurants
- Parks and trails
- Recreational activities

### COMPONENTS

- Consult popular businesses to consider a small discount for visitors who make their reservations through or because of the center
- Should review the Recreation Tourism Inventory and Mapping Project by the BRPC and FRCOG

### RECOMMENDATIONS



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## III. DEFINED USES AND PROGRAMMING: FORESTRY ASSISTANCE

- Goals:
  - build relationships between the Forest Center, landowners, foresters, loggers, and sawmill operators
  - encourage responsible stewardship and care of the land
  - support conservation to help mitigate climate change
  - facilitate sustainable timber harvesting on family forests if desired



IMAGE: Jay Healy of Hall Tavern Hall holds a plank of wood inside the sawmill building

### COMPONENTS

- Informational, resource-based website
- Brochures, videos, pamphlets, and books
- Consulting foresters and forestry experts
- Workshops, classes, safety courses, and webinars
- Social events and programming
- Supporter/facilitator of Indigenous land return

### PROGRAMMING

- Ecological and biological importance and the value of forests
- History of forestry in this region and its continuing impacts
- Traditional ecological knowledge and Indigenous histories
- State and federal grants, awards, programs for landowners
- Regulations, laws, rules, deeds, etc. regarding woodlands
- Climate change impacts, adaptations, and resiliency
- Importance of choosing a reputable forester
- Responsible timber harvesting and logging
- Local tree species and wildlife species identification
- Planning for the future of the forest

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Invest in an educational campaign about forestry, logging, and forest health
- Define sustainable forestry
- Collaborate with existing local FA programs
- Connect with research institutions
- Work with the guidance of Indigenous tribes with regional knowledge
- Advertise, outreach, communication!



### III. DEFINED USES AND PROGRAMMING: CONSERVATION AREA

- Goals:
  - define and showcase sustainable forestry practices
  - encourage landowners to conserve their woodlands
  - provide recreational and educational opportunities
  - promote wildlife biodiversity, carbon sequestration, and invaluable ecosystem services/"earthly gifts" \*



IMAGE: Hopkins Memorial Forest

*\*Robin Wall Kimmerer, Potawatomi scientist*

#### COMPONENTS

- Preservation area
- Demonstration area
- Maintained trails
- Signage and storytelling

#### PROGRAMMING

- Seasonal or regular festivals
- Demonstrative events
- Workshops and safety courses
- Social events and outdoor programming
- Educational opportunities for students

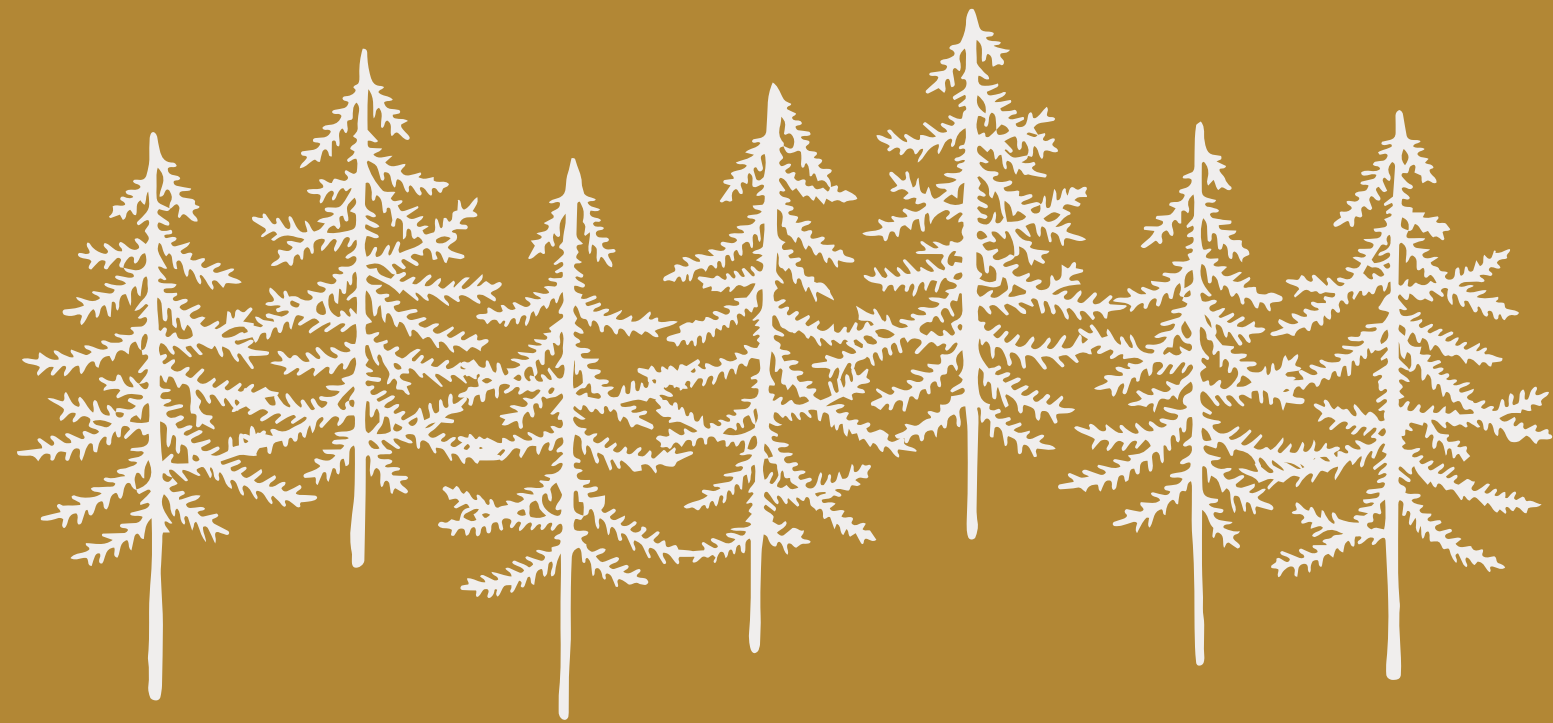
#### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Reach out to demonstration forest head stewards and managers
- Develop an explicit land use/land access agreement in collaboration with Indigenous communities

# III. DEFINED USES AND PROGRAMMING: EVALUATION MATRIX

- Used to check stakeholder survey results against our interviews, research, and best judgement
- Based on various factors, including environmental, social/equity, etc.
- Shows our ratings and rationale for the defined uses we assessed, where 3 is best and 1 is worst

Defined Use	Environmental	Social/Equity	Economic/Fiscal	Stakeholder Opinion	Feasibility	TOTAL	
Tourism Center		1	2	3	3	3	12
Forestry Assistance		3	2	3	3	2	13
Conservation Area		3	2	1	3	2	11
Educational Center		2	3	2	3	1	11
Research Center		3	1	1	2	1	8
Market Place		2	1	2	1	2	8
MTWP Headquarters		1	3	2	1	3	10
<i>Rating, where 3 is best and 1 is worst</i>							
Defined Use	Environmental	Social/Equity	Economic/Fiscal	Stakeholder Opinion	Feasibility		
<b>Tourism Center</b>	1. May require land use and clearing for a new building 2. Requires energy resources for building maintenance 3. May require land degradation and exploitation if new	1. Provides free resources for 'free' recreational outings 2. Tourist-catered facilities are targeted towards people with expendable income	1. Does not require significant resources or specific staffing to function 2. Should increase patronage to local restaurants, businesses, facilities	1. Consistently ranked as the 'most important' in the survey 2. Often cited as economically necessary during interviews	1. Does not require a lot of infrastructure or excessive resources in its development or implementation 2. Popular use that reflects the MTWP mission		
<b>Forestry Assistance</b>	1. Will foster and support healthy forests via biodiversity and mixed-structures 2. Will provide resources and support for landowners to keep their forest lands undeveloped 3. Will foster sustainable forestry methods for harvested woodlands	1. Targeted towards small landowners with family forests 2. Not applicable to most of the public, or low-income socioeconomic groups 3. Potential to promote land repatriation to regional Indigenous communities	1. Supports landowners in obtaining grants and tax benefits by maintaining healthy forests 2. Empowers small landowners to get a reasonable payout for timber harvesting 3. Potential to help compensate landowners via carbon credit markets	1. Consistently ranked as the 'most important' in the survey 2. All ecologists and forest experts interviewed emphasized the importance of forestry assistance	1. Does not require a lot of land infrastructure for its implementation 2. A substantial amount of resources needed to be successful 3. A significant part of the public opposes this use but it is misunderstood		
<b>Conservation Area</b>	1. Conserves and preserves forest land in perpetuity 2. Facilitates environmental consciousness 3. Actively sequesters carbon, provides wildlife habitat, promotes biodiversity, supports ecosystem services, etc.	1. Provides a free educational resource and experience 2. Public and private school field trips should cater to youth of all socioeconomic demographics 3. Land access/use agreement with Stockbridge-Munsee, St. Regis Mohawk, Nipmuc Nation, etc.	1. Will require land purchase or lease and upkeep without return profit 2. Unknown and incalculable ecosystem benefits (clean air, clean water, etc.)	1. Consistently ranked as the 'most important' in the survey 2. Demo forest and living preserve go hand-in-hand but demo forest is not popular with MTWP critics	1. The lot the Forest Center will be on should include woodlands already 2. Would likely not require excessive staffing beyond a forester		
<b>Educational Center</b>	1. Does not require any additional building space 2. Plan to have exhibits about the importance of natural resource conservation to help promote environmental consciousness	1. Exhibits and programs will be free to attend and accessible to all who can arrive 2. Will cover a wide range of topics relevant to every demographic 3. Should facilitate greater awareness and support of the region's Indigenous communities	1. Need to hire expert curators and purchase appropriate materials design the exhibits 2. Will require experienced staffing to handle and facilitate field trip/summer camp programs	1. Consistently ranked as the 'most important' in the survey 2. Supporters and critics of the MTWP agree that education is vital	1. Requires a significant amount of infrastructure, resources, and research to be implemented successfully 2. Will need to interview local experts and curators to appropriately design the exhibits		
<b>Research Center</b>	1. Will advance knowledge about sustainable forestry techniques, climate change impacts, sustainable wood products, etc. 2. Promotes environmental awareness in the region and connects NW Massachusetts to other research institutions	1. Only people with the appropriate background can conduct research 2. Social research (e.g. socioclimate crisis, regional traditional ecological knowledge) may pose better opportunities for equity	1. Research equipment costs a significant amount of money 2. May need to hire scientists and research assistants to conduct the research 3. Grants likely required for funding research efforts	1. Consistently ranked as 'somewhat important' in the survey 2. Many stakeholders feel there is already good research being done elsewhere 3. Foresters think there is always a need for place-based research	1. Will require a lot of extra work to implement, such as recruiting scientists and applying for research grants 2. Difficult to purchase research equipment and begin research projects without funding		
<b>Market Place</b>	1. If industrial, could encourage unsustainable wood production and purchase and environmental degradation 2. If artisanal, could encourage local, sustainable purchasing of wood products since they are largely constructed from by-products	1. Largely applies to people with expendable income to buy wood products 2. May help artisanal products become more affordable for local buyers	1. Would encourage the purchase of local wood products and put money in residents' pockets 2. Requires the hiring of a computer scientist/website designer for design and implementation 3. May require online upkeep/maintenance costs	1. Consistently ranked as 'not very important' in the survey 2. Current local artisanal culture is small, custom, and doesn't require an extensive marketplace	1. Actual use may be difficult to gauge/encourage 2. Online marketplace already exists via the Massachusetts Woodlands Institute		
<b>MTWP Headquarters</b>	1. May require addition building space for conference rooms 2. Similar to tourism, will also require additional energy resources for building maintenance	1. Conference rooms will be accessible to MTWP Board Members, public/private forums, research consortiums, etc. 2. Also accessible to anyone for a booking/meeting space with an application	1. May require additional infrastructure to be built 2. Beyond the building, no additional cost are expected	1. Consistently ranked as 'not very important' in the survey 2. However, MTWP Board Members consider this space important for staffing purposes	1. Easy to implement since all that is needed is a room with a table and chairs		



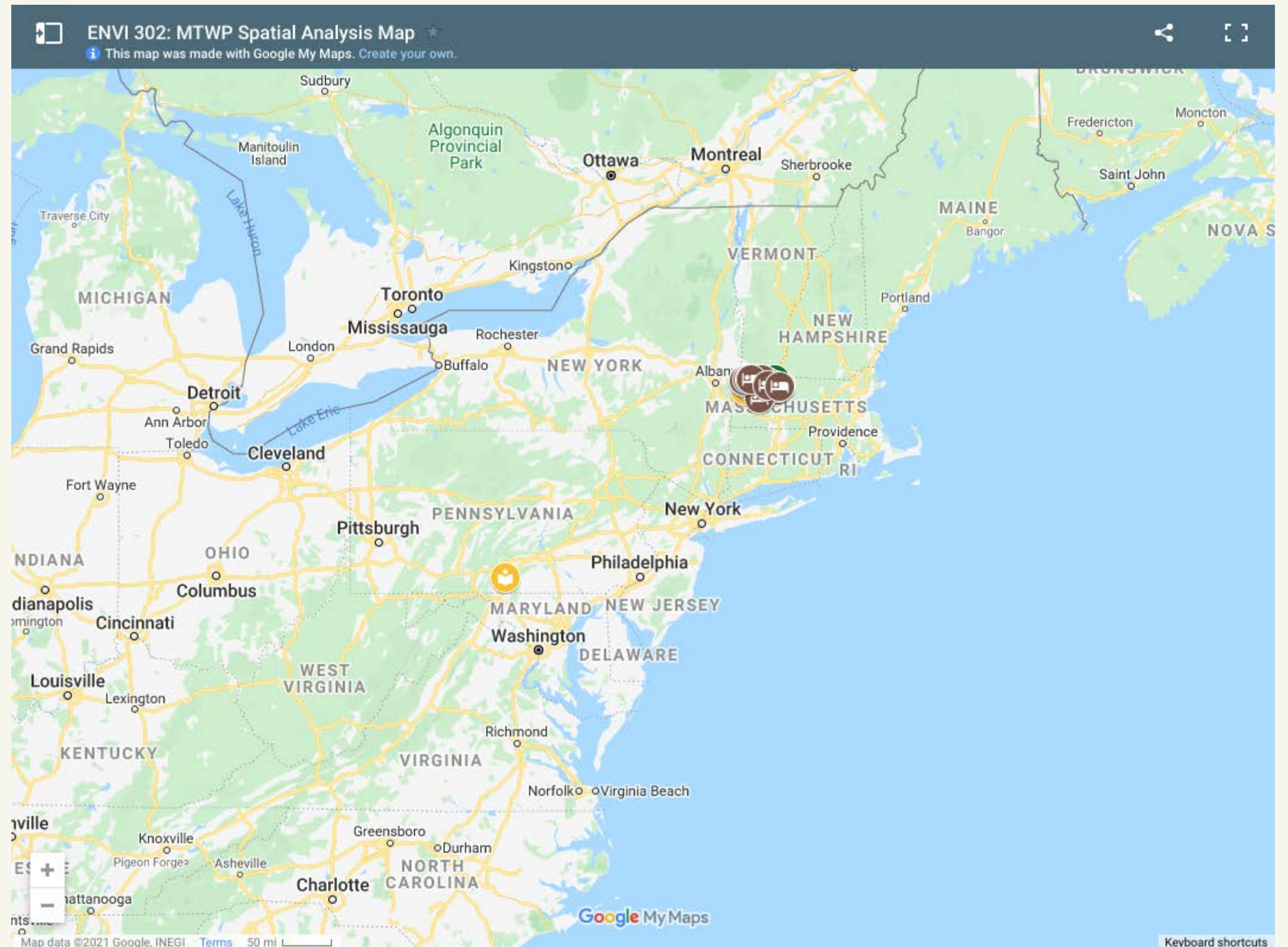
## RESEARCH FINDINGS 0.4

### Potential Locations

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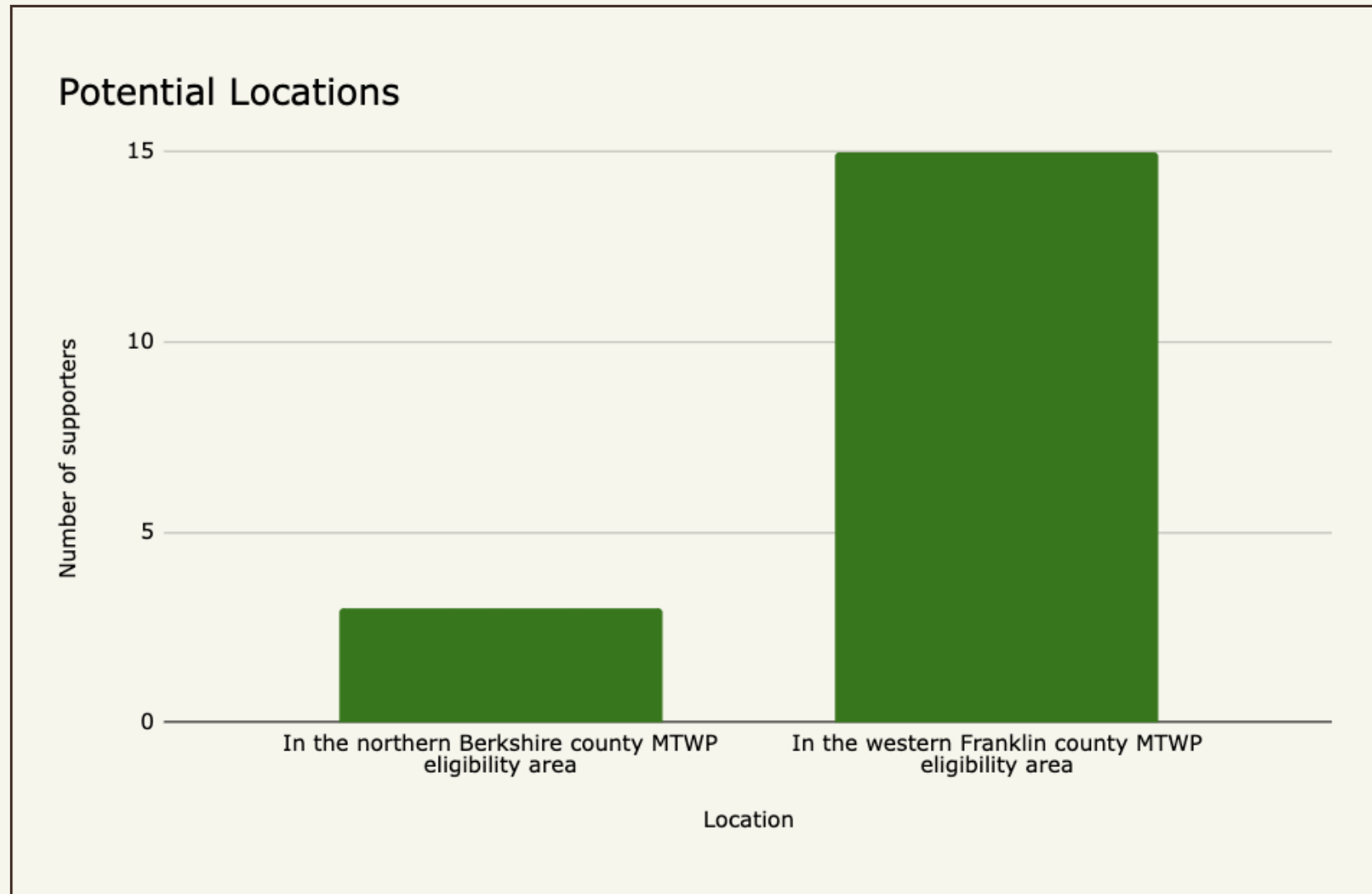
## IV. SPATIAL ANALYSIS MAP

- Created on Google Maps
- Labeled markers:
  - Site locations
  - Visitor centers
  - Local schools
  - Recreational infrastructure
  - Logging infrastructure
  - Hospitality infrastructure
- Additional considerations:
  - Deerfield River
  - Route 2
  - Other roads



<https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/edit?mid=1dV4hTPk7puYLwhaXzyAjwhp1ZLUa03ax&usp=sharing>

## IV. STAKEHOLDER LOCATION PREFERENCES



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## IV. WHITCOMB SUMMIT, FLORIDA

- 19 acres
- Current site has a hotel and forestlands
- Known for its view of the Taconic Mountains
- Far from any businesses, schools, recreational or tourism infrastructure
- Owner is open and willing, but Florida is not in MTWP



IMAGE: Abby in front of the Whitcomb Summit sign; map image from Google Earth

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## IV. HALL TAVERN FARM, CHARLEMONT

- 350 acres
- In a well-traveled area near businesses
- Existing sawmill operation and demo forest is perfect for forestry assistance
- Owner is excited about the prospect



IMAGE: Abby and Jay Healy walk the woodlands property; map image from Google Earth



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## IV. MOHAWK TRAIL STATE FOREST, CHARLEMONT

- 6,000+ acres of forest, ridges, gorges, and river
- Pre-existing visitor infrastructure, name recognition, along Route 2
- Physically difficult to place; demo forest is not an option
- Unsuccessful communication with forest director



IMAGE: Sabine in front of the Mohawk Trail State Forest sign; map image from Google Earth

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## IV. BERKSHIRE EAST, CHARLEMONT

- 150 acres
- Ski resort in the winter; hiking and biking trails in the summer
- Pre-existing clientele and name recognition
- Not directly off Route 2; must find it intentionally
- Owner is open and supportive of the idea, but contact requests were unsuccessful



IMAGE CREDIT: Image from Berkshire East website; map image from Google Earth

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## IV. REQUEST FOR INFORMATION (RFI)

- Administered and distributed by the New England Forestry Foundation
- Sets specific parameters for a location and owners and property managers can reach out if interested
- Recommendations:
  - Along Route 2/Mohawk Trail and the Deerfield River
  - In Charlemont and Shelburne municipalities



*IMAGE: The Deerfield River at the entrance of the Mohawk Trail State Forest*



## RESEARCH FINDINGS 0.5

### Mission Statement

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## WORKING MISSION STATEMENT

"The Forest Center works to connect residents and visitors to comprehensive and diverse educational materials that reflect the history, characteristics, and future of Northwestern Massachusetts; advance and sophisticate the region's small-scale eco-tourism economy by serving as an active visitor resource hub; support landowners to practice sustainable and regenerative forestry that aids in climate change mitigation and biodiversity conservation; and protect and manage an on-site woodlands preserve for recreational and demonstrative purposes."

**THANK YOU!**

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