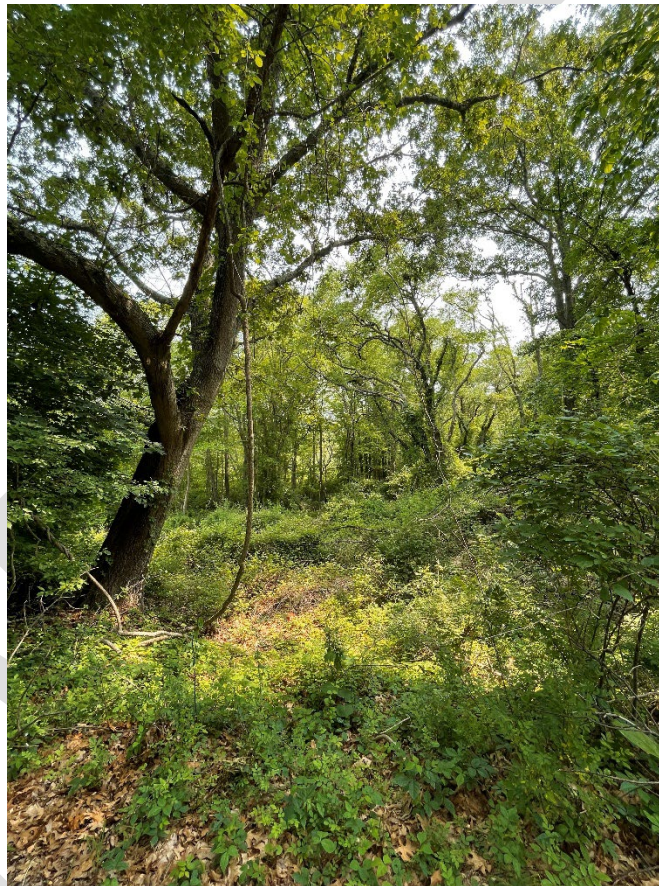


MOUNT HOPE COMMUNITY FOREST
COMMUNITY FOREST PLAN
BRISTOL, RHODE ISLAND
Prepared for the US Forest Service



View of Mount Hope Community Forest

By the
Town of Bristol Department of Community Development
Rhode Island
June 2025

Introduction

This Community Forest Plan provides guidance for the management and use of the Mount Hope Community Forest. Developed with community input, this plan describes the objectives, benefits, mechanisms, and implementation plans to provide public access and use and to protect cultural and natural resources on the property for the long term.

The Mount Hope Community Forest, while owned by the Town of Bristol, is subject to deed easements held by the RI Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM) and the US Forest Service who provided grant funding to assist the Town in the acquisition. (RIDEM Easement recorded in Book 2280 Page 60 and US Forest Service Deed and Grant Requirements recorded in Book 2280 Page 47 of Land Evidence Records). In general, these easements prohibit development of the land and provide for perpetual public access and conservation restrictions. All future proposed uses must remain consistent with the property restrictions and the conservation goals.

These grant funders require that a “comprehensive management plan” be developed and updated from time to time.

The Bristol Planning Board reviewed this Community Forest Plan at their regular meeting of June 12, 2025 and written comments from the public were also solicited on the draft plan by a newspaper notice (copy attached) and a website posting on the Town of Bristol’s website.

This plan is divided into eight sections in accordance with the Community Forest Plan requirements of the US Forest Service.

1. Description of all purchased tracts
2. Objectives and Strategies for the Community Forest
3. Description of Long-Term Use and Management of the Property
4. Community Benefits to be achieved from the establishment of the Community Forest
5. Ongoing activities that promote community involvement in the development and implementation of the Community Forest Plan
6. Plan for the utilization or demolition of existing structures and proposed needs for further improvements
7. A description of public access
8. Maps

Description of all Purchased Tracts

The Mount Hope Community Forest. consists of 120 acres of undeveloped open space within the Town of Bristol in Bristol County, Rhode Island. This land is primarily forest land with the exception of an approximate six (6) acre area of open field that has historically been used for agricultural purposes. The property is located in the Mount Hope Planning Area, as defined in Bristol's Comprehensive Community Plan at the southeasterly portion of Bristol. The community forest property consists of 14 individual parcels located along both the northerly and southerly sides of Tower Street.

This property consists of old growth forest, mature second growth trees, hayed field, and a forested maple swamp. Vegetation cover consists primarily of a mix of upland and wetland forest types. The westerly most portion of the land along both sides of Tower Street contains early- to mid-successional forest that is maturing from historic use as managed agricultural land. Much of this area consists of forested red maple swamp with native tree species consisting of red maple, yellow birch, ironwood, tupelo, sassafras, spicebush, and northern arrowwood. Upland portions of this westerly portion of the property consist of oak-maple forest containing red maple, red oak, white oak, scarlet oak, yellow birch, ironwood, sassafras, black locust, sycamore, black cherry, white pine, red pine, green briar, and northern arrowwood. The open field area was most recently hayed in 2024 and consists of native open meadow species including big bluestem, little bluestem, aster, goldenrod, and various grass and herbaceous plant species. Easterly and more northerly portions of the property rise in elevation and are dominated by forested uplands consisting of a more mature oak-hickory forest. Vegetation cover in this area contains red oak, white oak, scarlet oak, pignut hickory, shagbark hickory, yellow birch, red maple, beech, sassafras, sugar maple, northern arrowwood, highbush blueberry, swamp azalea, and sweet pepperbush.

The table below lists the tracts of land that were acquired to comprise the Mount Hope Community Forest.

County	Plat Map	Lot Number	Approximate Acreage	Land Use	Forest Type	Vegetation Cover
Bristol	135	3	44.8	Vacant	200 year old Oak Woods	Wooded
Bristol	144	1	6.5	Vacant	Mesic Forest	Wooded
Bristol	144	2	17.6	Vacant	Mesic Forest/mature second growth trees	Farmland and wooded
Bristol	144	3	7.8	Vacant		Wooded
Bristol	144	4	11	Vacant	Forested Maple Swamp	Wooded
Bristol	144	5	4	Vacant	Forested Maple Swamp	Wooded
Bristol	144	8	1.5	Vacant	Forested Maple Swamp	Wooded
Bristol	144	9	2	Vacant		Wooded
Bristol	144	10	3	Vacant		Wooded
Bristol	144	11	1	Vacant		Wooded
Bristol	144	12	2	Vacant		Wooded
Bristol	144	13	1	Vacant		Wooded
Bristol	144	14	5.8	Vacant		Wooded
Bristol	144	15	11	Vacant		Wooded

This property is located adjacent to the 125 acre Mount Hope Farm Trust property, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and contains colonial-era structures, actively managed agricultural attractions, and forest land extending to the shoreline of Mount Hope Bay. The 120 acres of Community Forest Property is also located adjacent to approximately 170 acres of additional land owned by the Pokanoket Tribe Land Trust. This additional land, which contains several educational and residential buildings, consists primarily of forested open space. These abutting tribal lands include the summit of Mount Hope, extensive amounts of natural shoreline along Mount Hope Bay, and contain many significant historic and culturally sites of importance to the Pokanoket/Wampanoag tribe of Native Americans.

1. Objectives of the Community Forest and Strategies to Implement them

The Town of Bristol will steward the Mount Hope Community Forest Property for its habitat, water quality protection, education, cultural and recreational attributes. The objective of

acquiring the Mount Hope Community Forest is preservation of the natural, cultural, and historic resources; and to allow public access for passive recreation.

The educational and recreational potential of this property is significant, and the Town intends to open the community forest portion of property to public access in the form of passive recreation, including walking trails, seasonal hunting opportunities, and educational endeavors. In addition, the property will be available to the public for cultural and scientific study and understanding.

Strategies to Implement the objectives are:

- a. Marking the boundary with signs at regular intervals and where trails leave the property;
- b. Assessing the property including wildlife vegetation, habitats, agriculture, invasive species, cultural resources, and history;
- c. Planning a trail system;
- d. Creation of a trail system with wayfinding signage.
- e. Creating a trail map;
- f. Posting a kiosk with a trail map and information about trail etiquette, rules and regulations at the trail head along Tower Street;
- g. Identify and secure funding as needed for trail creation and maintenance.
- h. A Forest Stewardship Plan will be created by either a certified Forester or the RI Department of Environmental Management.

2. Description of the long-term use and management of the property

The Town of Bristol has a well- established record of conserving and protecting land. This experience will prove beneficial in managing the Mount Hope Community Forest in perpetuity. The Town's Conservation Commission has very active members that are committed to the careful implementation of any actions and the Town has many volunteers that support and participate in the various Town projects.

The property will continue to be used as a passive recreation area. The Town of Bristol will manage the property. The Town will work with the Mount Hope Farm, an abutting property owner, for continued haying of the field on Plat 144, Lot 2 with a cooperative partnership agreement.

The Town intends to provide public access to the proposed Mount Hope Community Forest property for low impact passive recreation and educational uses. The Town typically limits public access to its open space parcels to daylight hours. Any sensitive environmental or cultural features that may be identified on the property will be protected by limiting or supervising visitation.

The Town will also explore a cooperative agreement with the RIDEM for expansion of the current seasonal (May to October) archery hunting agreement for deer hunting that the Town has in place on the abutting lots (Plat 144, Lots 6 and 7).

3. Community benefits to be achieved from the establishment of the community forest

The utilization of the property by residents and visitors allows them to experience first hand the benefits of Community Forests, building support for conservation efforts. Public support is essential for successful conservation of land in the future. It also supports local heritage tourism. Accessible, high quality recreational options also provide physical and mental health benefits for people.

5. Ongoing activities that promote community involvement in the development and implementation of the Community Forest Plan

- a. Spring clean- up days at the property annually;
- b. Conservation Commission monitoring of the property;
- c. Gather public input from guided walks on the property;
- d. Soliciting input from users on the property with a community survey
- e. A possible public visioning workshop.

6. Plans for utilization or demolition of existing structures and proposed needs for further improvements

The property is currently vacant – there are no existing structures. No proposed structures are needed at this time.

There are existing signs and fences from the previous private property owner that will be removed.

7. Planned Public Access

Public access will be enhanced by the creation of a series of pedestrian trails and paths for passive recreation on the wooded parcels. The trails will be designed and constructed to avoid sensitive areas, wildlife breeding/nesting sites, wetlands and other sensitive natural resources.

The Town envisions a series of trails that will encourage bird watching, historical education, and the simple appreciation of nature.

The Town will utilize volunteers and also seek grant funds to create the trail system.

There is currently public parking along the north and south sides of Tower Street which is planned to be the primary access to the trails. There is also an access point over a paper road, "Babbitt Lane", from the neighborhood to the north off Clipper Way; however, this is expected to be move of a neighborhood access only for pedestrians.

The Town staff and volunteers from the Conservation Commission will walk the property on a regular basis, including the boundaries at least once a year, to document any issues that need correction. It is also noted that some of the properties also have stone walls that will be monitored on a continuous basis to make sure they are properly protected and maintained.

8. Maps

The following maps are provide as attachments to this plan:

- a) General Location Property Map
- b) Survey of property
- c) Streams and Wetlands
- d) Topography
- e) Soil types