Community Forest Training Program: Ownership, Governance, and Funding

April 2, 2025

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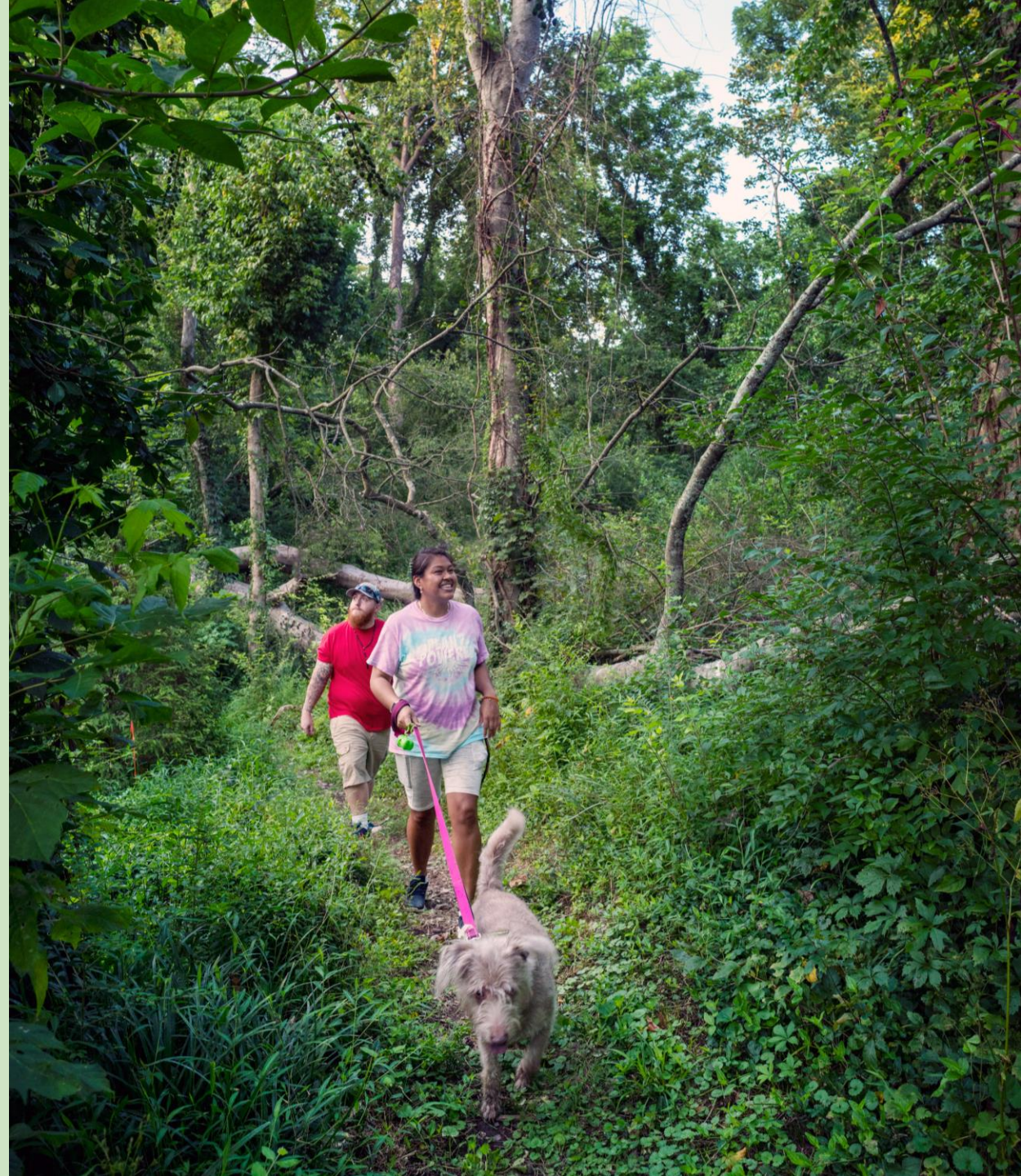
Welcome!

Warm-Up Poll: Which of the funding sources listed have you used for a community forest **or** other conservation project? (Select all that apply.)

Agenda

- Session 1 Recap

- Ownership, Governance, & Funding Models for Community Forests

- Panel Discussion: *Exploring Community Forest Models Across the Country*

- Q&A

- Reflection Exercise & Discussion

- Next Steps

Defining Community Forests

What makes a community forest different than other forms of conservation land?

1. Community ownership

Municipal or county ownership, land trust NGO ownership

2. Community participation in management

Stakeholder committees, governmental commissions, facilitated public meetings, town votes, etc.

3. Benefits flow back to the community

Community benefits tied to community priorities: economic (timber or drinking water), social (recreational access or outdoor education), ecological (wildlife corridors or wetlands)

4. Permanent protection

Conservation easement, deed restrictions, or grant agreements

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Benefits of Community Forests

For the forest...

- Local stable ownership

- Long-term sustainable stewardship

- Habitat protection and connectivity

- Water quality protection

- Slowing fragmentation

- Conserved forever

For the community...

- Economic vitality
    - Timber
    - Recreation
    - Tourism

- Community resilience
    - Drinking water protection
    - Flood resilience

- Preserve local character

- Build community

- Open access & recreation

- Outdoor classroom

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Setting the Table for Success

❑ **Be intentional about how you engage citizens and experts.** Community forests require a participatory process that's different from a traditional land protection process. The more you're intentional about inviting people in and blending community input with rigorous expertise, the better result you will get.

❑ **Expect a longer timeline.** These projects do not happen fast – if you've never been through the process, the idea that it could take 18-36 months might seem surprising.

❑ **Pick a compelling property.** The land should have unique value to the people that live in that place. It's one of the ways you get people to show up and go through a longer process.

❑ **You don't need a piece of land to start this process.** Know that you starting point can be different depending on where your community is.

❑ **Identify a local champion.** Every project needs someone or some group of people that live in the community and have this as their priority. Outside orgs can help with the real estate piece, but longevity and long-term success requires sustained community leadership.

❑ **Establish a mechanism for effective community leadership.** This process can't be owned or led by a municipal agency or professionalized staff alone. Community members must have a voice and authority in the process. A committee or other volunteer board that fits within your municipal structure is key.

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Community Forest Training Program: Series Overview

5-month, virtual workshop series designed to provide land managers with the **strategies, skills, and resources** needed to create and sustain community forests.

Session Dates:

- March 5: Principles of Community Forests

- April 2: Ownership, Governance, and Funding YOU ARE HERE

- May 7: Community Engagement and Visioning

- June 4: Management and Stewardship

- July 2: Project Implementation

Rodger Krussman
Vice President,
Director of Conservation

Community Forest Ownership & Governance

Who can own a community forest? How are decisions made about a community forest?

4 basic structures, with nuances:

Municipal Ownership	County Ownership	Nonprofit Ownership	Tribal Ownership

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Community Forest Ownership & Governance

Who can own a community forest? How are decisions made about a community forest?

4 basic structures, with nuances:

Municipal Ownership	County Ownership	Nonprofit Ownership	Tribal Ownership

1. Volunteer-based Governance (Selectboard, Conservation Commission)
2. Professionalized Management (Parks, Forestry)
3. User Group Management/ Operation
	1. Professionalized Governance
	   o Elected officials dictate staffing
		1. Land Trust Ownership (local or regional)
		2. User Group Ownership
		3. Partnership with municipality or county
			1. Tribe Ownership
			   o One or multiple tribes
			2. Tribal Nonprofit Ownership

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Community Forest Governance

How are decisions made about a community forest?

- For a project to be a community forest, community must lead decision-making.

- Specific governance structures depends on state laws.

- Link governance model to your project's specific goals/benefits.

- One size fits *one*!

Questions to consider:

- How will the community members who use/benefit from the project participate in decision-making processes?

- How will you set up seats at the table for other stakeholders (beyond professional staff or your Board of Directors)?

Examples
- Multi-town ownership with multi-town board
- Management Committee
- Conservation Commission

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Community Forest Funding

How are community forests funded?

Federal & Regional

- USFS Community Forest Program
- USFS Forest Legacy Program
- Wetlands Reserve Program
- NFWF Mitigation Funds
- Cooperative Endg. Species Grant
- Scenic Byways Funds
- Appalachian Regional Commission Area Development Funding

State and Local

- State Conservation / Open Space Funds
- Municipal Bonds
- Clean Water Funds (SRF)
- Community Economic Development Funds

Private

- Philanthropy
- Private Grants
- Private Investors (land banking or shared revenue streams)

Revenue Generation

- Responsible Extraction (timber, etc.)
- Recreation
- Carbon Credits

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Panel Discussion:
Exploring Community Forest Models Across the Country

Rex Linville
Eastern Division Director of Field Programs,
Land Trust Alliance

Jay McLaughlin
Executive Director, Mount Adams Resource Stewards

Rodger Krussman
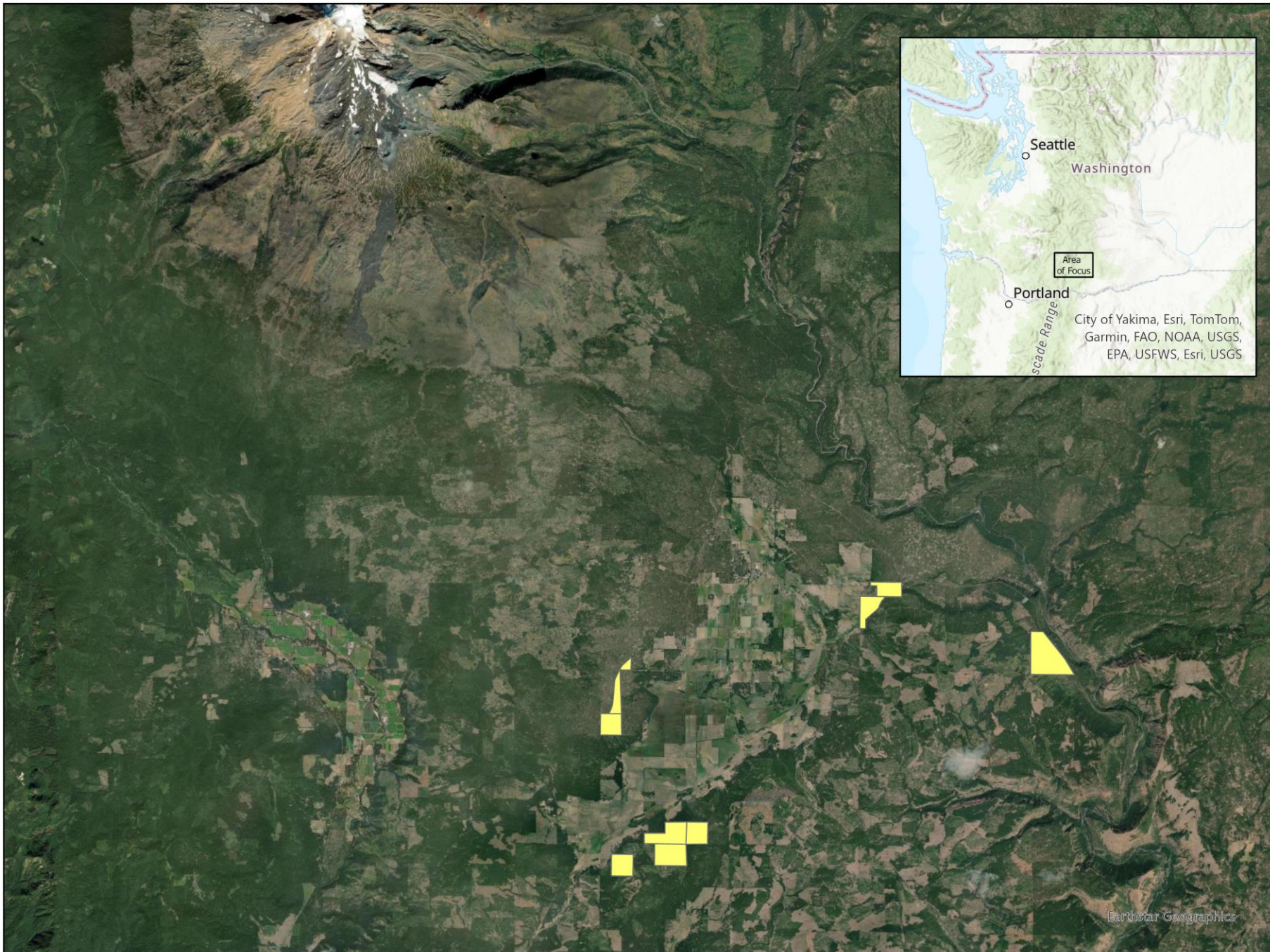(Moderator)

Photo: Mount Adams Resource Stewards

Mt. Adams Community Forest, WA
Jay McLaughlin

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Mount Adams Community Forest, Washington

Mt. Adams Resource Stewards

- 501(c)(3) non-profit organization established in 2004
- Mission "to promote sustainable connections between the land, local economies and rural communities of the Mt. Adams region…"
- Governed by a nine member board that reside in our operating area
- Currently 26 staff (9 full-time staff, 17 seasonals)

Land Stewardship

Community Development & Education

Economic Development

Mt. Adams Resource Stewards

Mt. Adams Community Forest

Collaborative Land Stewardship

Invasives Control and Native Species Recovery

Funding sources

- USFS Community Forest Program
- Washington State Community Forest Program
- North America Wetland Conservation Act
- State level "member requests"
- Foundations
- Individual donations
- Debt

Photo: Peter Krebs/PEC

Heyward Community Forest, VA

Rex Linville

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Heyward Community Forest

Project Partners:

- City of Charlottesville
- VA DOF
- Piedmont Environmental Council
- Rivanna Trails Foundation
- CAMBC
- Charlottesville Area Trail Runners
- Center for Urban Habitats
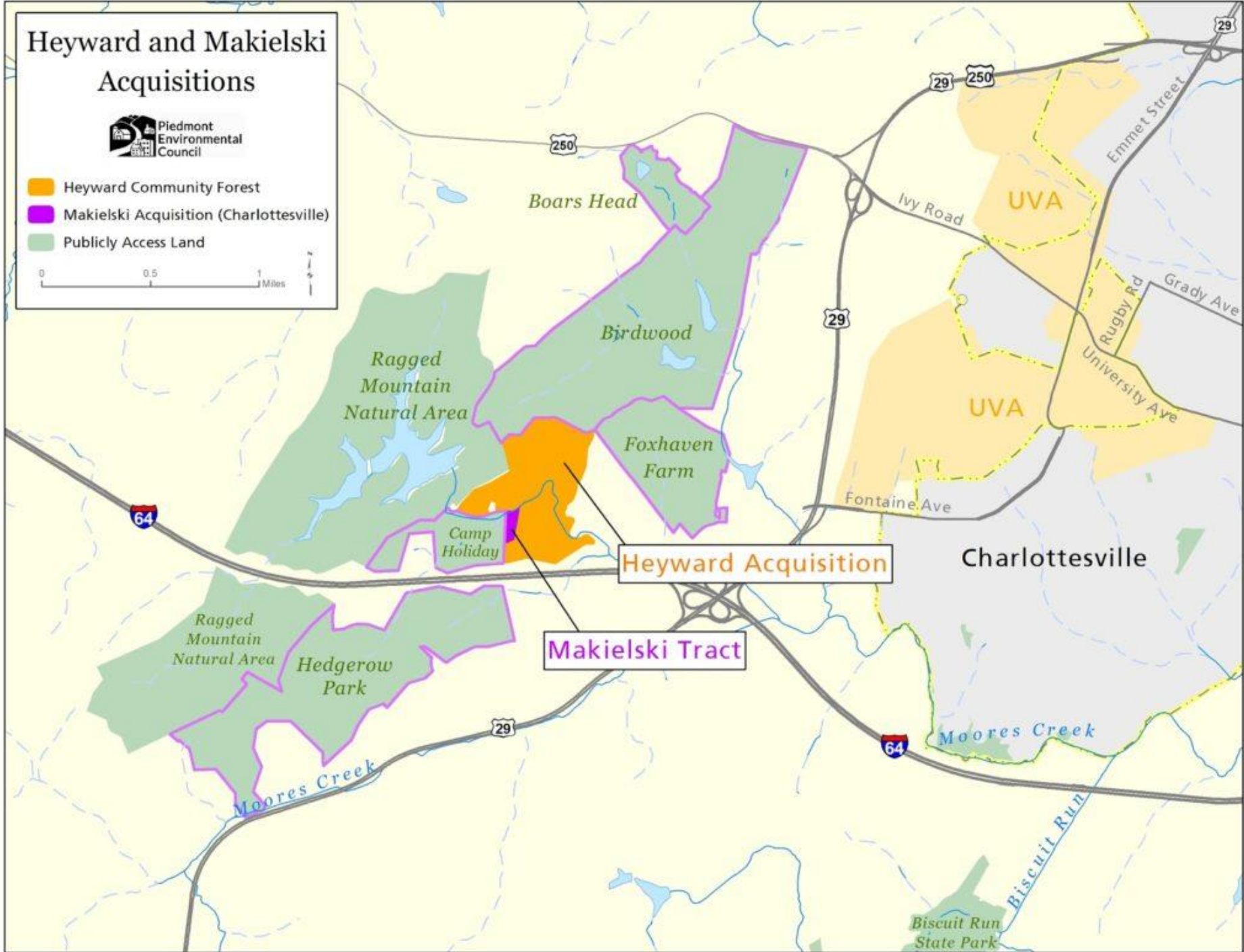- Charlottesville Area Tree Stewards

Project Funding:

- Community Forestry Program
- Landowner Donation
  - Virginia LPTC
- City of Charlottesville
- Virginia Outdoors Foundation
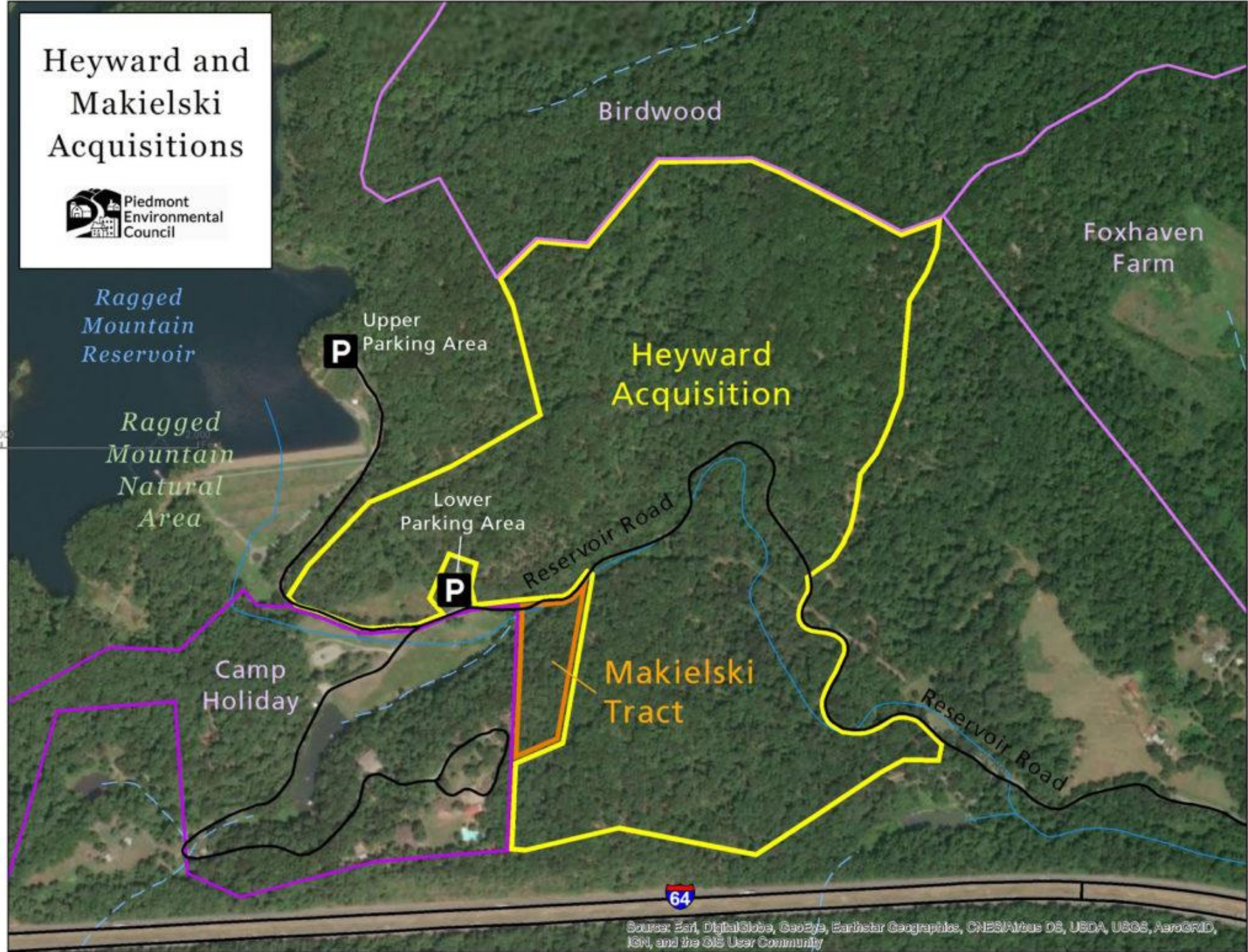- Bama Works (DMB)
- Private Donor

Heyward and Makielski Acquisitions

Piedmont Environmental Council

- Heyward Community Forest
- Makielski Acquisition (Charlottesville)
- Publicly Access Land

0   0.5   1 Miles

Boars Head

UVA

Ivy Road

Ragged Mountain Natural Area

Birdwood

UVA

Foxhaven Farm

Fontaine Ave

Camp Holiday

Heyward Acquisition

Charlottesville

Makielski Tract

Ragged Mountain Natural Area

Hedgerow Park

Moores Creek

Moores Creek

Biscuit Run State Park

Heyward and Makielski Acquisitions

Piedmont Environmental Council

Birdwood

Foxhaven Farm

Ragged Mountain Reservoir

Upper Parking Area

Heyward Acquisition

Ragged Mountain Natural Area

Lower Parking Area

Reservoir Road

Makielski Tract

Camp Holiday

Reservoir Road

Source: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AeroGRID, IGN, and the GIS User Community

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Ragged Mountain Reservoir

Heyward Community Forest

Charlottesville

Makielski Tract

Lower Parking Lot

Catamount Community Forest, VT

Rodger Krussman

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Governance Structure

Ownership: Town of Williston (Town Manager/Selectboard Structure)

Conservation Easement: VHCB/Vermont Land Trust

Management: License (5 yr) with Catamount Outdoor Family Center

Town approves renewal of License, and any permits for special events

COFC allowed to charge use fees for Mountain Biking and groomed trail uses (foot access is free to all)

COFC- Current Campaign to build new Trail Center

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Catamount Community Forest Funding
Total Project Costs: $1.97 million

Federal

- USFS Community Forest Program
- LWCF-Stateside

State and Local

- Vermont Housing and Conservation Board
- Town of Williston

Private

- Foundations
- Individual Donors

Stewardship Funds

- Town: $20K Stewardship Fund for future management costs

- COFC: $4K stewardship endowment

- Vermont Land Trust: $25K for perpetual stewardship of the conservation easement

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Q&A

Please share your questions in the chat!

Reflection

For the next few minutes...

- Complete page 2 of ***Setting the Table for Success: Getting Started***.

- Discuss:
  - Who are your core stakeholders?
  - What kinds of citizen-led decision-making groups exist in your community already?
  - What next steps do you need to take to establish one?
  - How will you invite other stakeholders (beyond professional staff or your Board of Directors) into the decision-making process?

In a moment, you'll be split into breakout rooms to discuss. *Questions?*

Community Forest Training Program   Session 1 | March 5, 2025

Setting the Table for Success: Getting Started
Before you begin, it's critical to lay the groundwork for a successful community forest by setting realistic expectations, engaging a diverse array of stakeholders, and identifying how best to champion this initiative in your area.

Use the worksheet below to assess how community forests can benefit your community and how to get started.

Name Your Goals: What are your community's top priorities?

1. List your community priorities below.

2. Circle, highlight, or **bold** any priorities that community forests may be able to help you address.

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Next Steps

- **Homework**:
  - Continue the worksheet *Setting the Table for Success: Getting Started.*
  - Share one takeaway from today's session with a colleague.
- Report-Out Slides & Recording
- **Session 3: May 7, 2025**

  Community Engagement

Thank You!