***Preservation of Notch Forest North Adams ...A Case Statement****by Walter Cudnohufsky 9.09.24*

*Proposed for use with land trusts and conservation organizations and city officials to solicit protection interest and possibly to enlist additional public support*.

We the ‘Friends of the Notch Reservoir and Bellows Pipe Trail’ in North Adams, Massachusetts, wish to consider, support and help create a permanent, perpetual, irrevocable preservation of the 1088-acre, North Adams Notch Forest and Bellows Pipe trail, *as a “Forever Wild Forest”.*

*This is in addition to an essential first stopping of the non-essential, insufficiently justified and potentially damaging proposed logging on this same tract.*

Williamstown resident, Dr. William Moomaw Emeritus Tufts Professor of international Environmental Policy, promotes ‘Proforestation.’ In a talk titled “a simple solution Feb 27, 2021 -Standing Trees Vermont”, he informs us that “We in western Massachusetts in particular, and those in Vermont and southern New Hampshire have and live in the “most carbon dense forest region, with the tallest trees” in the eastern United states. He says, it is astounding and labels this accumulation of forested land “a Natural Climate Solution Protecting the already, accumulated carbon in trees, plants, soils, and wetlands.”

The authors of proposed harvest plan for the Notch Reservoir Forest, acknowledge that “passive management and leaving the forest alone is best for carbon sequestration.” What the authors do not acknowledge is that unmanaged mature and old growth forests are vastly better!

Wildlands are best described as forest tracts of any size and current condition, permanently protected from development, in which management is explicitly intended to allow natural processes to prevail with “free will” and minimal human interference. Humans have been part of nature for millennia and can coexist within and with Wildlands without intentionally altering their structure, composition, or function.

The report [**Wildlands, Woodlands, Farmlands & Communities**](https://wildlandsandwoodlands.org/) (WWF&C) partners Harvard Forest, Highstead Foundation, and the Northeast Wilderness Trust shows that while 81 percent of New England is forested, only 3.3 percent has been permanently protected as Wildlands. It shows why New England, with some of the most intact temperate forest on the planet, is uniquely positioned to lead the nation’s participation in this global effort of carbon sequestration, while also securing the region’s future.

Even though small in percentage, New England region’s deep history as a peopled wilderness! Conservationists have protected a remarkable diversity of wildlands in New England. Nearly 1.5 million acres comprised of 425 distinct properties.

This significant protection gap creates an urgent call to action for advancing Wildlands protection as part of an integrated approach to conservation that also includes forests managed for wood products, natural spaces for recreation and renewal, and farmlands that produce local food — all existing among communities that rely on the health and beauty of the land that they call home. This study concludes among others that “Unsurprisingly, disturbing the forests of Massachusetts as little as possible and allowing forests to grow and age through passive management is generally the best approach for maximizing carbon, ecological integrity, and soil health.” p4

Bill Moomaw relates in his Simple Solution Talk ...that “study after study concludes that bigger and older trees are disproportionally the best carbon sequestering trees”. We can store twice as much carbon in uncut mature and older growth forests as we can in similar forests under rotational harvest, cutting where young forests to harvest are the espoused goal.” Others have cited that Old Growth and heritage forests exponentially expand their carbon sequestering capacity annually.

He suggests that preservation of carbon dense and the identified most diverse forests should start best on already partially protected public and private lands. We need to find a way to ‘pay to protect all growing trees’, not pay to cut/harvest every twenty years or so.”  
   
His talk was summarized by saying, “not unlike an established national strategic Petroleum Reserve, we need to institute a strategic Forest Carbon Reserve.” Private forest owners, and cities and a towns, often the most in financial need to harvest, can benefit from incremental planned payments to allow them to keep their trees growing. Such annual incremental payments are best described as an investment and not a cost.

**Why Permanently preserve the Notch Forest and the nationally recognized Bellows Pipe Trail** **?**

They are unique unique for a number of reasons, including:

**Prime reasons for preservation**

* Permanent protection is the best means and possibly the only viable one to sequester carbon ....a critical world goal  “A [peer-reviewed study](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/233579700_Late-Successional_Biomass_Development_in_Northern_Hardwood-Conifer_Forests_of_the_Northeastern_United_States) found that the Northeast's forests have the potential to increase carbon storage 2.3 to 4.2--fold if we simply allow them to grow older.” Standing Trees VT
* It is part of the acknowledged carbon densest forest region in the US
* Because New England Forests are our greatest natural asset.
* Because it is vulnerable to threats such as the current logging and forest management proposal that is correctly named an experimental ‘pilot study’ the Forest is obviously not protected.
* It hosts the highly used internationally used and nationally recognized accessible Bellows Pipe trail Conte Nast Traveler a luxury national travel magazine has recently named the

Bellows Pipe Trail “The best fall hiking trail in the U.S”. The trail offers opportunities to see wildlife, and the mountain is home to 132 bird species, including the blackpoll warbler and Bicknell's thrush. It is used by several thousand people each year in all seasons.

* It is an It is a major source of water for North Adams and a resource of increasing and critical importance
* A currently largely healthy and diverse maturing forest ‘confirmed in the cutting plan’
* Mature and old growth forest provide a host of critical earth and human integrated services that synergistically are bed rock essential to our survival

**Additional reasons to preserve Notch Forest**

* It is a very sizable and visible tract, 1088 acres
* It is linked to vast additional tracts of named contiguous sister forests in the Mount Greylock State Reservation, and is less than half a mile from the Appalachian Trail
* It boasts ample trees of maturing age that are ramping up their carbon storing potential.

The adjacent Greylock Range has approximately 555 acres of old growth forest, with trees up to 350 years old.

* Part of linked lengthy non interrupted regional wildlife corridors
* It is publicly owned thus; no money needed up front’ to launch and leverage more permanent protection it is doable and there is likely interest and expertise
* Gold standard ‘Mature Forest Carbon Credits’ are a likely substantial twenty-year source of more money for North Adams than any harvest plan could produce.
* Because its current character is largely unblemished natural beauty that is cherished it and the trail head would not escape major character change if harvested.
* Because preservation leadership is a compelling act of courage that invites and enlists other similar courageous acts all much needed
* New England's temperate deciduous forests are among the planet’s most effective carbon sinks!!!
* Mature and old growth forests are better and best suited to the rare and almost extinct wildlife.

**A courageous act of permanent preservation has implications for the most minute parts of this forest and its soils, to the forest itself, for the reservoir, the City of North Adams, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, our nation, and the world’s climate.**

**Summarizing the major reasons to preserve**Notch Forest must be permanently protected as Forever Wild because as a diverse mature forest, it is the best tool available for carbon sequestration! It is part of the identified high performing forests and it is in healthy condition and with diverse composition. Because it is vulnerable to logging and similar threats. Because it is home to a nationally recognized and highly prized and used Bellows Pipe Trail, it protects precious North Adams drinking water, and because is serves a host of complex systems supporting life on this planet.

**Continuing with reasons to preserve Notch Forest**Notch Forest is large and will make a statement and a difference. It is integral to and essential to serve a vast linked forest. It has the mature trees aging and already hard at work securing carbon. Essential to regional wildlife movement, it is already owned and long seen as being protected. Protection can/could be more financially lucrative with no substantial expense or risk for the city. It needs protection Because it is largely an unblemished gem and because preservation action is likely to be contagious in a world in desperate need for such actions. We must to have any chance to bring back the rarer wildlife species. Simply, New England forests are a world class asset as a carbon sink!

**From Forever Wild**“At this critical moment of climate chaos, protecting wildlands—now—is a courageous act of hope. Simply by allowing more forests to capture and store their full potential of carbon. At this critical moment of climate chaos, protecting wildlands—now—is a courageous act of hope.”

***New England's forests are our greatest natural asset- Standing Trees VT***

“Protecting and restoring the old forests of New England is an inexpensive, rapidly scalable and a proven strategy to support the regions full range of biodiversity, sequester and store planet warming carbon, clean air and water, and protect our communities from drought and flood.”

**From Standing Trees VT**

“On the global scale, forest protection represents approximately [half or more of the climate change mitigation needed](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/321947680_Unexpectedly_large_impact_of_forest_management_and_grazing_on_global_vegetation_biomass) to hold temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius. New England's temperate deciduous forests are among the planet’s most effective carbon sinks and have an outsized role to play in the global fight against climate change.” Standing trees VT

**From Standing Trees VT**  
“The state’s native flora and fauna that have been here prior to European settlement are adapted to this landscape of old, structurally complex forest punctuated by natural disturbance gaps and occasional natural openings such as wetlands or rock outcrops. The complex physical structure of old forests creates diverse habitats, many of which are absent or much less abundant in younger forests.”