

Forests illustrate the drastic impacts we have had on the natural environment.

The forests of today reflect centuries of human-wrought impacts. Species composition, structural complexity, age, health, and many other conditions of our forests, for better or for worse, are the results of past land-uses and ongoing human influence.

Today we can manage our forests with an eye towards the future, an understanding that our actions will have centuries-long impacts, and a new set of intentions: to promote and enhance forest health, diversity, and resiliency while also producing a supply of responsibly sourced, sustainable forest products.

At Merck Forest & Farmland Center we use management techniques designed to restore many ecological attributes that were previously lost. These activities, included in the current Timber Stand Improvement Project, are part of long-term forest management plan, and designed to restore and enhance species diversity, structural complexity, and promote the accrual of conditions that are more typical of an older forest.

The project you are witnessing now will:

- Create canopy openings of various sizes throughout the forest to encourage the regeneration of a diverse new age class of young trees and promote the development of multiple tree heights, creating more growing space for underrepresented species such as red spruce and black cherry
- Contribute to the accumulation of downed woody material on the forest floor and standing dead trees typical of older forests
- Promote the development of larger, old trees and the identification of legacy trees to remain in the woods for perpetuity,
- Improve overall health, diversity, and resiliency of the forest,
- Produce high-quality, responsibly sourced products at a furniture grade mill ([DCI furniture](#))

Partners and Collaborators on this project include the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation, Cory Creagan - Vermont Licensed Forester, SAF Certified Forester, Bennington County Forester, and DCI Mills.