
The Forest Reserve at Smallwood

Conserving, protecting and activating a unique natural resource for today and future generations.

Photo © Jonathan Hyman



The Forest Reserve at Smallwood (former Smallwood Golf Course) is a model for public / private partnerships and civic engagement. What began with a grassroots effort to protect an environmentally sensitive area of the Town of Bethel, evolved to include many stakeholders, policymakers and community organizations working together to ensure the conservation of this parcel for current and future generations. The result is a model for mixed land use that preserves vital natural resources and ecologically sensitive areas through a conservation easement with permanent legal protection and a mechanism in place for monitoring and sustainability.

THE FOREST RESERVE AT SMALLWOOD

Conserving and protecting a unique natural resource for future generations

The Bethel Local Development Corporation worked closely with the Delaware Highlands Conservancy to place a **conservation easement** on approximately 120 acres rich with water from White Lake Brook (part of which is Mountain Lake, aka Smallwood Lake), Lybolt Brook, and numerous other unnamed small streams. The Town Park "Mini Falls" (pictured right) also now has an easement; bringing the total easement to 133 acres. The Delaware Highlands Conservancy secured funding from the Common Waters Fund to support the easement transaction on behalf of the BLDC.



Photo © Jonathan Hyman

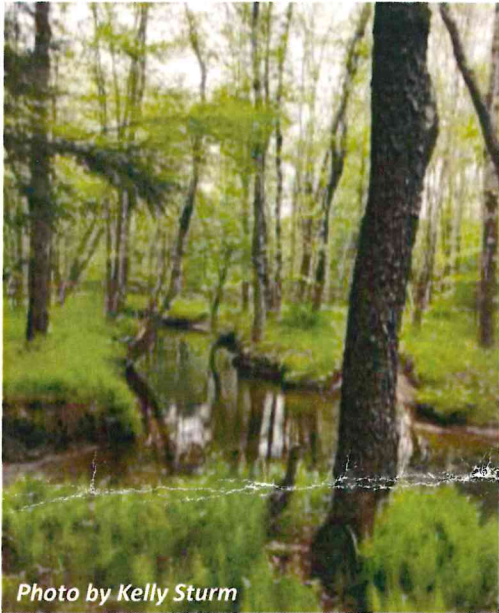


Photo by Kelly Sturm

The entire process took several years with many individuals and organizations along the way playing important roles in planning for the former Smallwood Golf Course to become **the Forest Reserve at Smallwood**. The Delaware Highlands Conservancy holds the easement and works in partnership with the Town and the community to monitor and ensure continued protection of the parcel.

The Forest Reserve allows light recreational uses that are appropriate to its surroundings including trails for hiking, jogging, cross country skiing and snowshoeing etc. **Hunting, trapping and camping are not permitted by rule of the Bethel Local Development Corporation.** The entire **Forest Reserve** is located in the Town Forest Conservation Zoning District which has a five acre minimum development requirement. The balance of the property outside the easement area (approximately 60+ acres) has been subdivided; with a portion to be developed in accordance with Town zoning and the other being used to harvest sand for Town roads.

The Town of Bethel is currently leading the development of a variety of recreational uses that are in keeping with the conservation easement. The Reserve offers levels of activities for users of all ages and abilities. The **48 Richard Crumley Drive (former ballfield)** entrance to the Reserve brings visitors to a 1/5 mile accessible loop trail with areas for sitting to enjoy the surroundings. The Town received funding through Cornell Cooperative Extension of Sullivan County to purchase and install 8 pieces of outdoor exercise equipment along this loop. The **Gulf Park Road** entrance to the Reserve brings visitors to the undeveloped portions for hiking and a more natural experience. These two sides of the Reserve can be experienced separately or together via a foot bridge that connects them. There are more plans for the Reserve which will continue to develop with community input as funding allows. Some things to look out for include a dog park and community garden; as well as programming and activities being planned with community partners.



There are many who have and continue to contribute to the Forest Reserve at Smallwood. Thanks to: the Bethel Local Development Corporation, The Bethel Town Board, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Sullivan County, The Delaware Highlands Conservancy, Assemblywoman Aileen Gunther, Preserve Smallwood Country Life, the Sullivan County Legislature, Sullivan County Planning, Sullivan Renaissance, and the many people who have discovered and are enjoying the Reserve. If you have an idea, we would love to hear it! Please contact us at 583-4350 ext 12 or visit us on facebook.