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## THE PROPOSAL

### The Cape National Conservation Area

***Proposed Designation:***  
**National Conservation Area**

***Towns:***  
**Chittenden, Goshen**

***Acreage:***  
**4,700**

***Topography:***  
**Goshen Mountain at 3,292 feet, the  
Cape at 2,635 feet**

***Water:***  
**Steam Mill Brook, Puss and Kill  
Brook, Baker Brook**

***Natural Features:***  
**Largest old-growth forest in  
Vermont**

***Points of Interest:***  
**Research Natural Area**



[Click map for larger view](#)

The proposed 4,753-acre Cape National Conservation Area straddles the town borders of Chittenden and Goshen, along the western border of the northern half of the Green Mountain National Forest. The proposed area will help to protect the existing 290-acre Cape Research Natural Area (currently the only research natural area in Vermont), which contains the largest and best remnant of old-growth northern hardwoods in the state. Its documented rich Northern Hardwood Forest community includes large-diameter black cherry, basswood, and butternut trees.



Although only the existing Cape Research Natural Area is considered to be old-growth, much of the forest that surrounds the area is mature and would grow into old-growth conditions in a matter of decades. Protecting the entire area would increase the ecological integrity of the existing old-growth community, and keep it from further fragmentation. Already, the recent Forest Service Baker Brook timber sale, adjacent to the Cape Research Natural Area, decreased the size of the intact, mature forest.

A larger old-growth stand would allow the flora and fauna in the existing Research Natural Area to spread to the surrounding forest, resulting in a more resilient and stable forest.

A well-established biological principle holds that larger patches of old-growth forest are better than smaller stands. Research indicates that old-growth areas must be at least 500 to 1,000 acres in size in order to have a sufficient interior area-to-edge ratio, which provides the habitat conditions required by old-growth dependent species. The current designation of 290 acres is insufficient to protect its rare and priceless qualities.

**Proposed Wilderness Areas and Additions, NRAs, and NCAs**

**Romance Mountain Wilderness**  
**Glastenbury Wilderness**  
**Lamb Brook Wilderness**  
**Lye Brook Additions**  
**Robert Stafford NRA**  
**Moosalamoo NRA**  
**Abbey Pond NCA**  
**The Cape NCA**

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