

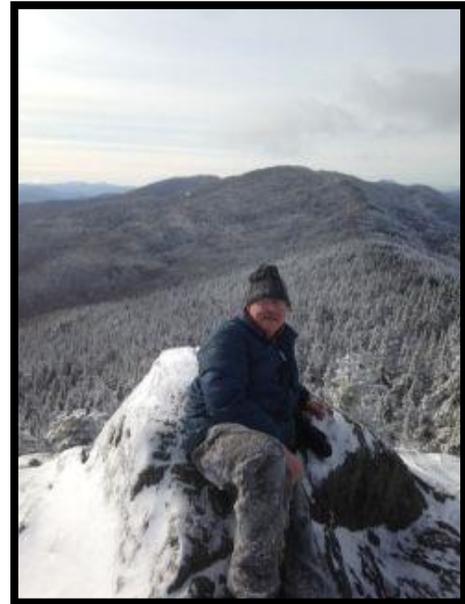
**Meet Steve Sinclair**

Director of Forestry

Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation

Steve Sinclair's first paycheck from the Vermont Department of Forest, Parks and Recreation arrived in his mailbox in 1975. Straight out of college and earning \$3.02 an hour, Steve was hired as the department's newest Forest Technician. Four decades later, Steve is still at it, advancing the department's mission while caring for the trees he loves.

Graduating from the University of Vermont with a degree in Forestry, Steve credits his minor in Public Administration for a significant part of his success. He feels that as much as a forester manages the forest, he or she also must manage people's expectations of what the forest provides. High-level skills in social sciences and communication are essential to working with the public to manage natural resources.



*Steve on Mount Worcester this past December.*

These skills are featured when Steve recalls the highlight of his career so far: the creation of the Skyline trail in central Vermont. During a surge of public interest in outdoor recreation in the late 70s and 80s, the peaks of Camel's Hump and Mount Mansfield were suffering from over-use. Meanwhile, the Worcester Range right across the valley remained underappreciated as a public asset. Steve engaged local municipalities and adjacent landowners, enlisted the Vermont Youth Conservation Corps, and helped lay out the course of the trail that would connect Mount Elmore and Mount Hunger. From conception to construction, Steve seized the opportunity get hikers out on less crowded trails and invested in the State's forests.

The [Director of Forestry](#) since 2002, Steve now spends far more time in the office than in the field. But the people of the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation continue to inspire him in his work. He notes that while the department shares the overarching vision and mission of the entire Agency of Natural Resources, he feels a deep and abiding affinity with the people of Forests, Parks and Recreation whom he describes as incredibly professional, dedicated and sincere.

His responsibilities have increased since his earliest days in the department, as has his appreciation for his co-workers. Using a valuable piece of advice he received from his father, Steve tries to remember not to take himself too seriously. As he moved into management

positions, Steve actively tried to avoid falling into the trap of valuing his contributions ahead of others', striving instead to appreciate everyone's effort towards the common cause.

Rattling off half a dozen different positions he's held in the division over the years, Steve reveals that his long career has been anything but stagnant. Change, he notes, is inevitable. He's seen plenty of change over his career and sees its value in breaking complacency. Technological changes have advanced how foresters do their work and share information. For example, in the 70s, he would use "pacing" as a tool to measure distance – literally counting your steps while keeping track in your head – when doing an inventory, investigating a heavy cut, or laying out a trail. Next came hip chains. Foresters tied one end a line to a tree and spooled it out from their hip as they walked between two points. Now, of course, GPS is the de rigueur tool for foresters, enabling field workers to log accurate information that is ready for digital use.

Another change Steve has witnessed is the degree of specialization in the field of forestry, and in this, he sees both good and bad. The Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation strives to create generalists who have a broad base of understanding about forestry issues and who purposely receive cross-training in many disciplines. But now, Steve also sees many young foresters entering the field as specialists. They bring with them greater professionalism and improved scientific values and views. For the department to work with the public on all of the issues surrounding forests and parks, balancing these seemingly opposing facets is key.

Finally, Steve noted that he sees a better interchange between departments and across agencies now than in the past, particularly under the current administration. However, always the enemy of complacency, he feels that this could yet stand improvement within ANR if Division Directors across ANR were given a structured venue for connecting. He followed this up with "We all go to a lot of meetings, but..."

Contrary to what you would think about a man who is best described as a straight-talker, Steve's favorite season is spring. He favors the subtly of that time of year over the garishness of autumn's leaves, reveling in the sweeping variety in texture and shades of green brought on by bud-break. True to form, however, his description of both seasons revolves wholly around the trees upon which he has built his long career.