

Our Year in Review

2023-24



Vermont Land
Trust





In honor of
Nadine Berrini
1973–2024

Nadine Berrini served as our Communications Director for over 17 years. She was the strategic leader, visionary, and wordsmith wizard behind much of our storytelling. A tireless advocate for fairness and equity in all spheres, she strived to make VLT and the work we do open and approachable for all people. And she pushed all of us at VLT to be more caring in the way we interact with one another and the community we serve. Nadine passed away in May 2024. We honor her, miss her dearly, and strive to carry her legacy forward.





Dear Friends,

Thanks to partners, landowners, and supporters like you, 2024 was an incredible year for conservation. With your help, we protected over 8,700 acres of land, including forests, farms of all sizes, wetlands and river corridors, and community spaces.

And, while we celebrate the accomplishments described in this year's Annual Report, we also acknowledge the challenges facing many of Vermont's communities.

The impacts of climate change are undeniably here. Whether it's excessive heat, frequent floods, or new pests, Vermont's land and lives are facing a new reality. Add to this a housing affordability crisis and other economic pressures, it's clear that Vermonters' relationship with land is changing.

How will we decide where to develop, where to increase food production, and where to prioritize ecological protection? How will we balance different recreational uses and land management practices?

Yes, state policy governs some of these decisions, but private landowners and communities shape what happens on the ground. The stories you'll read about in this Annual Report, including our efforts to secure fresh drinking water for our capital city (see page 16), demonstrate the power of conservation to spark collective action. In a time when communities feel beleaguered by change or divisiveness, we're inspired by these moments of unity.

As we look ahead, hope and collaboration will be essential. This is particularly true as Vermont embarks upon the planning stage of Act 59 to conserve 30% of our land and waters by 2030, and 50% by 2050.

How we achieve this ambitious goal matters. It must include landowners and communities shaped by this policy, farmers and foresters who work the land, scientists and ecologists, and explorers of all ages and abilities. Everyone.

No matter what your beliefs, background, or experience, there is a place for you here. Thank you for your steadfast commitment to protecting this home we share.

Sincerely,

Tracy Zschau
President & CEO

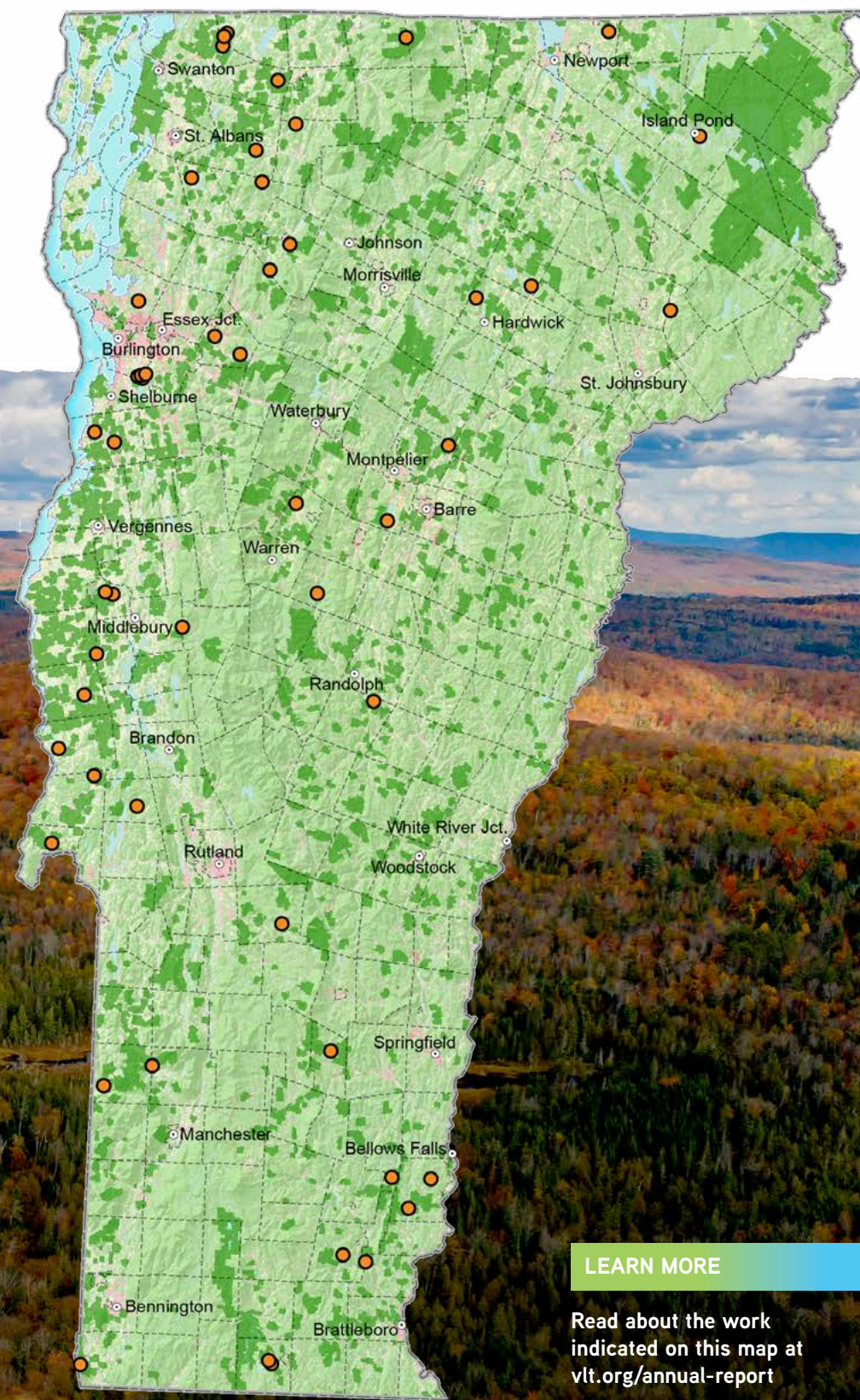
Cheryl Morse
Chair, Board of Trustees



Our Work This Year

8,773 acres
protected in 2023-24

647,445 acres
conserved over 47 years



[LEARN MORE](#)

Read about the work indicated on this map at vlt.org/annual-report

Our Work This Year

Forests and wildlife

We helped protect a range of forested parcels — from large blocks that dwarf the landscape to smaller woodlots and sugarbush — for wildlife habitat, biodiversity, clean water, carbon storage, as well as livelihoods.

4,700+ acres of remote forest were protected in Richford and Jay, adding to a network of nearly 10,000 acres of unfragmented, protected forest stretching to Quebec. We also conserved **500+ forested acres for community uses**, including lands in Pownal, Westminster, Berlin, Fletcher, Brighton, and Athens.



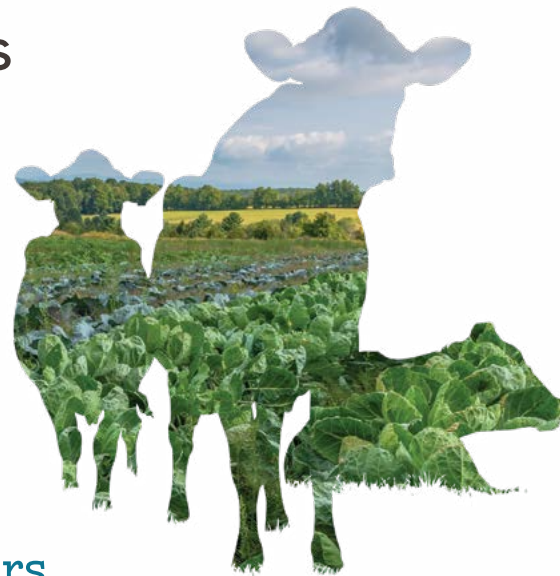
6,300+ acres
of forestland protected

4,500+ acres
of land opened for recreation

Farms that sustain us

Our farm conservation efforts helped beginning farmers buy land, enabled existing farm businesses to grow their land base, supported retiring farmers, and added clean water protections to rivers, streams, and wetlands on farm properties.

The five farmers behind **The Farm Upstream became first-time owners** of a farm in Jericho, as did Jon Lucas of Lucas Dairy Farm, who conserved 390 acres in Orwell. We also worked with multi-generational farm families, like **Matt Laroche of Laroche Dairy & Son** who added protections to their 218-acre property to make the farm more affordable and available for future farmers.



2,400+ acres
conserved on 21 farms

7 farmers
were able to buy land

Clean water & climate resilience

We worked with partners, landowners, and volunteers to protect Vermont's watersheds for clean water, flood safety, wildlife habitat, and biodiversity.

7,700+ native trees and shrubs were planted along wetlands, rivers, and streams that flow into Lake Champlain. We undertook **restoration efforts in 10 Vermont counties**: adding woody material to streams, improving water crossings, boosting bird habitat, and planting trees.



38 miles
of land along rivers
and streams protected

245 acres
of wetland conserved

Land for all

We deepened connection to land by hosting events and improving access to lands we own — welcoming visitors on recreation trails, hosting community garden plots, and supporting local food.

We worked with **Outright Vermont** to help them buy and conserve a lakefront property to establish a permanent home for their summer camp dedicated to LGBTQ+ youth. Over 100 families benefited from community gardens, and visitors used **14 miles of trails** on lands we own.



15,000+ pounds
of produce grown for people in need

1,000+ attendees
at 26 educational events

Forest, past & future

A long partnership yields new conservation outcomes

In 1997, a 33-year-old forester named David McMath got a job managing 26,000 acres of rugged forestland in northern Vermont. VLT and The Nature Conservancy had bought the land from a timber company to test how ecological health and timber management could better align.

For nearly thirty years, David tended those forests — watching, applying new methods, learning. He says he also learned from those who had worked the land before, and a younger generation of loggers.

While the majority is now VLT-conserved timberland, emerging priorities led to a different outcome for about 2,000 acres in Richford. The Northeast Wilderness Trust bought and added it to the adjacent Bear's Nest Nature Preserve that they own and care for under a forever wild conservation easement, which leaves the land relatively untouched.


The outcome aligns with the state's 30x30 conservation vision that prioritizes a variety of forests and conservation approaches — to boost the land's ability to adapt in a changing climate, store carbon, and host an abundance of lifeforms. Both active management and minimal intervention are important in caring for this place we call home.

Now on VLT staff, David is glad all those forests are permanently protected, and will provide connections between land and people into the future.

"That feels really good," he said.

LEARN MORE

vlt.org/many-forests



“It’s the connections between the land and people that stand out. I heard hundreds of stories, some firsthand and others passed down from generation to generation. If only those old trees could talk.”

David McMath, VLT forester

A living legacy

Supporting the conservation of a historic African American-owned family farm

In 1962, Dr. Jackson Clemmons and the late Mrs. Lydia Monroe Clemmons surprised their family and friends by purchasing a farm in Charlotte. The African American couple had moved to Vermont from Cleveland, Ohio and worked at the University of Vermont as a doctor and a nurse, respectively.

But the pair defied expectations by actively working the land for decades: raising livestock, growing and canning produce, and haying. They also restored the farm's many historic buildings (some dating back to the 1700s) and created a space to celebrate African American history, culture, and arts.

Today, the Clemmons Farm is a significant arts and culture center and historic site that brings together more than 300 Vermont artists of the African diaspora. It is also an official landmark on Vermont's African American Heritage Trail.

In 2023, the late Mrs. Clemmons and Dr. Clemmons sold the farm to the nonprofit named in their honor — Clemmons Family Farm, Inc. — to keep the farm intact and continue its legacy. The African American women-led nonprofit purchased the farm and conserved 119 acres of farmland, woods, and wetlands, with support from many organizations and individuals who helped to safeguard the farm's future as a vital cultural, historical, and agricultural site in Vermont.

LEARN MORE
vlt.org/clemmons

“ By broadening the purpose of the conservation of the Clemmons Farm's beautiful agricultural and forestry lands to include preserving a significant African American cultural heritage asset for future generations, we — *all of us* — have won. ”

Dr. Lydia Clemmons, president and executive director of Clemmons Family Farm, Inc., and eldest daughter of Jackson and Lydia Monroe Clemmons

Tree triage

Taking action to protect Vermont's ash trees

Vermont's ash trees make up about five percent of our forests. While most are under grave threat from the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB), several ash trees at the Catamount Community Forest in Williston are staying strong. That's because they receive regular shots.

Treatment with a special insecticide is a key strategy for protecting individual ash trees. In 2020, we started a program to bring these injections to more ash trees in Vermont. With grant support from the Forest Service, our forester Caitlin Cusack has been "inoculating" small groves of ash against EAB.

We also loan the equipment, including to the Catamount Community Forest. Caitlin coordinated that treatment with Terry Maron, who serves on the forest's management committee. Terry is a passionate advocate for removing invasive species.

"Some people get overwhelmed and say why even bother because there's so much of it. But you can see progress, you know, when you take small steps," Terry said.

While impractical as a large-scale solution, ash injections safeguard genetic diversity and sites for future seed collection. Together with other strategies, the actions buy time for scientists and ecologists to find more comprehensive solutions.

In the meantime, the treated ash trees are standing tall.

LEARN MORE
vlt.org/new-hope-EAB

“ You can see progress, when you take small steps. ”
There are a lot of invasives, but just the little you do
can make a difference.

Terry Maron, Catamount Community Forest Management Committee

A farm dream realized

Beginning farmer takes on legacy farm

“There’s a lot of pride in a generational business,” Tom Audet says. He and his brother Mike are third-generation dairy farmers and maple syrup producers who have lived and worked on their family farm, Ledge Haven Farm, in Orwell, Vermont, their entire lives.

“We didn’t have family that wanted to step in and be farmers,” Tom went on. So in 2015, they called us, asking if we had a list of people who would fit what they were looking for. The list we shared included Jon Lucas, a first-generation dairy farmer who was renting in Starksboro.

Jon had wondered for years if he would ever realize his dream of farm ownership or quit and “get a day job.” But he and the Audets clicked, so he moved his then 270-head dairy operation, Lucas Dairy Farm, to their land. The Audets stayed on, mentoring Jon, sugaring, and watching the farm continue. Jon’s herd has since doubled, and he now has 580 dairy cattle.

This year, Jon bought the land with our help. Conservation grant funding to protect 390 acres of farmland, wetlands, streams, and woods made the purchase more affordable for his business. He’s now making updates to the farm that he couldn’t do as a renter, like barn renovations. “There’s a lot of satisfaction in always moving forward and seeing things to fruition,” he said.

LEARN MORE
vlt.org/Lucas-Dairy



“ This place feels like home. I was kind of a traveling circus before I came here. ”

Jon Lucas, Lucas Dairy Farm

A pond protected

Locals step up to save drinking water and precious habitat

A stretch of land along Berlin Pond was Jeanne Crandall Mastriano's childhood stomping grounds. The environs hosted an array of birds and critters. The water also nourished humans in the neighboring capital; the pond is the sole source of Montpelier's drinking water.

All this was at peril when 33 acres of wetlands and woods went up for sale in multiple house lots. "So much would have been lost," said Jeanne.

The land had once been part of the 200-acre Crandall family farm. As a descendant, Jeanne had a legal right to step in when other family members put those parcels on the market. Encouraged by the Berlin Conservation Commission, she and her husband, Dennis, bought a lot that was already under contract. Their intention was to hold the land while searching for ways to protect it as open space.

Jeanne and Dennis's leap of faith helped jumpstart a groundswell of support, and the nonprofit Berlin Pond Watershed Association was born. Neighbors stepped up and purchased other lots for interim ownership. The community worked to raise support and funds for the conservation. We supported their efforts and helped them partner with the City of Montpelier, which ultimately bought the land and conserved it.

"We look at what we've done and marvel," Jeanne says.

LEARN MORE
vlt.org/Berlin-Pond

“It's such a celebration of possibilities, a testament to how much a small group of people can do. Our lives really are in our hands and the environment is ours to protect.”

Jeanne Crandall Mastriano

Resilient futures

Rebuilding a stream crossing after flood damage

As heavy rains pounded the state last July, stream waters began to rise in a narrow, forested valley in Andover. By the time the storm abated, significant stretches of road were washed out and an old culvert was carried away.

The stream is a tributary of the Andover Branch of the Williams River, and the damage was on a parcel we'd received as a donation. Our restoration team made several visits to assess the situation. It was clear that the old five-foot culvert had been undersized. An appropriately designed culvert could minimize future flood damage, protect water quality, and enhance wildlife habitat. So, we convened a team of specialists.

Engineers collected data to design a stream crossing that can handle the much larger water flows expected for this watershed. Other experts undertook the rebuild, assembling the ten-foot-wide custom aluminum culvert onsite.

With double the span and shaped like an arch, the new culvert will hold more water. Another design feature will make it a better home for fish. Because the new culvert is open on the bottom, aquatic animals can nest, breed, and move across an uninterrupted, natural rocky stream bed. That's good news for the native brook trout and slimy sculpin that have been spotted here.

“With thoughtfully designed infrastructure, we can help the watersheds where we live and work be more resilient to flooding.”

Allaire Diamond, VLT's ecology and restoration program director

LEARN MORE

vlt.org/Andover-stream-crossing

Because of you

Our community of supporters, including you, makes this work possible. Vermont's farms and forests, rivers and streams, are stronger and healthier and protected — because of you. Your support makes it possible for us to work every day to protect this home we share, from the ground up.

We are so grateful for you.

LAST YEAR

3,000+ members
contributed \$4,406,194

Gifts came from
42 states

The top five
contributing states
(after Vermont) were
Massachusetts, New York,
Connecticut, California,
and Pennsylvania!

78% of members
who gave last year
gave again

On average, our members
have been with us for
7 consecutive years

In Vermont alone,
donors came from
277 towns
and villages

Supporters protected
900+ acres
by donating
conservation easements

Thank you, VLT community!



Jodi Flanagan
West Burke

“The lake has been part of my life, all my life. The island is part of the lake, and it needed to be conserved. I have a vivid memory of being out on the boat with our kids and seeing the eagles nesting there.”

Growing up, Jodi Flanagan’s world revolved around Island Pond and its 15-acre island. (Her parents’ home overlooks the lake in Vermont’s Northeast Kingdom). She was constantly on — or in — the water and would canoe or kayak by the island. When she grew up, she returned to Island Pond every summer with her husband and their two sons, boating, water skiing, or tubing around the island, sometimes getting out and swimming between their boat and the island. So, when friends reached out to see if Jodi wanted to help protect the island, it was a no-brainer. She handed out brochures and also gave a donation, helping to raise funds for the island’s conservation; it is now part of Brighton State Park.



Ruth Rubin
North Danville

“I’ve worked hard to keep my farmland viable for people and wildlife. My bequest to Vermont Land Trust helps protect that continuity, and the natural beauty of our state, forever.”

A dedicated land steward, Ruth Rubin has been committed to preserving Vermont’s natural beauty since she began stewarding her scenic North Danville farm in 1977. In 2019, she conserved the property with us, which sits next to 25,000+ acres of unfragmented forest. The wetlands, mature trees and gardens, and productive hay fields play a vital role in supporting wildlife and clean water. Pondering the future of her land, Ruth attended one of our estate planning workshops for women. Ruth plans to donate her cherished farm to VLT upon her passing, to ensure its ecological and agricultural legacy will continue. We are grateful.



Thank you to all the funders and partners who support the protection of Vermont’s landscape.

- | | | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|---|--|
| VLT members and other individuals | Fields Pond Foundation | Natural Resources Conservation Districts of Addison County, Chittenden County, Franklin County, Lamoille County, Orleans County, and Winooski | Partners for Fish and Wildlife program |
| Landowners, including those who donated land and conservation protections | Freeman Foundation | New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission | Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food, and Markets |
| Volunteers, including students, Vermont ECO AmeriCorps members, and other community members | Lintilhac Foundation | Town of Berlin | Vermont Housing & Conservation Board |
| American Farmland Trust | Lookout Foundation | Town of Jericho and their Conservation Fund | Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation and their Clean Water Initiative Program, Clean Water State Revolving Fund, and Clean Water Service Providers Grant |
| Jericho Underhill Land Trust | Mad River Path Association | City of Montpelier | Vermont Youth Conservation Corps |
| Cornell Lab of Ornithology Land Trust Small Grants Program | National Fish and Wildlife Foundation | City of South Burlington | Watersheds United Vermont |
| Davis Conservation Foundation | Tom MacLeay Foundation | USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service | |
| | Vermont Community Foundation | U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and their | |
| | Windham Foundation | | |
| | Lake Champlain Basin Program | | |
| | U.S. Environmental Protection Agency | | |

Financial information

LEARN MORE

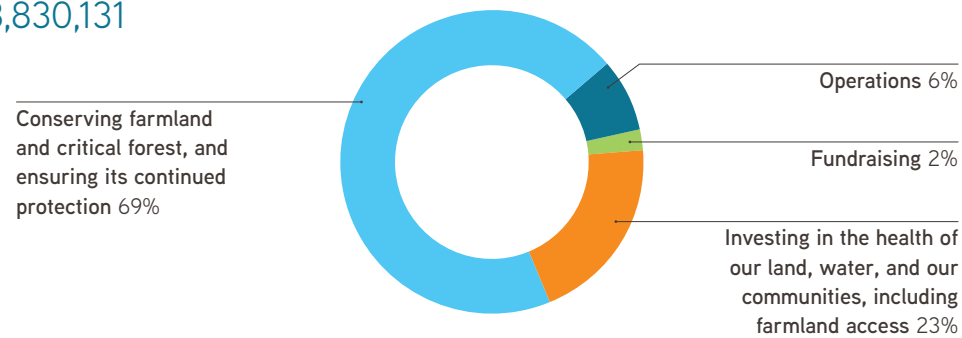
Find more information at vlt.org/annual-report

Fiscal year overview

The fiscal year ending June 30, 2024 saw an increase in our net assets. Several revenue events — gifts of land and proceeds from their sale, the conservation and sale of nearly 5,000 acres of forestland in Richford and Jay, favorable interest and investment income, and the receipt of funds for projects to be completed in future years — contributed to this growth. Over 60% of our net assets are restricted. We also began a multi-year effort to grow our stewardship endowment to support our perpetual obligations to VLT-conserved lands.

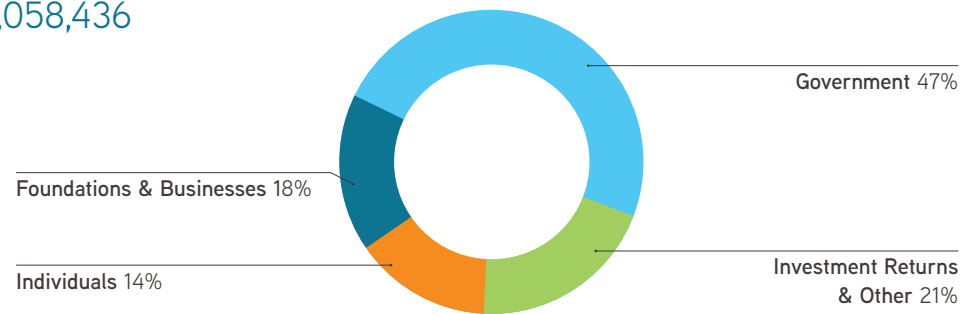
Uses of Funds

\$23,830,131



Sources of Funds

\$31,058,436



The Vermont Land Trust is a 501(c)(3) organization. This financial information is unaudited. Once completed, final financial statements and accompanying auditor's report will be available on request from our Montpelier office at (802) 223-5234.



Credits

Photos

Front cover: Jon Lucas (center), with his children Peyton (left) and Gus (right) at Lucas Dairy Farm, Orwell; by Caleb Kenna. Inside front cover: Photo of Nadine Berrini by Chris Moore and elderberry blooms with bee by Nadine Berrini. Inside back cover: VLT staff at Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park's Forest Center, Woodstock; by Caleb Kenna. Back cover: Downy woodpecker, staff photo.

Interior photos by Caleb Kenna, unless specified. Pg 2: Students and volunteers at a tree planting along the Lemon Fair River on a conserved Shoreham farm. Pg 4-5: Greensboro, by Kyle Gray. Pg 6: top, Monkton; bottom, Williamstown, by Paul Richardson. Pg 7: top, Berlin, by Kyle Gray; bottom, Shoreham. Pg 8-9: VLT forester David McMath, Richford. Pg 10-11: Clemmons Family Farm, Charlotte. Pg 12-13: Terry Maron and Big Jim, a large ash tree at the Catamount Community Forest, Williston. Pg 14-15: L to R, Jon, Gus, and Peyton Lucas, and Mike Audet and Tom Audet at Lucas Dairy Farm, Orwell. Pg 16-17: Berlin Pond, Berlin, by Kyle Gray. Pg 18-19: Engineer Jordan Duffy from Fitzgerald Environmental Associates at stream crossing restoration site, Andover, staff photo. Pg 20-21: Brewster Uplands, Cambridge, staff photo. Pg 22: top, Jodi Flanagan; bottom, Ruth Rubin, staff photo. Pg 23: Honeycomb Kids preschool at Andrews Community Forest, Richmond, by Corey Hendrickson.

Stories

Laura Hardie, pg 14.
Lucy Clark, pg 16.

Design

Balzanovision

Printing

L. Brown & Sons
This is printed on unbleached mixed percentage post-consumer recycled fiber that is FSC-manufactured.



Follow us on social @VermontLandTrust

