

# Vermont Land Trust

YEAR IN REVIEW

2020–2021







## IN HONOR OF **RICK CARBIN** 1939–2021

We dedicate this Annual Report to Rick Carbin, who founded the Vermont Land Trust and served as its president until 1990.

In the pioneering days of land conservation, Rick took risks and embraced creativity and innovation in order to serve the Vermont community, much as we strive to do today. His passion for land *and* people, and the role of land in the livelihoods of so many Vermonters, still resonates in our work. His legacy is clear to all who travel across Vermont and enjoy the woodlands, farms, bounty, and beauty of our state.







## DEAR FRIENDS,

This November, as we fire up wood stoves and pull out winter hats, we find ourselves reflecting on this time last year and noting how we have grown.

In 2020, we were all facing new and unfamiliar challenges: a global pandemic, a starkly changing climate, and a growing recognition of injustice.

One year later, uncertainty remains, but there is something new. We know we can make it through hard times. There's a new-found confidence and resilience. At the Vermont Land Trust, we see and feel that resilience. In fact, 2021 was one of VLT's strongest yet.

We launched new initiatives and completed multi-year projects that deepened our impact, including a long-awaited recreation trail at Bluffside Farm and a land access affirmation created in partnership with the Abenaki. We attracted hundreds of new donors, we engaged thousands of people far and wide through online events and storytelling, and our members—you—gave generously to sustain this work.

In these pages, we highlight some of our efforts:

- Fostering a new model of farm ownership in Tunbridge that is guided by the community and improving access to land.
- Planting 3,000 trees with dozens of volunteers across farms in the Champlain Valley to combat erosion, clean up our waterways, and improve wildlife habitat.
- Deepening children's connection to land through a new 148-acre outdoor classroom in West Pawlet.

We also share our hopes for the years ahead. Conservation has many dimensions. It is driven by community and connection to place. Conservation is also dynamic. It changes as our land and our communities change. We want to work toward a future where Vermont's land better serves people of all backgrounds and economic circumstances, where the health of our land and our communities are intertwined.

2021 feels like an inflection point. So much is at stake in our broader world, and so much possibility lies right in front of us.

**We thank you deeply for your support and look forward to exploring these possibilities, together.**

Sincerely,

**Nick Richardson**  
President & CEO

**Cheryl Morse**  
Chair, Board of Trustees







# UNITING LAND AND LIVES

Vermont is a place where the health of our land and the wellbeing of our people have always been entwined. This interdependence is more relevant today than ever.

The climate emergency, economic and social divides, human health crises, and persistent racial injustice confront us daily. There are new pressures on Vermont's landscape. How will we, as Vermonters, meet this moment? The health of our farms, forests, and natural areas—and our

relationship to them—depends on the action we take today.

With your help, the Vermont Land Trust has protected over 615,000 acres, including more than 900 farms and thousands of acres of working forests. This land shapes our identity. It nourishes our wellbeing, enlivens our communities, strengthens our ecosystems, and supports our economy. It is the bedrock upon which we can create a more vital and equitable future for Vermont.

## LAND AT THE CENTER

To meet this moment, we must put land at the center of our wellbeing. Over the next ten years, we aim to:

Accelerate efforts to protect Vermont against the devastating effects of climate change. This includes restoring wetlands, sequestering and storing carbon in our soils and forests, and conserving more land along rivers and streams.

Support hundreds of new and beginning farmers in purchasing land and operating successful farm businesses—helping to prevent sprawl, alleviate hunger, and support our vibrant food economy.

Enhance learning on the land, the creation of trails and access points, and community vitality by investing in land owned by VLT.

Expand land access, ownership, and economic opportunity among people who have been historically marginalized or oppressed because of their race and ethnicity. This could include acquiring and donating land, mobilizing capital, and offering technical services.



## NEW IN 2022

In a few months, we will introduce an updated brand that reflects our evolution and will help us reach a wider audience. Some things are changing, and some are not. Our logo, website, and publications will feel fresh; but our passion and the expertise you have come to trust will remain the same.

Conservation is in our bones. So too is the desire to reimagine the role of conservation in Vermont's future.

**We are energized by your support and invite your feedback as we move forward.**





# OUR WORK THIS YEAR

12,900+ ACRES CONSERVED



COMPLETED A LONG-AWAITED RECREATION PATH AT BLUFFSIDE FARM, NEWPORT

## COMMUNITY



50,000+

POUNDS OF LOCAL VEGETABLES SOURCED AND PACKED for Farmers to Families program

Produced CSA shares FOR ABENAKI FOOD SHELF, SWANTON

100+

FAMILIES BENEFITED from community gardens on VLT land

12,000

POUNDS OF CARROTS &

800

POUNDS OF POTATOES grown for food shelves, schools, and hospitals

## FARMS & FORESTS



3,200+ FARMLAND ACRES PROTECTED

9,800+ ACRES OF FORESTLAND CONSERVED

27

FARM PARCELS CONSERVED

5,400+

ACRES SECURED for community use and recreation



## CLIMATE & ECOLOGY

CLEAN-WATER PROTECTION ALONG 63 miles OF STREAMS AND RIVERS

7,500+

TREES PLANTED along wetlands, rivers, and streams

655 ACRES OF WETLANDS CONSERVED



40

ACRES OF HABITAT IMPROVED





# FOR THE COMMUNITY, BY THE COMMUNITY

## EMBARKING ON A NEW TYPE OF FARM

While the pandemic has underscored the need for strong food systems and led more consumers to support local farms, farmers continue to face an uphill battle. In Vermont, farmers cite soaring land prices as the top barrier to starting their own business. The White River Land Collaborative in Tunbridge poses a particularly thrilling solution: multiple farmer tenants, equitable land use, pooled resources and support, a focus on sustainability, lots of ways to engage the community, all on conserved land.

VLT bought the conserved farm and is leasing it to the Collaborative so they have time to refine their plans and raise the money needed to succeed. "It's potentially a great model for other communities to follow and something we're eager to support and be a part of," says VLT's Maggie Donin.

From left to right, Fran Miller, Suzanne Long, Shona Sanford-Long, and Sarah Danly of the White River Land Collaborative in Tunbridge.



"The first time walking on to the farm and walking into that big gambrel barn, there's just something that catches you there. You can really feel the imprint and the care that generations of people have put into managing this land. There's something really special about that."

Shona Sanford-Long, a second-generation farmer who grew up nearby and has brought her livestock business to the farm





# BACK TO THE LAND

## PLANTING TREES CONNECTS US TO THE NATURAL WORLD

As the climate changes, there's a new urgency to restore and support our working landscape. Volunteers are joining with VLT to plant trees along streams, rivers, and wetlands. As saplings grow, they nurture birds and other animals, and their leaves and roots capture carbon. During floods, they absorb water, catch debris and slow runoff, and provide refuge for animals.

But there is another vital reason to come together to plant trees: it's a powerful way to connect with each other and the land. As VLT ecologist Allaire Diamond notes, "When you're kneeling down with your hands in the soil, you're seeing the land with new eyes."



**"I volunteered because I wanted to get more students connected physically to the earth and environment. Trees are such incredible organisms ecologically. Their benefits and longevity have a real lasting impact and that is an important factor as we look towards the future for climate solutions."**

**Iris Hsiang, Essex High School student and Vermont Climate Council member**

**Volunteers helped plant 3,000 trees along Muddy Brook in South Burlington, a tributary of the LaPlatte River in Charlotte, and at the confluence of Mill Brook and the Winooski River in Jericho.**



Students at Mettawee Community School have been biking, sledding, nature journaling, trail building, bird-watching, animal tracking, and even built forts.

# SCHOOL'S OUT

## OUTDOOR LEARNING EQUALS DEEPER CONNECTIONS

After a year of disrupted learning, children headed back into classrooms this fall. But at Mettawee Community School in West Pawlet, it is what's happening *outside* that has families talking. Through a partnership with the Merck Forest & Farmland Center and VLT, students can explore the fields and forests behind their school every single day.

"Whether it's peering at an iced-over pond or buzzing with questions about a deer carcass, children are enhancing their learning—and their well-being—through a deeper connection to the natural world," says VLT's Donald Campbell. "For many kids, especially those without lots of exposure to nature, the experience has been nothing short of transformational."



"Kids for the past year and a half have been sitting in front of screens learning—how much better to be out and putting your hands on something! As opposed to sitting in the classroom to read about biodiversity, they are actually exploring it."

Christine Hubbard, Education Director, Merck Forest & Farmland Center



# PLACES PROTECTED



## 617,175

**ACRES CONSERVED  
AS OF JUNE 30, 2021**

We are grateful to the landowners, partners, and supporters who help us protect Vermont's farms, forests, and natural areas. Most conserved parcels listed on the following pages include special protections along wetlands, streams and rivers, vernal pools, and for other sensitive ecological areas.



# NORTHEAST KINGDOM



Dan Royer retired from dairy farming, and conserved and sold his Newport farm to Misty-Anne Koloski and David Daniels who run Divine Dairy.

- Albany, 202 acres:** vegetable farm and maple syrup | Andy Paonessa and Marina Carleton
- Albany & Craftsbury, 238 acres:** forest, meadows | Beverly Delaney
- Danville, 134 acres:** beef farm | Roy Patterson
- Danville, 172 acres:** organic dairy | Henry and Allison Pearl
- Eden & Craftsbury, 2,100 acres:** forest, recreation | Maureen Conte and Bob Busby
- Lowell, 37 acres:** organic dairy, Missisquoi River frontage | Jason and Ashley Randall
- Lyndon, 271 acres:** forest, pasture, recreation | Kingdom Trail Association
- Morgan, 125 acres:** organic dairy, farm transition | Kenric and Avalena Gonyaw, Ron and Jennifer Patenaude
- Morgan, 837 acres:** forest, headwaters, recreation | Josh Steirman
- Newport, 136 acres:** organic dairy, farm transition | Dan Royer, Misty-Anne Koloski and David Daniels
- Sutton, 515 acres:** forest | Carol and Paul Brouha
- Westfield & Troy, 135 acres:** farm frontage on Missisquoi River and tributaries, 4,000 trees planted  
Karen and Pat O'Donnell
- Wheelock, 300 acres:** vegetable, egg, and meat farm | Mark and Kerry Drown
- Wheelock & Greensboro, 796 acres:** forest, recreation | Gary Dwyer

# SOUTH



VLT worked with Green Mountain Conservancy to add 600+ acres in Brookline and Newfane along the West River to the Deer Run Nature Preserve.

- Andover, 468 acres:** forest, streams, wetlands | Kohler family, Elliott Stewart
- Brookline & Newfane, 627 acres:** Deer Run Nature Preserve expansion | Green Mountain Conservancy
- Dummerston, 59 acres:** woodland, recreation | Putney Mountain Association
- Dummerston, 59 acres:** woods, fields | Ed Anthes and Mary Ellen Copeland
- Jamaica, 101 acres:** forest | The Nature Conservancy
- Mount Holly, 346 acres:** Okemo State Forest expansion | Mount Holly Conservation Trust
- Pawlet, 71 acres:** sheep farm, Mettowee River frontage | Peter Helmetag
- Sandgate, 114 acres:** forest | The Nature Conservancy
- Shaftsbury & Rupert, 1,438 acres:** forest | David and Cheryl Mance
- Shaftsbury, 88 acres:** woodland, streams, wetlands | Elizabeth and John Graham
- Sharon, 150 acres:** forest, pasture, wetlands, streams | Wilfred Moore
- Springfield, 70 acres:** vegetable farm, Connecticut River frontage | Matthew Kurek and Maggie Wood
- Sudbury & Orwell, 166 acres:** dairy farm, Lemon Fair River frontage | Tupper family
- Wardsboro, 207 acres:** forest, pasture | Donna and Peter Sebastian
- Weathersfield, 262 acres:** vineyard, forest, wetlands, streams | Beth Hunton and Brian Bosenberg



# CHAMPLAIN VALLEY



Thanks to our Farmland Access Program, Henry Webb and Gabrielle Tuite established their vegetable business, Old Road Farm, on farmland protected by Daniel and Daphne Hewitt in Granville.

- Bridport, 73 acres:** flower farm, farm transition | Jessie and Gregory Witscher
- Bridport, 416 acres:** farmland, wetlands, recreation | Karen and Clarence Deering
- Charlotte, 72 acres:** vegetable and herb farm, farm transition | John and Carol Snow, Katie Rose Leonard and Bryan Steward
- Charlotte, 800 trees** planted along stream of LaPlatte River | Nordic Farms
- Charlotte, 56 acres:** vegetable and berry farm, farm transition | Jane Engelman MacLean and Dan MacLean
- Cornwall, 125 acres:** grazing and livestock farm | Cheryl and Marc Cesario
- Fletcher, 180 acres:** vegetable, egg and meat farm, farm transition | King family, Hannah and John Doyle
- Franklin, Highgate, 9 acres:** Rock River and Bullis Pond frontage, 630 trees planted | Wayne and Nancy Fiske
- Granville, 24 acres:** vegetable farm, farm transition | Daniel and Daphne Hewitt, Henry Webb and Gabrielle Tuite
- Huntington, 245 acres:** Huntington Community Forest | The Trust for Public Land
- Isle La Motte, 57 acres:** vineyard, farm transition | Krista Scruggs
- Jericho:** 1,600 trees planted along the Winooski River and Mill Brook | Jericho Settlers Farm
- Monkton, 269 acres:** vegetable and fruit farm, Pond Brook frontage, 80 wetland acres given to the town Sam Burr and Eugenie Doyle
- Monkton, 360 acres:** cropland, farm transition | Charles and Mary Huizenga, Ben Miner
- Montgomery & Belvidere, 2,775 acres:** forest, streams, wetlands, recreation | Thirty Acres Woodlands
- Richford, 113 acres:** woodland | Cora Mae Smith
- Richmond, 68 acres:** vegetable, meat, and egg farm, farm transition | Peet family, Christa Alexander and Mark Fasching
- Ripton, 80 acres:** woodland, wetlands | Barbara and Warren King
- St. Albans, 55 acres:** beef farm | John and Heather Brigham
- St. Albans, 130 acres:** dairy farm | Nelson Dairies West
- Starksboro, 303 acres:** dairy farm, sugarbush | Eric and Jane Clifford
- South Burlington:** 750 trees planted along Muddy Brook | Bread & Butter Farm
- Underhill, 17 acres:** meadow, recreation, Casey's Hill | Town of Underhill
- Weybridge, 160 acres:** dairy farm, Lemon Fair River frontage | Monument Farms

# CENTRAL



An eastern comma butterfly spotted at the new town-owned Peter A. Krusch Nature Preserve in Cambridge, which boasts ravines, streams, waterfalls, and trails.

- Barre Town, 34 acres:** vegetable, berry, and poultry farm, farm transition | Matt Systo and Kim Rich
- Cambridge, 51 acres:** woodland, recreation, Peter A. Krusch Nature Preserve | Sally Laughlin, Town of Cambridge
- Marshfield, 2,144 acres:** forest, sugarbush, recreation | New Leaf Tree Syrups
- Morristown, 175 acres:** livestock farm, farm transition | Valcour family, Jesse and Marlene Hursh
- Norwich, 115 acres:** forest, tributary of Ompompanoosuc River | Nancy Arnold
- Strafford & Sharon, 266 acres:** vegetable, meat, and egg farm and maple syrup, farm transition Hilary and Ben Miner
- Tunbridge, 203 acres:** livestock farm, forest, community land | White River Land Collaborative
- Washington, 62 acres:** woodland | Lynne and Dave Lersch





# ROOTED IN COMMUNITY

Our four flagship properties are places where we're working with communities to enhance learning on the land, access to the outdoors, and economic opportunity.

## BLUFFSIDE FARM, **Newport**

We completed construction of a mile-long recreation path connecting downtown Newport with existing trails. A filled-in wetland on the edge of Lake Memphremagog has been excavated and restored, and invasive plants are being removed. We've established community gardens, and hosted both a Three Sisters Garden with the Nulhegan Abenaki and a Community Health Care Share garden with Vermont Youth Conservation Corps. And, students and teachers from local schools made great use of the land for outdoor education!

— VLT's Tracy Zschau

## KING FARM, **Woodstock**

The community gardens, managed by Sustainable Woodstock, were busy this summer. The farm's caretakers continue to raise goats, laying hens, and cattle, and manage haying by a local farmer. We love that the trails, scenic views, and sculptures installed as part of Sculpturefest, are enjoyed by so many. Our experimental forest deer fence is in its second year, and we continue to care for the land, especially wooded areas along wetlands and Prosper Brook for clean water.

— VLT's Donna Foster

## PINE ISLAND COMMUNITY FARM, **Colchester**

Working with the New American community is an incredible learning opportunity for us. We are engaging more deeply with the community's needs and the challenges that arise. Last year, because of the pandemic, people were losing jobs and facing rising food insecurity. The community garden plots are used by 75 New American families and, working with partners, we provided 20+ chest freezers so gardeners can store their harvests through the winter. We're also helping the farm businesses and improving infrastructure.

— VLT's Ben Waterman

## BREWSTER UPLANDS, **Jeffersonville**

At the nonprofit West Farm, we retrofitted a dairy barn to provide year-round storage for area farmers, sourced and packed 50,000+ pounds of local vegetables for the Farmers to Families program, grew 12,000+ pounds of carrots for schools and hospitals, and delivered vegetables to over 15 schools. We produced CSA shares for the Abenaki Food Shelf in Swanton. And we partnered with Healthy Roots Collaborative to grow potatoes for food shelves and culturally significant foods for migrant farm workers. Plus, recreation trails were open and busy all year!

— VLT's Ben Waterman

# THANK YOU

TO THE FUNDERS AND PARTNERS WHO SUPPORT THE PROTECTION OF VERMONT'S WORKING LANDSCAPE.

Charlotte Land Trust	The Conservation Alliance	Vermont Clean Water State Revolving Fund
Cold Hollow to Canada	The Nature Conservancy	Vermont Community Foundation
Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Land Trust Grant Program	The Nature Conservancy under a grant from Keurig Green Mountain, Inc.	Vermont Community Foundation's Lyman Orton Fund
Davis Conservation Fund	Town of Cambridge	Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation
Fields Pond Foundation	Town of Charlotte	Vermont Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation
Franklin County Natural Resources Conservation District	Town of Huntington	Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department
Freeman Foundation	Town of Monkton	Vermont Food Bank
Friends of the Winooski River	Town of Underhill	Vermont Habitat Stamp Fund
Hosmer Pond Fund	USDA	Vermont Housing & Conservation Board
Jericho Underhill Land Trust	USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service	VLT's Farmland Futures Fund
Lookout Foundation	U.S. Community Forest and Open Space Fund	William P. Wharton Trust
Michael Colbert Farmland Fund	U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's Partners for Fish & Wildlife Program	Windham Foundation
Mount Holly Conservation Trust	U.S. Forest Service's Forest Legacy Program	Other private foundations, businesses, individuals, and VLT members
National Fish & Wildlife Foundation's New England Forests & Rivers Fund	Vermont Agency of Agriculture	
Passumpsic Valley Land Trust		
Stowe Land Trust		





## STAYING CONNECTED

## DISCOVERY, EXPLORATION, AND WONDER

This past year Vermonters and Vermonters-at-heart wowed us with their curiosity and enthusiasm for learning about this land. You joined us for webinars on wildflowers, old forests, birds, Vermont's trees, Abenaki sugaring and stories, and more.

**2,700+**  
ATTENDED 23  
EDUCATIONAL  
EVENTS

EVENTS WERE FREE  
but participants chose  
to contribute  
**\$17,500+**

Here's what some of you said about these online events:

"Sugaring is a storybook part of the Vermont experience. [Honoring] its roots with the First Peoples of the region is the kind of education we need to share more of. Your follow-up resources/links were outstanding."



"Liked seeing close-ups of birds,  
hearing their songs and  
learning nesting habitat!"

"I liked learning interesting new tidbits  
about things like bear nests and birds  
in birches. My kids enjoyed learning  
how to tell our maples apart."



## JOIN US!

Learn of events when we announce  
them by signing up for email updates,  
go to [vlt.org/subscribe](https://vlt.org/subscribe).



# BECAUSE OF YOU

Since our founding in 1977, VLT has grown and accomplished so much. Because of you, our members.

You have helped us protect over 615,000 acres of working forests, farms, community land, and wildlife habitat, as well as the rivers, streams, and wetlands that are an integral part of this rich ecosystem.

## THANK YOU!

YOUR SUPPORT IS BUILDING A  
STRONGER, HEALTHIER VERMONT.

## ABOUT OUR MEMBERS

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VERMONT  
LANDOWNERS  
**DONATED**  
conservation  
easements on  
**2,000+ ACRES**

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WE HAD SUPPORTERS  
FROM ALL  
**50 STATES**  
plus DC, Puerto Rico,  
the US Virgin Islands,  
and overseas!

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**4,500+**  
FAMILIES  
AND INDIVIDUALS  
GAVE  
**\$5,189,726**

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**830**  
NEW PEOPLE  
joined the VLT  
community



# FINANCIAL SUMMARY

## Summary of Financial Position June 30, 2021

### ASSETS

Cash and money market funds	4,714,483.00
Contributions receivable	2,829,136.00
Notes and grants receivable, net	686,787.00
Investments, at fair value	25,242,013.00
Conservation property, net	17,136,854.00
Other assets	3,351,281.00
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>53,960,554.00</b>

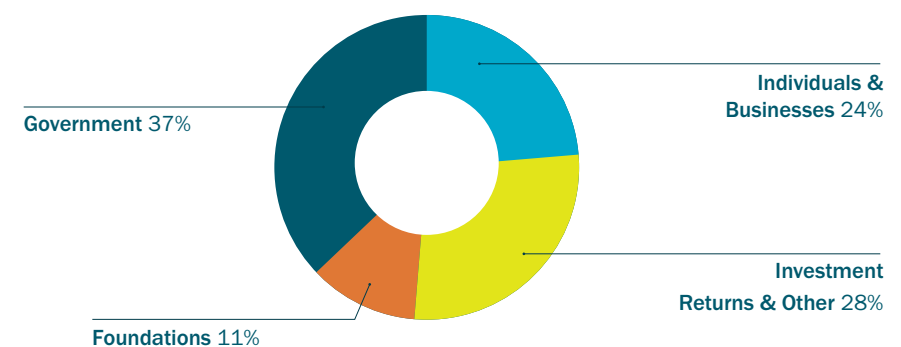
### LIABILITIES

Notes payable, including line of credit	10,076,702.00
Accounts payable and accrued expenses	305,010.00
Charitable annuities payable	1,779,185.00
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>	<b>12,160,897.00</b>

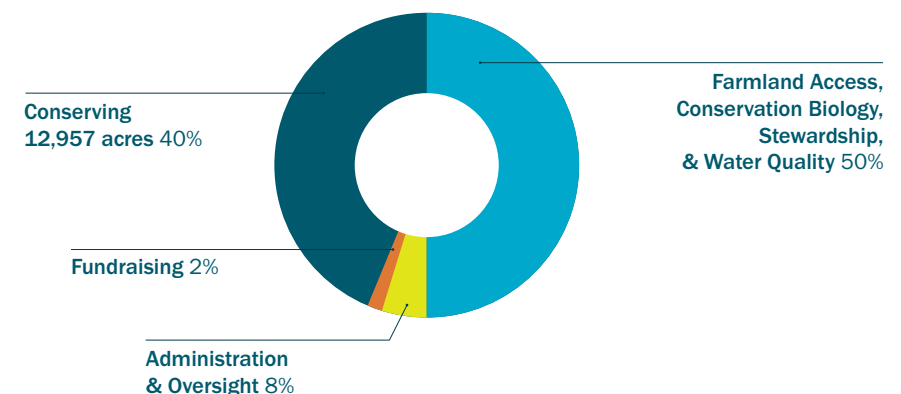
<b>TOTAL NET ASSETS</b>	<b>41,799,657.00</b>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</b>	<b>53,960,554.00</b>

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

## Sources of Funds \$24,867,189



## Uses of Funds \$18,184,543





# OUR STAFF & BOARD OF TRUSTEES

## BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Pieter Bohen, Woodstock  
Heidi G. Chamberlain, Manchester, VT and New York City  
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## STAFF

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Ben Waterman, Lands Director  
Abby White, Vice President for Strategic Communications  
Tracy Zschau, Vice President for Conservation

## LOCATIONS

Brattleboro, Montpelier (headquarters), Newport, Richmond, Woodstock  
(802) 223-5234 | VLT.ORG



## CREDITS

Photos: Front cover: Volunteers at a tree planting in Jericho, by Caleb Kenna. Back cover: Pine grosbeak, by David Middleton. Caleb Kenna: pp. 2, 4, 5, 7 (top), 8-9, 10-11, 12-13, 14-15, 18, 20, 21, 22, 24-25, inside back cover. David Middleton: pp. 1, 7 (bottom). Kyle Gray: p. 6.

Focus stories by Rachel Mullis: pp. 8, 10, and 12.

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