WOWVT
WOMEN & OUR WOODS

CASE STUDY

ALYSSA BENNETT

BOLTON, VT

The Bennett property is an important wildlife resource that connects to almost 50,000 acres of unfragmented forest. Its variety of fruit-bearing trees are prime sources of forage for wildlife that pass through the land. The forest contains important habitat for bats and flying squirrels, along with warblers and other migratory songbirds.

MEET THE LANDOWNER

As a wildlife biologist, Alyssa Bennett long wanted to put into practice the advice she often gave to private landowners. She grew up with her parents on 100 acres in Belvidere, VT and dreamed of buying her own land to manage and give back. After years of hard work, she was able to achieve her goal a few years ago, buying just over 40 acres in Bolton where she now lives with her daughters. Just before she bought her land, she had helped convert a private landowner's parcel into a State Park. She was inspired by the landowner's commitment to sharing his land with the public and wanted to do the same. Today, a former portion of the Long Trail crosses Alyssa's property. She aims to manage recreation with supporting wildlife and restoring the forest that previous owners had heavily logged. She also harvests the firewood needed to heat her home from the land (which she cuts, bucks, and splits on her own!).

Alyssa's daughters, Cece (left) and Bella (right), are growing up exploring the forest and helping their mom manage the land.

AT A GLANCE

PROPERTY / PROJECT ACREAGE

40.9 acres (7 managed in project)

LOCATION

Bolton, VT

FOREST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Crop tree release with canopy gap formation
Woods road rehabilitation

PARTNERS

North Woods Forestry
Natural Resources Conservation Service
Lake Champlain Regional Conservation Partnership Program
Vermont's Women and Our Woods
Vermont Youth Conservation Corps

WOMEN & OUR WOODS

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HOW HAS THIS LAND BEEN MANAGED?

Alyssa started actively managing her land within months of buying it. Developed in partnership with Charlie Hancock of North Woods Forestry, Alyssa's forest management plan identifies her goals of managing for wildlife, forest health, sustainable timber production, and responsible public use. Alyssa secured funding through the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) to pay for her management plan. Once the plan was finished, her first focus was to improve the woods roads that run through the property. Significant erosion on the main road was impacting water quality. She received funding through NRCS and the Lake Champlain Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) to restore these roads.

On the left, the girls build fairy houses in the woods. On the right, Bella helps pull the invasive Japanese Knotweed.

Alyssa was excited to learn about the opportunity for a demonstration project with Vermont Youth Conservation Corps (VYCC) and WOW-VT. As a youth member of VYCC , she knows the impact that on-the-ground training can have on students interested in forestry careers. The VYCC crew completed a crop tree release in a seven-acre area. Crop trees grow food that supports local wildlife and humans as well as provide timber and other forest products.

Charlie Hancock identified high-quality trees to retain and selected competing trees for harvest. He also selected small groups of trees to create gaps in the canopy. These gaps allow young trees and shrubs to grow. Several trees were girdled, meaning they will slowly decline. Girdling creates cavities and peeling bark that bats and flying squirrels need to raise their young.

WHAT COMES NEXT?

Alyssa is looking ahead to her next challenge: invasives. Japanese knotweed has become established on the property and she aims to control it. When she thinks about her land in the future, she wants to see a diverse forest ecosystem that supports many kinds of wildlife. She wants it to be resistant to disease while managing for old growth characteristics, where possible. She wants to find the right balance between public recreation and wilderness. And most of all, she wants to continue to set an example for her daughters of how to live with and from the land. She wants to see them appreciate the wildlife around them and the opportunities to spend time out in nature every day.

PROJECT PARTNERS

North Woods Forestry
Charlie Hancock from North Woods Forestry developed Alyssa's Forest Management Plan and is helping her implement it.

Vermont Youth Conservation Corps (VYCC)
A crew from VYCC completed the crop tree release and canopy gap formation on the property in partnership with WOW-VT.

Vermont's Women and Our Woods (WOW-VT)
WOW-VT secured funding from the US Forest Service to pay for VYCC to complete demonstration projects on women-owned and women-managed land.

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
Alyssa received funding from NRCS's EQIP program to restore the woods road.

Lake Champlain Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)
Alyssa received funding from the RCPP to restore the woods road.

Thanks to the US Forest Service who made this project possible through the award of a Landscape Scale Restoration Grant.

WOW VT
WOMEN & OUR WOODS

CASE STUDY

BARBARA MOORE

PAWLET, VT

A valley woodland surrounds a historic farm. Nestled in the Mettawee River Valley, the Moore Farm features a diverse woodland surrounding rich farmland. The woodland sits just below Haystack Mountain and next to the North Pawlet Hills Natural Area.

MEET THE LANDOWNER

Barbara Moore is grateful to have any chance to get out on her beautiful land. For much of her adult life, she lived in New York, running The Good Table, her farm-to-table food service business. Whenever possible, she made her way back to a rural corner of Pawlet to spend time on the land that has been in her family since the 1940s. In 2019, she came back full-time as the sole owner and manager of the property. The woodlands are nestled around a farm that has hosted cows, chickens, and organic vegetables over the years. When Barbara's father stopped farming in 1988, the barns lay empty for years. Today, Barbara leases the farmland to Laughing Child Farm, an organic sweet potato farm. A highlight of the surrounding woodland is a unique forest landscape: dry oak, hickory, and hophornbeam trees with an open grassy floor. Barbara jumps at the chance to explore her woodlands to monitor growth, plan for new projects, and understand its unique character.

A view of the unique dry oak, hickory, and hophornbeam forest on the property with good density and mixed ages of the trees.

AT A GLANCE

PROPERTY / PROJECT ACREAGE

225.5 acres (198 actively managed)

LOCATION

Pawlet, VT

FOREST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Mast Tree Release - 8 acres
Patch Cuts - 3.9 acres and 2.0 acres
Irregular Shelterwood Harvest - 7 acres
Timber Stand Improvement - 13.9 acres

PARTNERS

Southwind Forestry
Natural Resource Conservation Service
VT Agency of Natural Resources
Redstart

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HOW HAS THIS LAND BEEN MANAGED?

Barbara's goals are to increase wildlife on the land and be a good steward of a healthy forest. In 2006, her family learned about the Current Use (or Use Value) program. Under this program, land is appraised (and taxed) as farming or forestry land rather than at its fair market value. This program incentivized the Moores to actively manage the land as woodland. The Moores developed a forestry management plan alongside Southwind Forestry and the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources. Barbara is now working from her second ten-year plan, which she will renew in 2027. In 2016 Barbara's land was certified as a Vermont Tree Farm, which confirms that the forest management meets certain sustainability standards.

One of the two patch cuts completed in one section of Barbara's woodland.

All but 18.7 acres of the woodland produce valuable timber. Wildlife biologists and foresters worked with Barbara to identify five unique stands – areas of the forest where the trees can be grouped by certain characteristics. The professionals identified priority activities for each stand. In one stand, they created patch cuts: clearing areas by harvesting mature trees. Barbara's priority was to create open space with shrubs and grasses to attract migratory birds and other wildlife. In another stand, they cleared an area around specific, healthy trees that provide food for local wildlife. The fruit of forest trees and shrubs are called "mast." Mast-producing tree species in this stand included red oak, white oak, and shagbark hickory. Allowing these trees more room to grow can improve mast production. Barbara was able to secure funding through the Natural Resource Conservation Service for both of these activities as well as to pay Redstart Forestry to do invasive plant control. In a third stand, they selectively harvested individual mature trees to prioritize hardwood trees like red oak, white oak, shagbark hickory, and sweet birch. In addition to being mast-producing and high-value timber-producing species, these trees are also prime roosting spots for bats.

The same area of the forest three years after the patch cut, showing the growth of shrubs and other low-lying plants.

WHAT COMES NEXT?

When Barbara envisions this land in 50 years, it doesn't look that different than it does today. She is committed to managing the forest, making space for wildlife, and keeping trees healthy. She looks forward to walking the land with foresters, evaluating the work that was done previously, and making plans for new projects. Her advice to other landowners? "Get connected. There are so many resources available to help with this work and to connect you with other resources."

PROJECT PARTNERS

Southwind Forestry
Barbara brought in Southwind Forestry to create and manage her Forest Management Plan.

Redstart Natural Resource Management
Barbara worked with Redstart to manage invasives in the woodlands and is planning on working with them to complete a tree and shrub planting in the future.

Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS)
Barbara received funding from NRCS's Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) to pay for activities that improve the health of the forest and its wildlife.

Vermont Agency of Natural Resources (ANR)
Barbara worked with the county forester at the Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation and biologists from the Department of Fish and Wildlife to understand and promote the health of her forest.

Thanks to the US Forest Service who made this project possible through the award of a Landscape Scale Restoration Grant.

WOWVT
WOMEN & OUR WOODS

CASE STUDY

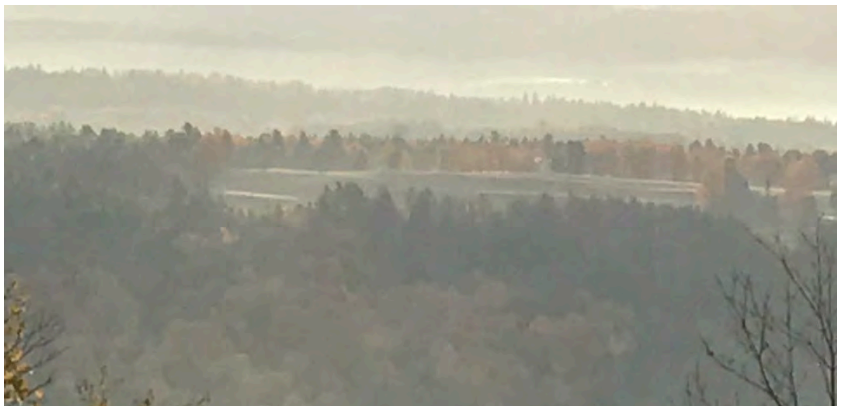
BARBARA ORLOVSKY

CRAFTSBURY, VT

Barbara Orlovsky is slowly bringing a property back to wholeness again. Nicknamed The Ledges for its steep rocky cliffs, it sustains patches of yew, hornbeam, basswood, and black cherry trees on its forested slopes. The nearby wetlands help create habitat for many songbirds, black bear, and moose.

MEET THE LANDOWNER

Barbara describes her land as her fourth child. She grew up with free rein to explore her parents' 400-acre property in Lamoille County. After leaving Vermont in 1957, she used family inheritance to buy her own land in 2005, which she named The Ledges. "Trees and plants were my childhood companions. I feel what the land is doing. It's a living whole that I'm allowed to spend time in and with." But the steep acreage had been far from whole for many years. Previous owners allowed extensive logging that significantly damaged the land and the forest. With the mapping program Avenza, she spent over thirty hours (cumulatively 17 miles) walking up and down The Ledges, trying to visit every acre. She took 473 digital notes on wildlife signs, plant life, and ecology to log the special, fragile, and intimate features of the land. She hand-planted a hay meadow near her cabin and, though nearing 80, regularly wields a scythe and chainsaw as needed. Spending time in and around the land helps inform necessary choices about how to manage the forest. She does this work with her three grandchildren in mind, envisioning their future explorations of the land.



Steep cliffs form The Ledges, giving the landscape character and striking views all year round.

AT A GLANCE

PROPERTY / PROJECT ACREAGE

137.63 acres (135.63 actively managed)

LOCATION

Craftsbury, VT

FOREST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Patch cut - 2 acres
Mast Tree Release - 72 acres
Trail work - 1320 linear feet

PARTNERS

David McMath, forester
Pelland Forestland Management
Audubon Vermont
Natural Resources Conservation Service

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HOW HAS THIS LAND BEEN MANAGED?

Barbara has harvested cherry (shown above) and other high-quality hardwoods for furniture and other woodworking projects.

The focus for the land is recovery. Barbara's property has been a certified Vermont Tree Farm since 2013, demonstrating her commitment to sustainable forest management. Barbara asked Audubon Vermont to conduct a bird habitat assessment in 2014. The assessment found 29 species of birds, some "species of concern," by sight and sound. This and Barbara's extensive notes informed her work with her forester, David McMath, to develop and implement her 2016 forest management plan. Between 2005 and 2014, Barbara heard fewer warbler species singing in the woods by the cabin and down the ledges. Some species of warblers rely on young forests and moist thickets. She worked with the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) to complete a 2-acre patch cut on the edge of her wetlands, spurring the successional growth of shrubs and berries. She is considering similar measures in the upper woods.

NRCS funding also partially supported a mast tree release and the rehabilitation of logging roads between 2011-2014. Mast trees (beeches, hop hornbeams, and black cherries) feed bears, partridge, turkeys, and songbirds. With Barbara, NRCS selected 30 healthy mast trees for release, and marked surrounding trees to be girdled or cut. Increasing seed and fruit production improved animal habitat in those sections of the forest. The road work repaired deep gullies caused by erosion and allowed Barbara to travel to outer corners of the parcel to observe and plan its care. As she ages, she uses an ATV to reach remote sites. By design, the trails respect seeps and other wet areas and are built with minimal disruption to well-established trees.

An ancient hemlock sits at the bottom of the property.

WHAT COMES NEXT?

Barbara's goal is for "the land to grow according to its own rules." She won't interfere except when taking what she needs for firewood and woodworking or for repairing past damage or improving wildlife habitat. When she first stayed on the property, there was no running water or electricity. She recommends the same experience for any new landowner. "To be alone in the land and with the land for a time during which you put yourself at its mercy. To simply say, 'I'm here with you,' and listen to the response from all around." She hopes her family and others continue to learn from The Ledges for years to come, through the rare experience of immersion in the forest.

PROJECT PARTNERS

David McMath, Licensed Consulting Forester
David McMath worked with Barbara to develop her initial forest management plan and implementation efforts.

Tyler Pelland, Pelland Forestland Management
Starting in 2022, Tyler Pelland took over the management planning and implementation efforts on the property.

Audubon Vermont
Audubon Vermont conducted a bird habitat assessment on Barbara's property to inform the Forest Management Plan and support future bird habitat.

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
Barbara received funding through the NRCS to complete forest management and restoration activities.

Thanks to the US Forest Service who made this project possible through the award of a Landscape Scale Restoration Grant.

WOWVT
WOMEN & OUR WOODS

CASE STUDY

BUTTON FARM, VLT
COLCHESTER, VT

A fourth-generation family farm is now managed by the Vermont Land Trust (VLT) to ensure the land will be conserved for generations to come. A portion of the land is still actively farmed, and VLT has worked to control invasives and improve the health of the forest and wetlands.

UNDERSTAND THE LAND

Button Farm is on both sides of Route 7 in Colchester. The farm has been in current owner Gene Button's family for four generations, since 1895. Gene cares about keeping the land undeveloped and healthy, so he worked with VLT to conserve it in 2002. VLT is a statewide conservation organization, committed to protecting farmland, forestland, and community land from development. In 2012 Gene conveyed a remainder life interest for the 97 acres east of Rt 7 to VLT. This means that VLT and Gene jointly own the land until Gene's passing, at which point VLT becomes the sole owner. Since 2020 VLT ecologist Allaire Diamond has been working to restore the streams and wetlands on the property to improve water quality and protect against flood damage. The agricultural land is leased to a New American farmer growing nthori (African eggplant.) Most of the remainder of the land is forested and managed by VLT forester Caitlin Cusack. Unfortunately, invasive plants have established throughout much of the forest and along the field edges. Invasive species outcompete native plants for space and resources and typically provide low quality food and habitat for native wildlife and insects. They can even harm humans directly. For example, poison parsnip causes a painful rash.

An aerial view of Button Farm and the surrounding forest.

AT A GLANCE

PROPERTY / PROJECT ACREAGE
130 acres (77 managed in project)

LOCATION
Colchester, VT

FOREST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES
Invasives species management

PARTNERS
Vermont Youth Conservation Corps
Vermont's Women and Our Woods
Redstart Forestry
Natural Resources Conservation Service

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TAKING A MULTI-PRONGED APPROACH TO INVASIVES

In 2022, VLT completed an inventory of invasive species found at Button Farm. The inventory found eleven species present on the property, ranging from established populations to sparse occurrences. Caitlin is following an integrated pest management strategy, which uses manual, mechanical, and chemical options where appropriate. The plan helps ensure that new invasives won't be introduced to the property and requires ongoing monitoring to ensure management is working. The plan relies on two commonly used methods to treat the invasives, cut-stump and foliar applications. The cut-stump method involves sawing the plant off at the base of the stem and chemically treating the stump with herbicide. The foliar treatment involves spraying the entire leaf surface area of the plant with an herbicide.

Button Farm showing invasives (brown stems) that had been chemically treated in 2023.

In August 2022, a Vermont Youth Conservation Corps (VYCC) crew came to the property for a week to help manage invasives in four distinct areas. They used the cut-stump method in areas far from wetlands and farm fields. Near the wetland, they manually removed individual plants and dug up poison parsnip in the hayfield. The crew dried the parsnip plants in the sun before disposing of them, to prevent any spread. In 2023, VLT signed a contract with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) for funding to continue managing invasives on the property. VLT brought in Redstart Forestry to complete the work, which includes managing invasives on 77 acres over 3 years. During the first year, 40 acres will be treated using the two application methods described above. Additionally, Redstart will mechanically remove 3-acres of densely infested barberry, buckthorn, honeysuckle, and bittersweet. To do this, they will use a brontosaurus, which is a large piece of machinery that mulches plants. In the second year, they will return to treat any plants that have re-sprouted in this area and will begin the initial treatment of invasives on an additional 37 acres. The final year will involve treating any plants that have re-sprouted.

WHAT COMES NEXT?

The work of managing invasives is never complete. Once Redstarts's work is complete we will assess the success of treatment and determine how to move forward. Even when a species appears to be gone, land managers should monitor the land annually to ensure it doesn't reappear. Regular monitoring and removal of plants can help keep invasive populations in check over the long run.

PROJECT PARTNERS

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
VLT received funding from NRCS's Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) to pay for invasive management work from 2023-2025.

Vermont Youth Conservation Corps (VYCC)
A crew from VYCC completed invasive management work on the property in partnership with WOW-VT.

Vermont's Women and Our Woods (WOW-VT)
WOW-VT secured funding from the US Forest Service to pay for VYCC to complete demonstration projects on women-owned and women-managed land.

Redstart Forestry
Redstart Forestry is helping manage invasives on the Button Farm over a three-year period.

Thanks to the US Forest Service who made this project possible through the award of a Landscape Scale Restoration Grant.

WOWVT
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CASE STUDY

CAROLYN MAYO-BROWN

DUMMERSTON, VT

An uncommon Oak-Black Birch Talus Woodland, the largest ash tree in the state, and a large Dry Transition Hemlock Forest set this woodland apart. It stands within a high-priority interior forest block and a priority connectivity block, meaning that it is critical for wildlife habitat and migration.

MEET THE LANDOWNER

40 years ago, Carolyn and her husband Greg first bought the house they live in with 46 acres of land surrounding it. They began acquiring adjoining parcels to bring their total woodland to 228 acres. Their goal was to ensure that connected forest blocks in this critical wildlife corridor would remain conserved and undeveloped. Large areas of forested land are critical for many animals including moose, bobcat, black bear, ovenbirds, and hermit thrushes. They also want their land to support human recreation. Carolyn has been active on Putney Mountain Association's Land Acquisition Committee. The Association owns and stewards 926 acres of conserved land along with 30 miles of hiking trails from Prospect Hill to Putney Mountain, continuing along the Windmill Hill Ridgeline.

One of the scenic vistas overlooking the forest on Carolyn's property.

AT A GLANCE

PROPERTY / PROJECT ACREAGE

228 Acres (3.2 managed in the project)

LOCATION

Dummerston, VT

FOREST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Beech suppression - 2 acres
Crop tree release - 1.2 acres

RESOURCES

Long View Forest Management
Vermont Youth Conservation Corps (VYCC)
Vermont's Women and Our Woods

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HOW HAS THIS LAND BEEN MANAGED?

Carolyn and Greg enrolled their land in the current use program, working with Dan Healey of Long View Forest Management to create a Forest Management Plan. While they had worked with previous foresters, Carolyn appreciated Dan's wide view of forest management. He considered timber management along with her goals of protecting wildlife, promoting recreation, and preserving unique habitat. Carolyn has also spent her time educating herself about her land and management practices. She's participated in workshops from the Agency of Natural Resources, the Vermont Woodlands Association, Long View Forest Management, the Vermont Land Trust, and the three-day training from Vermont Coverts.

In September 2023, Carolyn teamed up with the Vermont Youth Conservation Corps (VYCC), WOW-VT and Carolyn's forester Dan Healy to complete a demonstration project on the land. Their goals were beech control and crop tree release, both of which Dan had included in her forest management plan. The VYCC crew cut American beech sprouts in a 2-acre area where they were crowding out other desirable species. In another 1.2 acre area, the crew removed trees that were competing with healthy "crop trees." For Carolyn these were trees that produce food for wildlife or are straight and defect-free for sawtimber. This work was funded by the US Forest Service as a WOW Demonstration Project. The project had to be scaled down due to the crew's availability and schedule. Carolyn was happy to help inspire young people to learn about the field of forestry and practice skills that can help them in future careers.

Black bears pass through this land, which is part of an important wildlife corridor.

The property hosts a huge white ash, believed to be the largest of its species in Vermont.

WHAT COMES NEXT?

Carolyn is committed to ensuring the forest is healthy for years to come. But she knows it's a slow process. Forest management projects always take longer than expected because of wet weather, worker availability, and in the case of VYCC, extra training for the workers. Carolyn's goals are to maintain the trail network and protect critical habitat for wildlife. She also wants to protect the cultural resources – a small historic farmstead with cellar holes and other farm infrastructure. She wants to continue the work that VYCC started to ensure that her land will always be a haven for humans and wildlife alike.

PROJECT PARTNERS

Long View Forest Management
Long View Forest Management created and is helping to implement Carolyn's Forest Management Plan.

Vermont Youth Conservation Corps (VYCC)
VYCC is a non-profit organization that provides young people with skills and experience implementing conservation and restoration practices. A crew from VYCC completed a crop tree release and beech control on the property as part of a partnership with WOW-VT.

Vermont's Women and Our Woods (WOW-VT)
WOW-VT secured funding from the US Forest Service to pay for VYCC to complete demonstration projects on women-owned and women-managed land.

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WOWVT
WOMEN & OUR WOODS

CASE STUDY

DIANA TODD

HALIFAX, VT

Historic farmland has regrown into diverse woodland in Windham County. Trails crisscross the forest, along a stream, skirting wetlands as they meander across the property. Black bears have been known to stop through, enjoying the woodland alongside humans and other wildlife.

MEET THE LANDOWNER

Diana believes in getting out on her land. If she could tell other landowners one thing, it would be to build a trail so you can easily get out into the woods. She and her husband, Lee, bought the property in two separate pieces in 1999 and 2000. The trails on their own property connect to trails on their neighbors' land. Due to her husband's busy work schedule, Diana became the primary manager of the land. Over the years, it became a passion. Managing the land has helped her get to know not only the familiar trail network, but secrets hidden beyond the beaten path. She retired early from her career as a structural engineer and became an avid cartographer. She's taken the full suite of Game of Logging courses to feel confident working on her land. She's carried her passion for working with her own land to helping manage local recreation properties. Her goal is to help more Vermonters take advantage of the beautiful terrain hidden across the state.

Diana has taken an active role in managing the land for the last 20 years.

AT A GLANCE

PROPERTY / PROJECT ACREAGE

107.5 acres

LOCATION

Halifax, VT

FOREST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Single Tree & Group Selection - 59.97 acres
1st Stage Shelterwood - 17.89 acres
Progressive Clearcut - 10 acres

PARTNERS

Long View Forest Management
Natural Resource Conservation Service

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HOW HAS THIS LAND BEEN MANAGED?

Diana appreciates that actively managing her land benefits her community. Her community gets to use locally harvested wood and support the sustainable forest economy. She enrolled their land in the Current Use program in 2006, creating a forest management plan alongside forester Andrew Sheere of Long View Forest Management. In the largest area of the woodland, Andrew identified individual or small groups of mature or poor-quality trees to harvest, called a single tree selection or group selection cut. This left space for younger trees to grow. In another section of forest, Andrew recommended the shelterwood method. This practice harvests mature trees over a series of multiple harvests to regenerate the next generation of trees. The trees in the canopy that are left after the first harvest provide shelter for the next generation of trees to establish without letting in too much light for sun-loving weeds or non-desirable species to take over.

When Diana and Lee bought the land, around 10 acres of abandoned pasture had been regrowing for about 35 years and was no longer young forest. Grouse and woodcock still nested around the area, but within five years, wildlife that needed young forest started disappearing as the forest matured. In 2014, Diana received funding from the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) to help offset the cost of clearing the area to begin the process of regrowth. They used a brontosaurus, a large machine that mulches the trees in place. Diana is able to maintain trails using her mower as the brush and shrubs regrew. That meant she had a firsthand view as the woodcock and grouse returned to nest.

The old pasture showing one year (top) and six years of regrowth (bottom).

WHAT COMES NEXT?

When Diana envisions the future of her land, she sees people enjoying it. She wants the land to remain forested and laced with trails. She has already begun the legal work to ensure that a large piece of it will remain conserved. She knows that process can take years and she wants to ensure she and Lee's vision for the land is carried on past their lifetimes.

PROJECT COSTS

ACTIVITY	ACRES	FUNDING OR PROFIT	COST
2021 Harvest	54	$7,495.07 (timber)	$4,576.44
Progressive Clearcut	10	$4,890 (EQIP funding)	$13,000

PROJECT PARTNERS

Long View Forest Management
Andrew Sheere of Long View Forest Management worked with Diana to develop her forest management plans and continues to support implementation.

Natural Resources Conservation Service
Diana received funding from NRCS's Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) to clear the old pasture.

Thanks to the US Forest Service who made this project possible through the award of a Landscape Scale Restoration Grant.

WOWVT
WOMEN & OUR WOODS

CASE STUDY

DOREEN JONES

ROCHESTER, VT

Humans and wildlife have the chance to interact on this Rochester woodlot with a surprising family history. A VAST Trail and a Velomont mountain bike trail cross a small part of the land, passing alongside a bird-filled meadow. A farmer mows the meadow at the end of summer, allowing grassland birds, like bobolinks, to thrive. A small pond provides a habitat for water birds and other local wildlife.

MEET THE LANDOWNER

When Doreen and her husband Bruce bought the property in 2018, they had no idea that it carried family history. Both Doreen and Bruce had lived in Vermont, but had been living in southern California for over 20 years. They wanted to be back in a place where getting out into nature didn't require a car trip. As they were looking for land in the Rochester, they both knew Bruce's family had been in the area for generations, but they didn't realize how close. Only after they closed on the land did they realize that Bruce's great-great-grandfather had owned and farmed the same land they now owned. Both Doreen and Bruce took the three-day intensive land management training with Vermont Coverts, a course Doreen recommends any landowner take. The training helped them understand the different approaches to active land management and define what their own approach would be. They view a lot of forestry work as long-term and know that they'll never see the full results. But their goals are to better understand the land and help foster a balance between recreation, agriculture, forestry, and the needs of local wildlife.

Doreen's property features a pond that hosts local waterfowl.

AT A GLANCE

PROPERTY / PROJECT ACREAGE

257.95 acres (209.65 actively managed)

LOCATION

Rochester, VT

FOREST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Invasive Management (entire property)
Thinning (60 acres)
Single-tree selection (79 acres)
Pre-commercial thinning (11 acres)

PARTNERS

New England Forestry Consultants
Vermont Youth Conservation Corps
Women and Our Woods Vermont

WOMEN & OUR WOODS

Vermont's Women & Our Woods (WOW-VT) is a collaborative women-centered community that shares information, resources, and support for people who care about and steward Vermont's forests. WOW-VT has developed a series of case studies to highlight a variety of management activities being conducted on women-owned or women-managed woodlands to highlight successes, share lessons learned, and identify resources available.

To learn more visit wowvt.org.

WOW-VT is led by steering committee members from VT Woodlands Association, VT Coverts, VT Land Trust, VT Department of Forests Parks and Recreation, VT Fish and Wildlife Department, and Audubon Vermont.

HOW HAS THIS LAND BEEN MANAGED?

One of the first steps the couple took was to enroll the land in the Use Value Appraisal Program. They engaged New England Forestry Consultants to craft a forest management plan to guide them through the next decade of managing the land. Their forester, John McClain, recommended a harvest in 2019. Working with logger Sam Lincoln, they thinned a little over 60 acres to remove poor-quality trees and harvest some mature spruce trees. In other areas totaling about 79 acres, they used the single-tree selection method to harvest mature trees for lumber and firewood. They also selected additional poor-quality, diseased, or pest-infected trees for removal. In 2020, they enrolled their land in the Vermont Tree Farm program, underscoring their long-term commitment to sustainable forest management.

In 2023, Doreen brought in the Vermont Youth Conservation Corps (VYCC) in partnership with WOW-VT and McClain to complete a demonstration project on the land. The crew completed pre-commercial thinning on 11 acres in a crowded stand of forest. This style of management removed trees that aren't large enough or of a sufficient quality to use for lumber to allow the remaining trees to thrive with more space to grow. Doreen was excited at the chance to give young Vermonters a way to develop their skills and understand how this new management practice would impact the woods. She was also excited that cut trees were left to decompose on-site to add nutrients to the soil and habitat for small mammals and amphibians.

The land shortly after VYCC completed the WOW-VT demonstration project.

WHAT COMES NEXT?

Doreen and Bruce spent their first few years on the property trying to tackle invasive species that had become established on the land.

This proved to be a never-ending and thankless job. The management of invasive species requires consistent attention over multiple years and long-term monitoring. Doreen gets emotional when she thinks about the future of her land. She wants to be able to do more, but she also wants the woods to be its "wild self". Her future vision for the land is fewer invasives and healthy, resilient trees that can withstand the changing climate and incoming pests. She hopes that the work they are doing today is laying the groundwork for that future.

PROJECT PARTNERS

New England Forestry Consultants
Doreen and Bruce contracted with John McClain (now retired) of New England Forestry Consultants to create and implement their forest management plan.

Vermont Youth Conservation Corps (VYCC)
VYCC is a non-profit organization that provides young people with skills and experience implementing conservation and restoration practices. A crew from VYCC completed pre-commercial thinning on the property as part of a partnership with WOW-VT.

Vermont's Women and Our Woods (WOW-VT)
WOW-VT secured funding from the US Forest Service to pay for VYCC to complete demonstration projects on women-owned land.

Thanks to the US Forest Service who made this project possible through the award of a Landscape Scale Restoration Grant.

WOWVT
WOMEN & OUR WOODS

CASE STUDY

ESTHER LICHTI

MONTGOMERY, VT

Esther describes her property as a refuge for wildlife. She has spotted deer, wild turkeys, coyotes, foxes, bears, and bobcats throughout the forest, a mix of northern hardwoods, red pines, spruce and hemlocks.

MEET THE LANDOWNER

Esther Lichti and her husband Roger enjoy hiking and observing wildlife and plants on their land in Montgomery, VT. The regular presence of wildlife give Esther hope for the land as a refuge from the changes and stresses of climate change. Esther grew up in Montreal, vacationing at the property that is now her permanent home. Esther's father purchased the land, a former dairy farm, in 1957. The farmers had cleared most of the forest for use as pasture. He planted most of the property as a pine plantation and enrolled the property in Vermont's Use Value Appraisal Program (UVA). Enrolling a property in UVA allows eligible private landowners in VT who practice forestry or agriculture to have their land appraised based on the property's value of production of wood or food rather than residential or commercial development. When Esther's father passed away, Esther and Roger inherited the land. Their goals are to preserve and create habitat for birds and other wildlife while maintaining the health of the forest and quality of timber.

AT A GLANCE

PROPERTY / PROJECT ACREAGE

72 acres (9.8 managed in projects)

LOCATION

Montgomery, VT

FOREST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Group selection
Apple tree release
Tree and shrub planting

PARTNERS

North Woods Forestry
Cold Hollow to Canada
Natural Resources Conservation Service

WOMEN & OUR WOODS

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HOW HAS THIS LAND BEEN MANAGED?

The Use Value Appraisal Program requires that landowners to work with a forester to create a forest management plan containing a schedule of forest management activities. Esther and Roger have been working with local forester Charlie Hancock of North Woods Forestry since 2008 to update and implement their management plans. In 2022, Charlie recommended a harvest known as group selection in one of the red pine stands, which removes groups of trees to create small openings. Removing mature red pine allows the forest to regenerate with more diverse tree species. Esther and Roger worked with volunteers from the Cold Hollow to Canada (CHC) Woodlots Program to plant nut-producing trees in the openings, such as oak and chestnut blight-resistant chestnut trees. CHC engages landowners from forested properties in the Cold Hollow Mountains to focus their management strategies on the landscape scale.

Later that same year, the CHC crew planted small shrubby, food-producing plants such as elderberry in the meadows that surround Esther and Roger's house. These plants provide food for birds and other wildlife, increasing the value of the meadow ecosystem for wildlife. In 2023, Esther and Roger began to release apple trees with funding from the Natural Resources Conservation Service. Cutting back competing trees "releases" the apple trees to allow their fruit production to increase. If competing trees or shrubs grow too close together, it can stunt their growth and food production by restricting sunlight. Apple trees are popular habitat for woodcock and other songbirds like blue birds, flycatchers, robins, and orioles as well as mice, deer and other mammals.

WHAT COMES NEXT?

Esther's recommendation to other women landowners looking to engage in forest management is to seek professional guidance from a trusted source. Charlie, their forester, has helped them identify a logger and connect with other resources. The CHC Woodlots Program has helped them complete projects and understand other landowners' approaches to stewardship. Esther worries about maintaining the property as she and Roger age, but she's simultaneously excited to watch life thrive on her property as they continue to invest in the forest and create habitat for local wildlife.

PROJECT COSTS

ACTIVITY	ACRES	COST OR REVENUE
Group selection	9.8	$3,600 in timber revenue
Tree planting	4	$600-$700 from CHC, $900 from NRCS

PROJECT PARTNERS

North Woods Forestry
Esther and Roger have worked with Charlie Hancock from North Woods Forestry to create and implement their forest management plan.

Cold Hollow to Canada (CHC)
Esther and Roger are members of CHC's Woodlots Program, which provided a volunteer crew and funding for their forest projects. CHC utilizes sustainable stewardship, forestland conservation, and community empowerment to further their vision of a more resilient and connected ecosystem.

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
Esther and Roger have a contract with NRCS to obtain funding to complete some of the management projects.

Thanks to the US Forest Service who made this project possible through the award of a Landscape Scale Restoration Grant.

WOWVT
WOMEN & OUR WOODS

CASE STUDY

FOLSOM BROOK, VLT

WAITSFIELD, VT

The Folsom Brook property is a valuable forest within a patchwork of agricultural land and residential developments. It provides forested and riparian habitats for wildlife to travel between two larger, high priority forested areas to the east and west.

MEET THE LANDOWNER

Robert and Jacqueline Rose gifted the 98-acre Folsom Brook property to the Vermont Land Trust (VLT) in 1997. VLT is a statewide conservation organization, committed to protecting farmland, forestland, and community land from development. VLT holds conservation easements on private land and also owns land, such as the Folsom Brook property. VLT's forestland is managed by staff foresters. VLT Forester Caitlin Cusack has been managing the Folsom Brook property since 2015. Caitlin is licensed by the State of Vermont and is endorsed by Audubon. An Audubon endorsement means that participating foresters have completed bird-friendly forestry training and demonstrated that they can apply these concepts to land they manage. Her first couple of years at the property focused on manual control of introduced invasive plants, such as honeysuckle, buckthorn, multiflora rose and burning bush. In 2018, she updated the forest management plan with guidance from Audubon Vermont.

HOW HAS THIS LAND BEEN MANAGED?

Caitlin secured cost-share funding in 2020 from the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) to continue controlling the invasive plants and implement a crop tree release with canopy gap formation in a 7-acre area where red maple, white ash and aspen dominated. This area was mostly pasture until the 1960s and soil compaction, low soil organic matter, and invasive earthworms are resulting impacts that need to be addressed to restore the health of the soil and the forest. A crop tree release is a practice where individual trees are 'released' from competition for light and space by removing the surrounding trees on 2-4 sides. In August 2022, Caitlin chose 30 crop trees per acre, including

AT A GLANCE

PROPERTY / PROJECT ACREAGE

98 acres (7 acres managed in project)

LOCATION

Waitsfield, VT

FOREST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Crop tree release with canopy gap formation

PARTNERS

Vermont Youth Conservation Corps

Natural Resource Conservation Service

Audubon VT

Vermont's Women and Our Woods

WOMEN & OUR WOODS

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To learn more visit wowvt.org.

black cherry, which are a great food source for migrating songbirds; straight and defect-free red maples; and wild apple trees. Caitlin also identified eight areas to create small canopy gaps, where poorly-formed red maples were clumped or where young spruce and fir trees were growing in the understory. In the gaps, all trees 2" in diameter were marked to be cut. These gaps create space for the young spruce and fir trees to grow or to let in sunlight for new red maple and ash seeds or aspen roots to sprout.

The project also aims to increase the understory and midstory canopy layers, which are important for providing nesting, perching, foraging, and protective cover for birds. In the fall of 2022, a Vermont Youth Conservation Corps crew cut the trees marked around the crop trees. Trees were girdled if their removal would have led to a lot of damage and were left to become standing dead trees, or snags, and provide habitat for yellow-bellied sapsuckers, barred owls, and other wildlife to nest in the holes that will develop. All tree tops and trunks were left on the forest floor. This allows for the slow decomposition and release of organic matter. It also protects the soil from erosion and young trees from being browsed by deer while providing birds with places to nest and forage. By increasing age and species diversity, and vertical and horizontal structure, this work also increases the ability of the forest to respond to climate change.

Before and after photos of the crop tree release.

WHAT COMES NEXT?

This project has given Caitlin the opportunity to practice her craft and provided the next generation of woods workers with the opportunity to learn forestry techniques. Given the increase in sunlight, Caitlin will have to monitor and remove new invasive plants as they establish. In the spring of 2023, Caitlin treated 12 ash trees (9 female) with an insecticide that kills emerald ash borer (EAB). EAB is a non-native insect that threatens the survival of all native species of ash. The Folsom Brook property is one of a number of properties around the state where groves of ash trees are being treated to preserve their genetics.

ACTIVITY	ACRES	NRCS FUNDING	COST
Invasive plant control	12	$2452	$52 for glyphosate & buckthorn blaster
Crop tree release w/canopy gaps	7.3	$2537	$5000 for VYCC

PROJECT PARTNERS

Vermont's Women and Our Woods
WOW-VT secured funding from the US Forest Service to pay for VYCC to complete demonstration projects on women-owned and women-managed land.

Vermont Youth Conservation Corps
Trains young adults to work on projects related to water quality, forest health, recreation and agriculture.

Audubon Vermont
Provides technical support and guidance for enhancing habitat for priority forest birds.

Natural Resource Conservation Service
Provided financial support to pay for the VYCC crew and invasive plant control.

Thanks to the US Forest Service who made this project possible through the award of a Landscape Scale Restoration Grant.

WOWVT
WOMEN & OUR WOODS

CASE STUDY

JESSICA BOONE

HI VUE MAPLES
RICHFORD, VT

Tucked away in northern Vermont, the Hi Vue Maples property is a haven for wildlife. Snowshoe hares, foxes, coyotes, bobcats, bears, and lynx have been spotted roaming the land, which sits on a wildlife link between Vermont and the Sutton Mountains in Quebec.

MEET THE LANDOWNER

Jessica's family began producing maple syrup and related products in 1903, beginning operations under Hi Vue Maples during the Great Depression. Jessica is the first woman manager in four generations. The family land is adjacent to over 45,000 acres of unfragmented forest that spans Montgomery, Westfield, Richford, and Jay. Jessica and her family decided to conserve the property with the Vermont Land Trust in 2022 to keep the land unfragmented and free from development. Jessica is involved in Cold Hollow to Canada (CHC), a land stewardship and wildlife habitat conservation organization. Their Woodlots Program engages landowners from contiguous forested properties to focus their management strategies at the landscape level. She has enrolled their forest in the Cold Hollow Carbon Project, which aggregates 12 Vermont parcels to enroll in the voluntary forest carbon market to implement forest stewardship practices that maintain and increase carbon stocking and provide revenue from the sale of carbon offsets.

Jessica and her family conserved the Hi Vue Maples property with the Vermont Land Trust in 2022.

AT A GLANCE

PROPERTY / PROJECT ACREAGE
408 acres (7 managed in project)

LOCATION
Richford, VT

FOREST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES
Patch Cut

PARTNERS
Audubon Vermont
Cold Hollow to Canada (CHC)
Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

WOMEN & OUR WOODS

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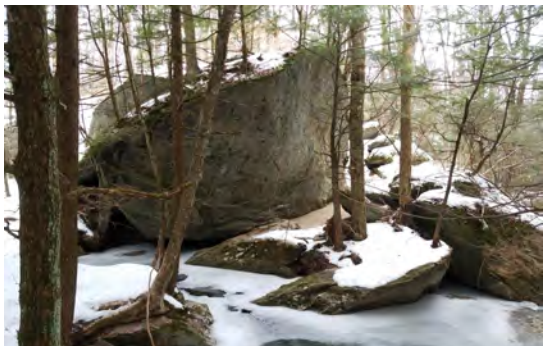
HOW HAS THIS LAND BEEN MANAGED?

Hi Vue Maples is not only designated as one of Audubon Vermont's Bird-Friendly Maple Producers, but it is also a certified Vermont Tree Farm. This dual recognition highlights their dedication to both healthy forests and bird habitat. By considering bird habitat in how they manage their sugarbush, their efforts promote a diversity of native tree and plant species and multiple layers of forest vegetation to create welcoming habitats for Vermont's songbirds. With guidance from Audubon Vermont and funding from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and CHC, Jessica completed two patch cuts on the property. Until the late 1980s, the area had been pasture. Since then, trees had returned but were all the same height and over 20' tall. Ideal songbird habitat for nesting, foraging and cover involves a mosaic of multiple layers of vegetation.

Jessica and her team completed the first patch cut, in a 5-acre area, in the fall of 2020. She replanted the cut with fruit and nut-bearing trees like oak and dogwood, and shrubs including viburnum and elderberry. They completed a second patch cut in a 2-acre area in the winter of 2022 and left behind some black cherry, beech, maple, and apple trees. Jessica plans to plant oak trees. They selected species to leave or plant that will help provide food for songbirds and mammals.



A small stream trickles through boulders in one part of the forest.

Jessica stands near an old stone wall running across her property.

WHAT COMES NEXT?

Jessica encourages fellow women landowners to ask questions early and often. She says that has helped her build a trusted community network that she relies on as she continues to manage her land. With so many sugaring projects, the family is spread thin, so Jessica is responsible for most of the forest management. The resources she has tapped into have allowed her to do more and she's excited for new projects to come. She loves seeing evidence of wildlife throughout her land and it inspires her to continue her work to manage the beautiful forest.

PROJECT PARTNERS

Audubon Vermont
Audubon Vermont provided technical support and guidance in the development of management recommendations to enhance habitat for priority forest birds through their "Forestry for the Birds" and Bird-Friendly Maple programs.

Cold Hollow to Canada (CHC)
Jessica is a member of CHC's Woodlots Program, which provided partial funding for the patch cuts. CHC utilizes sustainable stewardship, forestland conservation, and community empowerment to further their vision of a more resilient and connected ecosystem.

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
Jessica also received some funding through NRCS for the patch cuts.

Thanks to the US Forest Service who made this project possible through the award of a Landscape Scale Restoration Grant.

WOWVT
WOMEN & OUR WOODS

CASE STUDY

JULIE MAGOON & SHEILA HALPIN
WOLCOTT, VT

Old agricultural land has regrown into woodland dotted with apple trees in the hills of Wolcott. Trails meander across the land, passing by wetlands through hemlock and mixed hardwood forests.

MEET THE LANDOWNERS

Julie and Sheila define their approach as "slow forestry." They prefer to spend time learning and understanding the land, cultivating it slowly according to their goals and its needs. Several years after they bought the woodland, Julie took the three-day VT Coverts training. That sparked her interest in actively managing the land. The pair, a retired teacher and a retired school counselor, now spend their days enjoying and maintaining their woods. But they don't do it alone. Their property sits a mile down the road from Dave Holton's woodland. They credit some of their philosophy to Dave, who has harvested firewood for the couple from their woodland since they first bought the land. He walks the woods with them to explain which trees he chooses and which trees he'll leave behind. It's a collaboration: between themselves, their forester, their neighbor, and the woods themselves.

Julie watches barred owls nesting in the snag on their property in May 2020.

AT A GLANCE

PROPERTY / PROJECT ACREAGE
74.99 acres (70.29 actively managed)

LOCATION
Wolcott, VT

FOREST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES
Patch Cut - <1 acre
Single Tree Selection - 31.91 acres
Tree release (Crop, Mast, and Apple) - 20.82 acres

PARTNERS
Northern Stewards
Vermont Youth Conservation Corps
Dave Holton
Vermont's Women and Our Woods

WOMEN & OUR WOODS

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HOW HAS THIS LAND BEEN MANAGED?

The VYCC crew rests in between work on the patch cut on Julie & Sheila's land.

A section of the patch cut shortly after it was completed.

Julie and Sheila work with Allan Thompson of Northern Stewards, LLC. Allan also works with another local neighbor, which helps support a continuous stretch of managed woodland between the two properties. Their Forest Management Plan identifies two primary productive stands in the forest. Stands are areas of the forest where trees are grouped by shared characteristics. The first stand contains a mature mix of large eastern hemlock sprinkled with red maple, birch, and spruce. Allan recommended harvesting individual trees (single tree selection) to encourage trees more tolerant of shade to establish. The second stand is old pastureland that has regrown a mix of hardwoods and softwoods with apples and hawthorns nestled throughout. In this stand, Allan recommended harvesting trees to "release" (or provide more space for) valuable trees like high-quality hardwoods and wildlife food trees (apples, hawthorns, and serviceberries).

Julie and Sheila do most of the work in the woodland themselves. They also trust that when Dave comes in to harvest firewood, he's selecting trees that support their goals and the management plan. In 2023, they partnered with WOW-VT and the Vermont Youth Conservation Corps to complete a small patch cut along one side of a forested wetland and plant 16 trees in the 0.7 acre opening. This patch cut was prescribed in their forest management plan. Wetlands are sensitive areas that are important habitats for wildlife. A patch cut – clearing most or all the trees in a small area – promotes new forest growth, including dense brush and berries. The young forest next to the wetland creates shelter for animals who rely on the wetland for survival. This work was funded by the US Forest Service as a WOW-VT Demonstration Project.

WHAT COMES NEXT?

Sheila and Julie think a lot about how their woodland will fare in a changing climate. They're working to plant trees, like red oak and mockernut hickory trees, that may be more resilient to coming changes. Their goal is to build a resilient woodland that will remain beautiful for their grandchildren. But they're okay thinking one day at a time – they prefer to take it slow.

PROJECT PARTNERS

Northern Stewards
Consulting Forester and Certified Wildlife Biologist Allan Thompson works with Julie and Sheila to create their Forest Management Plans and answer questions.

Dave Holton
The couple's neighbor is a farmer who has helped harvest firewood and informed their management philosophy.

Vermont Youth Conservation Corps (VYCC)
VYCC is a non-profit organization that provides young people with skills and experience implementing conservation and restoration practices. A crew from VYCC completed a small patch cut on the property as part of a partnership with WOW-VT.

Women and Our Woods-VT (WOW-VT)
WOW-VT secured funding from the US Forest Service to pay for VYCC to complete demonstration projects on women-owned and women-managed land.

Thanks to the US Forest Service who made this project possible through the award of a Landscape Scale Restoration Grant.

WOWVT
WOMEN & OUR WOODS

CASE STUDY

JULIE MESSERVY

WESTMINSTER, VT

Julie and her husband Steve call their land "grandchild paradise." A beaver pond and a swimming pond create havens for humans and wildlife amidst the 270 acres of mixed hardwood and softwood trees and forested wetlands.

MEET THE LANDOWNERS

Julie and Steve make a strong land management team. Julie is the visionary and Steve is the implementer. She manages two businesses around landscape architecture and design. She sees the possibilities in the land and helps identify strategies to implement. Steve puts those ideas into action. A leadership training and team development consultant by trade, he loves getting out on the land whenever he's home. Whether he's hiking, skiing, doing trail work, or running the chainsaw, the woods are where he spends his free time. The couple bought the property together almost 20 years ago. Despite looking for a 5-acre parcel, they fell in love with a 206-acre parcel of land on a perfect autumn day. They added on a second parcel recently, bringing their total property to 270 acres.

Julie & Steve's property is used year-round by humans and wildlife.

AT A GLANCE

PROPERTY / PROJECT ACREAGE

270 acres (all actively managed)

LOCATION

Westminster, VT

FOREST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Single tree and group selection (112.3 acres)
Invasives management (3 acres)

PARTNERS

Long View Forest Management
Vermont Youth Conservation Corps
Vermont's Women and Our Woods

WOMEN & OUR WOODS

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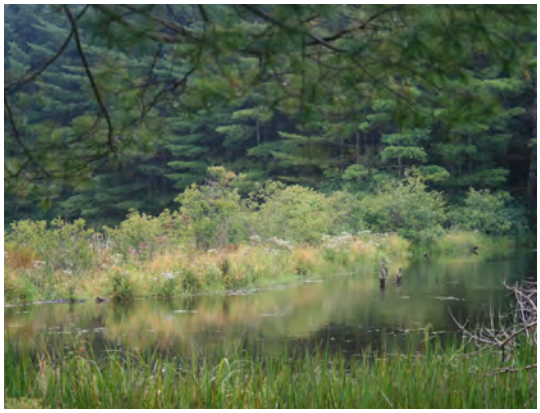
HOW HAS THIS LAND BEEN MANAGED?



The beaver pond (below) and the swimming pond (above) offer beauty and habitat for wildlife passing through the property.

The couple enrolled the land in the Current Use program. Since 2010, they've worked with Andrew Sheere and Dan Healey at Long View Forest Management to create and implement their forest management plans. They learned a lot from their first harvest, a single and group tree selection in 2013. They found that logging changed the nature of the forest. They chose to leave the treetops and non-profitable logs in the forest rather than having the crews take them away. This saved money, provided shelter for wildlife, and protected saplings from browsing deer. But the wood and brush made it difficult for Julie and Steve to access their land. In some places, they wished the team had taken fewer trees. Julie likes having areas of dense forest to provide aesthetic balance and act as a carbon sink. On the positive side, Julie now sees wildlife coming back into the woods. And she can see the bones of the land better. Understanding the land's structure better helped the couple develop new trails across the property.

Unfortunately, the harvest also worsened an existing problem with glossy buckthorn, an invasive species spreading across Vermont. The buckthorn took advantage of the newly sunlit areas to spread and multiply. Honeysuckle, another invasive plant, has also established on the property. As a result, managing those invasives is one of their biggest priorities for the coming years. In 2023, in partnership with WOW-VT, the Vermont Youth Conservation Corps completed a demonstration project on the land. They picked one small area that buckthorn, and some honeysuckle, had overrun. Over approximately three acres, they treated cut stumps with a wetland-approved pesticide and pulled other plants out manually.

WHAT COMES NEXT?

Now Julie and Steve want to listen to the land and watch what happens. They are worried about the invasives problem and realize they will need to follow-up next year. They're reluctant to use too much pesticide since their land is upstream of many other properties and waterways. They're also thinking about how they can conduct future harvests to avoid making the problem worse in the future. At the end of the day, they want to maintain their goal of keeping the land protected and used as a family haven for generations to come.

PROJECT PARTNERS

Long View Forest Management
The foresters at Long View Forest Management worked with Julie and Steve to create and implement their forest management plan.

Vermont Youth Conservation Corps
A crew from VYCC completed a demonstration project at the property in partnership with WOW-VT. Over a week, the crew worked to remove buckthorn from a three-acre patch.

Vermont's Women and Our Woods
WOW-VT secured funding from the US Forest Service to pay for VYCC to complete demonstration projects on women-owned and women-managed land.

Thanks to the US Forest Service who made this project possible through the award of a Landscape Scale Restoration Grant.

WOWVT
WOMEN & OUR WOODS

CASE STUDY

LINA HRISTOVA

WOODSTOCK, VT

A gurgling stream runs through a gently sloping woodland. Once used for pasture, the rocky soils now support wildlife like deer, bear, turkey, grouse, and other forest birds. It is being managed to encourage new wildlife and other forest products, like timber and maple sap.

MEET THE LANDOWNER

Growing up in Bulgaria, Lina never expected to be a landowner in Vermont. But she's jumped into the opportunity with both feet. Since taking over management of the land, she has learned a whole variety of skills she never expected to use, like operating a chainsaw. Lina went on a bear hunt, following hounds chasing the scent of bears and attended VT Coverts' three-day intensive Cooperator Training on forest and habitat management. When Lina added a sugarbush, she realized basic plumbing skills were necessary for its upkeep and maintenance. Lina is growing mushrooms in a small clearing in the forest and she joined volunteers with the Connecticut River Conservancy to plant shrubs supporting the stream running through the property. She has planted trees throughout the property and has worked to expand the network of trails running through her property. Each project she undertakes helps meet her goals of welcoming wildlife into the land and enabling recreation. But at the end of the day, Lina has understood that she is only a guide for the woods – nature will ultimately choose its own course.

Lina participated int Northeast Woodland Training's Game of Logging four-day course.

AT A GLANCE

PROPERTY / PROJECT ACREAGE

90.23 acres (79.23 actively managed)

LOCATION

Woodstock, VT

FOREST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Patch cut - 2.2 acres
Overstory removal - 10.73 acres
Single tree and group selection - 8.16 acres

PARTNERS

Natural Resource Conservation Service
VT Fish and Wildlife Department
HB Logging
Redstart Forestry

WOMEN & OUR WOODS

Vermont's Women & Our Woods (WOW-VT) is a collaborative women-centered community that shares information, resources, and support for people who care about and steward Vermont's forests. WOW-VT has developed a series of case studies to highlight a variety of management activities being conducted on women-owned or women-managed woodlands to highlight successes, share lessons learned, and identify resources available.

To learn more visit wowvt.org.

WOW-VT is led by steering committee members from VT Woodlands Association, VT Coverts, VT Land Trust, VT Department of Forests Parks and Recreation, VT Fish and Wildlife Department, and Audubon Vermont.

HOW HAS THIS LAND BEEN MANAGED?

A volunteer crew from the Connecticut River Conservancy planted trees on the property.

Lina got started managing her land in a way that will feel familiar to other landowners: invasives. She saw invasives taking over the edges of the property and brought in Redstart Forestry to manage the ongoing work of removing them. To meet the requirements for the Current Use program, where land is appraised (and taxed) as farming or forestry land rather than its fair market value, she created a forest management plan with Patrick Bartlett (since retired). Lina continues to complete projects with Redstart and a local logging company, HB Logging. She received funding from the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) to complete projects including addressing invasives, planting shrubs, and patch cuts.

As part of her plan, the foresters recommended strategies to remove trees that were diseased or infested with pests and promote healthy trees. Lina prioritized sugar maples and softwood trees that support deer during winter. In one area of the forest, she completed patch cuts to clear small areas of trees. This strategy creates an opening, allowing direct sunlight to reach the forest floor. This promotes the growth of native plants like blackberry and raspberry bushes. Birds carry berry seeds in their droppings. Wild bushes will grow on their own within a year of a patch cut and provide wildlife food for many years.

Foresters recommended leaving tree tops behind in the patch cuts. The tops provide nesting spots for forest birds. They also protect sensitive new growth from browsing deer. As they decompose, they put nutrients back into the soil. The dead wood also stores carbon and keeps it from going into the atmosphere, helping slow climate change.

WHAT COMES NEXT?

Lina would advise other women landowners to get out into the woods and do more hands-on work. Each project she completes builds her confidence and her familiarity with her woods. She's looking forward to growing nut trees in one of the patch cuts. She has dreams of planting a newly revived hybrid version of the American chestnut. She's also building bat houses around the property. Additional harvests will prioritize high-quality sugar maples and remove declining species. And of course, there's always more work to be done on invasives. In fifty years, she wants her land to be healthy, full of birds, and full of people enjoying the woods the way Vermonters do.

PROJECT COSTS

ACTIVITY	ACRES	FUNDING	COST
Invasive Plant Control	13.3	$3705 (NRCS)	$7100
Shrub Planting (materials)	.6	$483 (NRCS) plus grants & volunteers	$1000
Patch Cut	2.2	$1603 (NRCS)	$1200

PROJECT PARTNERS

Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS)
Lina received funding from NRCS's Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) to pay for activities that improve the health of the forest and its wildlife.

VT Fish and Wildlife Department
Habitat Biologist Travis Hart worked closely with Lina to plan, layout and certify the work funded by NRCS.

HB Logging
Lina brought in HB Logging to complete logging projects on the land.

Redstart Forestry
Redstart Forestry is helping manage invasives and working with Lina on her next forest management plan.

Thanks to the US Forest Service who made this project possible through the award of a Landscape Scale Restoration Grant.

WOWVT
WOMEN & OUR WOODS

CASE STUDY

MELITA BASS

SHOREHAM, VT

Opening onto Lake Champlain, Melita's property has been farmland, a productive apple orchard, and a summer camp over its history. Today it features sprawling old hardwoods and a regrowing example of the clayplain forest, the original forest type in much of the Champlain Valley.

MEET THE LANDOWNER

Melita loves working in and around beautiful landscapes. She has made it her business as a landscape architect. When it comes to her own land, however, she doesn't view it as business. Melita purchased a little over 100 acres on the shores of Lake Champlain in 2019. Her goal is to restore old agricultural and recreational land to its natural forest. She wants to take the time to understand the land and the big-picture vision for its future. As the child of beef farmers, she wants her land to support local farms. It is also important to Melita that her restoration work supports water quality in Lake Champlain, provides habitat for local wildlife, and protects fragile or unique natural communities. Melita sees this work as her legacy and she's happy to take her time and get it right.

Melita Bass stands in front of the hayfield she aims to restore to clayplain forest.

AT A GLANCE

PROPERTY / PROJECT ACREAGE

106 acres (4 acres managed in project)

LOCATION

Shoreham, VT

FOREST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Tree planting
Invasive management
Patch cut

PARTNERS

Vermont Family Forests
Natural Resources Conservation Service
Vermont Youth Conservation Corps
Vermont's Women and Our Woods

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HOW HAS THIS LAND BEEN MANAGED?

When Melita bought this property, invasives had already started taking over the abandoned apple orchard and agricultural lands. Bush honeysuckle and common buckthorn, two invasive plants that have become common in Vermont, are well established on the property. Other invasives including multiflora rose and Japanese barberry are present in lower quantities. Common treatment for invasives typically involves the use of pesticides. Given the proximity to sensitive waterways, Melita does not want to use any pesticides on the land. Instead, she and her forester, Kathleen Stutzman of Vermont Family Forests, are focused on manual and mechanical removal in targeted areas and protecting and repopulating native plants.

Melita worked with NRCS to complete a 4-acre patch cut to create habitat for Golden-winged Warblers. These threatened songbirds thrive in the dense brush that grows within a few years from a patch cut. She began working with the Vermont Youth Conservation Corps (VYCC) in 2021 to control the invasive plants. In 2023, Melita worked with WOW-VT and VYCC to complete a demonstration project on the land. Melita selected a 4-acre parcel of hayfield sitting on the lakeshore to restore to clayplain forest. The VYCC crew planted 350 native trees, which will help stabilize the lakeshore and promote water quality. The crew then returned to remove buckthorn along Lake Champlain, and create an environment for native species to repopulate.

Before (above) and after (below) VYCC planted 350 trees in the former hayfield.

WHAT COMES NEXT?

The WOW-VT demonstration project was one small piece of Melita's larger vision: to restore the forest, improve water quality in Lake Champlain, and enhance wildlife habitat for species such as the Golden-winged Warbler. Her advice to other women landowners is, "Take time to learn about the land; take time to plan." She will do just that and continue to work with VYCC to manage invasive plants and get to know the land as she works towards her vision of restoring this beautiful property.

PROJECT PARTNERS

Vermont Family Forests

Melita worked with forester Kathleen Stutzman of Vermont Family Forests to develop and help implement her forest management plan.

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

Melita has a contract with NRCS to receive funding to create habitat for the Golden-winged Warbler and pay for the native trees planted by the VYCC crew.

Vermont Youth Conservation Corps (VYCC)

VYCC is a non-profit organization that provides young people with skills and experience implementing conservation and restoration practices. A crew from VYCC planted 350 trees and controlled invasives on the property as part of a partnership with WOW-VT.

Vermont's Women and Our Woods (WOW-VT)

WOW-VT secured funding from the US Forest Service to pay for VYCC to complete demonstration projects on women-owned and women-managed land.

Thanks to the US Forest Service who made this project possible through the award of a Landscape Scale Restoration Grant.