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Recent Projects in the Champlain Valley



Raven Ridge Natural Area Established

Charlotte, Hinesburg, and Monkton. The Nature Conservancy. Assistance with land acquisition. 362 acres.

Over the course of three years, VLT worked with several landowners, The Nature Conservancy of Vermont (TNC), the Vermont Department of Fish & Wildlife, and other partners to establish a spectacular, ecologically diverse natural area that will be owned and

managed by TNC in perpetuity.

Fulfilling a conservation commitment they made to themselves after first setting eyes on the property in the early 1970s, Raven Davis and Ed Everts donated 161 acres of their land in Charlotte and Hinesburg to TNC. "We were first captivated by the grey and pink rocks," recalled Raven. "And then the stream that bubbles down a rock ledge. And then the beaver, otter, and ducks that use the stream. The woodlands host some 137 bird species. Ed and I feel incredibly privileged to have been stewards of this property for over 35 years."

The other 201 acres that are a part of the Preserve were owned by John Paluska and Cynthia Brown, who held onto their land in Monkton during the years that it took for project partners to raise the money needed to buy and conserve the land. John and Cynthia also helped set the stage for conservation in this area by donating conservation easements to VLT on two adjoining parcels in 2004 and 2008.

The new preserve is the 54th TNC natural area in Vermont and is open to pedestrian public access. The preserve has roosting and foraging habitat for the endangered Indiana bat, denning bobcats, nesting ravens, vernal pools with breeding habitat for frogs and salamanders, Lewis Creek frontage, and the signature ridge that provides outstanding views to the south and west. The land also has two remarkable geological features: a large cave and an exposed anticline with visible layers of folded rock. Supported by the Charlotte Land Trust, the Towns of Hinesburg, Monkton, and Charlotte, the Vermont Department of Fish & Wildlife, VHCBC, and 160 individual donors. (May 2010)



Community Rallies to Protect Barber Farm

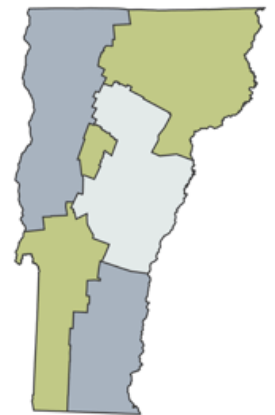
Jericho. Charlie and Jean Siegchrist. Conservation easement sale. 148 acres.

The Barber Farm has been part of the Jericho community for generations. The farm's history goes back to 1774, when it was

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the third property settled in Jericho. The farm's current owners, Charlie and Jean Siegchrist, and their family have farmed the land for more than 60 years. The Siegchrists and the local

community worked with VLT and the Jericho Underhill Land Trust to conserve the farm, ensuring it can be used to supply local food for years to come.

The Siegchrists currently lease the land to the nearby Jericho Settlers' Farm, which uses it to grow vegetables and graze beef cattle, sheep, and chickens. The farm supports their popular CSA (community supported agriculture) and also provides food to nearby towns at farmers' markets and grocery stores. "This land has great history and beauty," said Jean. "It has provided a living to many and has been loved by generations. Keeping the land open and available for farming is the right thing to do for future generations of community and neighbors."

The Siegchrists generously sold the conservation easement for significantly less than market value, and the community rallied in support of the project with a local fundraising effort. The project includes an extension from an existing trail network to the top of the Barber Farm meadows, offering sweeping views of Camel's Hump. Funded by VHCB with matching funds from NRCS, the Town of Jericho, and more than 100 individuals. (October) ♦ See [press release](#).

Lawton Family Conserves Second Farm

Bridport and Shoreham. Henry Lawton. Conservation easement sale. 410 acres.

Henry and Donna Lawton added to the large block of contiguous conserved land in Bridport and Shoreham by conserving their home farm. This is the second time they've conserved farmland. (The Longe family now owns the first farm the Lawtons conserved.) On the newly conserved land, the Lawtons and their sons, Matt and Mike, manage one of the largest organic hay businesses in New England. They also have a farm equipment and truck repair business. The home farm has 357 acres of tillage with 325 acres of statewide-rated agricultural soil. The large fields produce excellent alfalfa and grass forage. With the conservation of the Lawton's farm, more than 8,000 acres on 26 farms have been conserved in the Bridport–Shoreham area. Funded by VHCB with matching funds from NRCS. (November) ♦



Claflin Family Farm Conserved Through Collaboration

Monkton and Ferrisburgh. Sid Claflin, Dawn Ridolfo, Barbara Claflin, and Lela Sisk. Conservation easement sale. 199 acres.

For three generations, the Claflins have farmed a scenic stretch of open land on Old Hollow Road in Monkton and Ferrisburgh. Sid Claflin and his three sisters—Barbara, Dawn, and Lela—have now permanently conserved the farm. The easement sale helped the family

settle the estate after their mother's death, and now Sid is the sole owner of the land. "Conserving the farm was the right choice for our family," said Sid. "Since I own it now, I can reinvest in the farm. And it gives me the peace of mind that all my work won't be lost to development someday." Soon after conserving the farm, Sid bought a herd of cows and started milking again.

A grant from the Monkton Agricultural and Natural Areas Fund was instrumental in conserving this farm. "Three and a half years ago the Monkton voters started setting aside funds to conserve agricultural lands and natural areas," said Stephen Pilcher, a member of the Monkton Selectboard. "The Claflin Farm is one of the gateways into Monkton and preserving it as agricultural land is consistent with [the town's] rural character." Funded by VHCB with matching funds from NRCS, and the Town of Monkton. (November) ♦ See [press release](#).

Small Organic Farm Conserved in Richford

Richford. Linda Whitney. Conservation easement sale. 44 acres.

Linda Whitney conserved her family's farm on South Richford Road. She had been farming the land since 1988, when she purchased it from her mother. The whole farm is certified organic and has very good agricultural soils. Linda plans to milk cows again soon with help from her nephew, who is interested in being part of the business. This is the fifth farm to be conserved in Richford. Funded by VHCB with matching funds from NRCS. (November)◆

Scenic Charlotte Farmland Protected

Charlotte. Peter Trono. Conservation easement donation. 57 acres.

Peter Trono conserved farmland located at the corner of Spear Street and Bingham Brook Road, which he had recently purchased from the Hinsdale family. Peter and his son Zack intend to raise a small herd of beef cattle and use the open land for hay. Five acres of clayplain forest are also located on the property. "It was a pleasure working with VLT," said Peter. "By donating the easement we achieved several goals: good farmland and some rare clayplain forest were protected and some land was reserved for future housing for my family. It was gratifying to be able to give back to the community by protecting all the open land." The Burleigh farm, conserved last year, is across the road from Peter's land. (December) See [press release](#).



Local Food Producer Conserves Franklin Farm

Franklin. Greg Finch. Conservation easement sale. 208 acres.

After building a successful diversified farm operation over the last decade, Greg Finch conserved his 208-acre farm in Franklin to ensure the land will always be available for agricultural use. Greg and his family raise sheep and pigs and sell local meat to

communities in Vermont and northern New England. Greg now sells lamb and pork through Black River Produce, and meat from the farm's heritage Berkshire-Chester White cross pigs is sold under Vermont Smoke and Cure's "Vermont Grown" label.

The Finch family generously sold the conservation easement for less than market value. "We are very pleased to conserve our farm with VLT," said Greg. "This will allow continued expansion of our farm production, and will hopefully allow for the purchase and possible conservation of additional farmland. It is very clear to us that VLT is essential to the future of farming in Vermont." Greg's farm abuts two farms previously conserved by VLT. Funded by VHCB with matching funds from NRCS. (December)◆ See [press release](#)



VHCB: [Vermont Housing and Conservation Board](#)
NRCS: [Natural Resources Conservation Service](#)

◆ Denotes conservation easements co-held by VLT, VHCB, and the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets.

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