

Acquisition of Conservation Easements and Land for Longterm Ownership

GOAL: Complete 10-14 acquisitions that advance the strategic objectives of UVLT's 5-year Conservation Plan

MAJOR INITIATIVES:

Houghton Hill Natural Area, Thetford – Acquisition of a local landmark and culminating vista of the popular “Mimi’s Trail,” maintained for hiking, running, skiing and snowshoeing. Significant grants and fundraising campaign will be required. Because of the funding required, this transaction might not be completed in FY 2027 but will receive significant staff focus.

Dothan Brook-Norton, Hartford – Acquisition of significant habitat tract (also possibly an easement) to be donated to UVLT in conjunction with a complex project to develop “missing middle” housing, and secure land presently used as outdoor classrooms by the Dothan brook elementary school. UVLT staff actively engaged in project design. Some state funding may be sought for this project. Because of the permitting process, this transaction is more likely to be completed in FY 2028 or 2029, but will receive significant staff focus in 2027.

Barrett/On The River Farm, Lyme – purchased easement on small tract of prime farmland ideal for market farm on scenic River Road, USDA NRCS funding approved, matching funds will need to be raised by local campaign and grants in 2027.

Britton Forest Lands, Newbury – bargain purchase of large forested tract adjacent to Woodchuck Mountain and other UVLT forest ownerships, using FCA funds, possibly in combination with grants.

TRANSACTIONS SUBSTANTIALLY COMPLETE IN 2026:

Rutter, Lebanon – land donated to UVLT for subsequent conveyance to City of Lebanon subject to conservation easement.

Warren, Enfield – donated easement with endowment to be funded by FCA, owners plan to bequeath property to UVLT for environmental education and experiential stewardship.

Sawyer, Thetford – donated conservation easement, proximate to Taplin easements.

FY 2027 LANDOWNER OUTREACH

Continue landowner outreach in areas identified in 2025 and 2026 operating plans where communications with landowners are ongoing.

OTHER ACQUISITIONS CURRENTLY IN PROCESS:

Fee Land:

LaBombard, Norwich – either UVLT fee or CE with Town ownership; adjacent to Gile lands with key trail segment, assessing feasibility of raising purchase price and endowment with VHCB, other grants and potential local campaign.

Goodwin, Sharon – land to be donated; will need funds (grants and local campaign) for endowment.

Conservation Easement Purchases:

Clay Brook North Farmland, Lyme – USDA NRCS funding approved, required matching funds are pledged.

Mink Meadow Farm (Storrs Bent) – USDA NRCS funding approved, currently obtaining a final appraisal, will seek matching funds from local fundraising, Town of Hanover and a state grant.

Maddox Farm, Hartland – potential VHCB application for closing in FY 2028.

Donated Conservation Easements:

Ashley/Whitney, Windsor

Patkowski, Cornish

Von Schaik, Cavendish

Shurcliff, Cornish

Pierson, Strafford

Sommers, Norwich

Steiner, Tunbridge

Colditz-Cox, Canaan

Three Ponds, Thetford

Blue Mountain Sanctuary, Ryegate – land owned by Northeast Wilderness Trust

EASEMENT AMENDMENTS:

Paradee, Orford – post mortem amendment to remove development potential on a riverfront lot that the late owner had purchased adjacent to her previously protected parcel.

Middlebrook, Fairlee – amend and restate old CE to add a previously excluded area with scenic road frontage, add riparian buffer, clarify a driveway location, reconfigure the existing homestead area away from the stream corridor, and resolve an improperly located solar tracker.

Conservation Stewardship and Public Engagement with Conserved Lands

GOALS:

- Ensure that the conservation values of each of UVLT's 585 conserved properties are protected and managed for the benefit of the public and nature.
- Engage 250 people on the land through stewardship experiences and learning opportunities.

MAJOR INITIATIVES:

Smith Pond Dam Emergency Action Plan – complete required testing and obtain approval from NH Dam Safety Bureau, train UVLT staff in plan protocol, secure memo from NH DSB re compliance.

Year-round Recreation Plan for Pohl Conservation Area – develop plan for trail development and improvements, secure parking access, open initial trails, work with Hartford Area Career and Technology Center and Hartland Winter Trails to complete additional trail work as funding allows.

Smith Pond Forest Management Plan – contract with forester Ethan Tapper to develop a forest management plan for Smith Pond with substantial public programming to increase awareness of the ecological values of this property and approaches to forest planning.

Trail Repairs and Improvements at Lyme Pinnacle – rebuild bog bridges and stream crossings between parking area and Cutting Hill Lane. Use trail activities to recruit and engage with volunteers and donors who love Lyme Pinnacle.

Complete pavilion construction at Ely Mountain/Fin and Feather – install roof, connect power.

Pursue USDA CSP and EQIP contracts to support land management activities at Dismal, Brookmead and Snow Mountain.

Align events and public engagement opportunities with UVLT's marketing and fundraising strategy.

RESOLVE KNOWN COMPLIANCE ISSUES:

Middlebrook, Fairlee – amendment and updated baseline documentation report to be managed by UVLT conservation staff (See page 1).

Furlow, Enfield – external counsel to explore potential settlement and damages with violator, Solaflect.

Wellwood Orchard – monitor situation with conflicts over access/location of Crown Point Road.

POTENTIAL ACQUISITION OF CONSERVED LAND:

Howe Family, Hartland – assess cost/benefits of accepting gift of previously conserved land with barn, determine feasible options for funding sufficient endowment.

CORE FUNCTIONS:

Monitor 519 conservation easements using volunteers (50), staff (217) and satellite imagery (250).

Monitor 48 fee owned properties (36 Conservation Areas) – check boundaries and interior roads, oversee leases, maintain culverts, bridges, dams, and structures (if called for in conservation plans or funding agreements).

Update forest management plans for fee owned lands (current use compliance) - Mary Elizabeth Kincaid Wildlife Area, Timotheus Pohl Conservation Area.

Update in-house conservation management plans (accreditation compliance) Ely Mountain, Mill Road Floodplain Preserve, Mountain View Farm, Zuckert, and Rix Ledges.

Oversee 80 miles of trails/trail systems on conserved lands – work with management groups, trail adopters.

Manage Connecticut River campsites – work with volunteer campsite adopters.

Mow trails - Smith Pond, Lyme Pinnacle, Dismal, Pohl, Brookmead

Mow fields – Lyme Pinnacle, My Walden, Lyme Hill, Up On the Hill

Maintain winter parking access (plowing) at Lyme Pinnacle, Lyme Hill, Smith Pond Shaker Forest, Brookmead, Dismal, Ely Mountain

OTHER PLANNED MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES:

Debby and James Crowell Conservation Area - install kiosk, clear loop trail, place bench, and dedicate memorial plaque.

Cream Street - clear trail from parking area to pond (mowing to be done in FY 2027 by volunteer)

Brookmead Conservation Area - establish native tree nursery.

My Walden – inoculate ash in meadow near cabin, potential harvest of paper birch (scheduled for 2027-2029).

Conservation Stewardship and Public Engagement with Conserved Lands (*continued*)

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- Engage 250 people on the land through stewardship experiences and learning opportunities.

SERVICE IMPACT ACTIVITIES:

Operate food pantry gardens at Brookmead Conservation Area and Up On the Hill; engage volunteers and corporate service; deliver food to Willing Hands and Claremont and Charlestown food pantries.

Firewood fuel assistance – deliver 5 cords of wood currently stored at Up On the Hill. If the situation with neighbors permits, process additional wood on site for delivery in 2028.

PUBLIC EVENTS:

Seasons on the Land - Host 4-6 large-group (target 50+) public events showcasing UVLT-owned Conservation Areas. Establish and brand these as UVLT annual events hosted by Trustees with staff. They will be the primary events for which UVLT devotes resources and staff time. Suggested events are:

- Stargazing at Mountain View Farm
- Winter Solstice at Lyme Pinnacle
- Picnic at Smith Pond
- Music at Ely Pavilion
- Something at My Walden (lady's slippers/lupines or fall foliage?)

Other Events – As capacity allows, UVLT staff may attend and assist with other partner events, including hikes and other activities suitable for groups of 10-25. These co-promoted events are useful in raising visibility and building relationships but are expected to be a significantly lighter investment of staff time and organizational focus. Historic examples include: Vernal Pools at Brookmead with Norwich Conservation Commission, Snowshoe at Mountain View Farm and Foliage Hike at Cottonstone Mountain with Orford Conservation Commission, Winter visit to Bear Pond with Canaan Conservation Commission.

FIELD NOTES FRIDAY:

Collect content for weekly video brief featuring natural phenomena observed by staff in the course of UVLT stewardship work; intended primary audience is "armchair naturalists;" production and distribution managed by UVLT Communications Director.

NATURALIST-LED PROGRAMS:

Upper Valley Master Naturalist Program – in collaboration with the Vermont Naturalist Program, offer a nine-month in-depth training for 10-20 people to develop naturalist skills. (Each participant to contribute 20 hours of volunteer service to UVLT in FY 28.)

Noticing Nature – at least monthly nature walks at UVLT-conserved properties. Goal 30 people who re-engage with UVLT by subscribing to UVLT's E-news or Field Notes Friday after attending.

Bird Walks – monthly. One beginner bird walk each quarter and the other 8 to be complete checklists for UVLT properties using eBird. Goal 20 repeat attendees.

Tree Team - at least one tree planting activity (chestnuts at Ely Mountain in 2026).

Eyes on Ash – one workshop/field event in each season focused on what is known about effects of Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) and strategies for maintaining viable populations of ash trees. Intended audiences include foresters and land managers and conservation commissioners.

VOLUNTEER TRAINING AND CORPORATE SERVICE

SUPPORT:

Easement Monitors - Host at least one (two-part) training session for new volunteer easement monitors.

Corporate volunteers – maintain relations with businesses that offer employee service days, develop opportunities for individuals and groups of employees to perform service work on UVLT properties.

GEO SPATIAL DATA AND ONLINE COMMUNITIES:

Manage and continue to build UVLT Explorer interface to share information about UVLT's trails and Conservation Areas; use eBird and iNaturalist to upload observations of flora and fauna, build natural resource inventories for each UVLT-owned property and engage with beginning as well as experienced naturalists.

Development and Outreach

GOALS:

- Raise \$750,000 in annual unrestricted giving
- Obtain agency, foundation and individual restricted gifts as needed for priority conservation acquisitions and programs and annual operating support
- Add 5 new members of the Swan Bedrock Society
- Increase \$'s raised from gifts of less than \$500 by 25% (\$15,000)
- Maintain 75% donor retention rate

MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS

MAJOR INITIATIVES:

Implement a strategy to dramatically increase UVLT's social media presence and effectiveness - increase posting cadence, refine and manage messaging, use digital advertising, execute three targeted campaigns. Advisory and capacity support contracted with Wheelhouse Web Solutions.

Develop and implement consistent, branded outreach promotion and follow up communication to event attendees with goal of donor and/or volunteer conversion and repeat attendance.

OTHER CORE FUNCTIONS:

Print Publications – produce and distribute two (or three) newsletters (six panel) and an Annual Report (approx 28 pp) for distribution to UVLT donors, prospective donors and other key contacts.

E-news - create content and oversee distribution of digital newsletter (approximately monthly) featuring impact stories of interest to target audiences identified in UVLT's Communications Plan. Develop welcome series for new e-news subscribers.

Website and Blogposts – prepare blogposts, event listings, campaign and donor landing pages, etc.

Promote UVLT activities, events, and news on local listservs – increase presence on listservs by using them to report on activities and observations at lands UVLT owns and shift UVLT's identity toward being a member of the community where that listserv is located.

Media Relations – maintain relations with reporters and editors. Goal for weekly's (JO, VT Standard) 4-6 stories per year (each), goal for Valley News: at least one feature story in the fiscal year, events feature 4-6 times.

Collateral – develop posters, brochures, flyers as appropriate to support UVLT programs, tabling, etc. Maintain and express brand identity and chosen marketing messages consistently.

FUNDRAISING

MAJOR INITIATIVES:

Onboard Chief Philanthropy Officer, increase the number of major gift prospects receiving personal communication to at least 150.

Raise \$500,000 for Jeanie McIntyre Fund.

OTHER CORE FUNCTIONS:

(more details provided in FY 2027 Development Plan)

Donor stewardship and solicitation - Implement plan of individual relationship stewardship for identified leadership gift prospects. Deliver Annual Reports, invite to UVLT events, communicate significant news.

Coordinate timely renewal requests of small gift donors through monthly digital contact and direct mail. Create fresh letter content expressing donor impact, using best practices for fundraising letters.

Promote planned giving opportunities through stories and testimonials in print and online communications.

Write grants and collaborate with agency partners to obtain funding for Board-approved conservation acquisitions. Write grants for unrestricted annual support to family foundations identified in Development Plan.

Lead campaigns as needed to raise funds for transactions and stewardship endowments.

Manage templates and assignments for timely gift acknowledgement

INTRODUCE UVLT SUPPORTERS TO

UVLT'S NEW PRESIDENT

Host social gathering(s) and one-on-one introductions for new President. Begin transfer of donor relationships from Jeanie McIntyre to new President