

UPPER VALLEY
LAND TRUST

Annual Report 2015





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Dear Friends,

The photos and stories in this report summarize UVLT's progress and impact in fiscal year 2015 – a busy, challenging, exciting, productive, inspiring year! We secured ten more conservation easements and acquired two properties for conservation ownership. These lands include working farms, more than a mile and a half of frontage on cold water streams, some of the highest ranked habitat in New Hampshire, vernal pools and wetlands, several miles of scenic road frontage and two miles of old roads and trails.

Land conservation begins with the choices of individual landowners and is realized through the values and vision of the whole community. Our success depends on volunteers, on donors, on the skill of professional staff, on our collective commitment to uphold the promises we have made to each other and to the special places we love.

We ended the fiscal year with over 45,000 acres under our permanent conservation protection and hundreds of area residents engaged in property visits, trail maintenance, habitat restoration and recreational and educational programs on conserved land.

With this strong foundation, our small organization is poised to do much, much more. UVLT's Board of Trustees are committed to increasing the pace and scope of land conservation in the Upper Valley over the next five years. Using private capital as an accelerant, we will proactively develop projects that are "transformational:" projects that have outstanding natural resource values at multiple scales; projects that are leveraged by community engagement and support; projects that are catalysts for inspiring new partnerships around land conservation and stewardship. As a result, UVLT will be positioned to respond nimbly to conservation opportunities when they arise and to make opportunities where they are needed.

Together we are choosing and creating our future. We invite you to walk, hike and snowshoe with us, discovering the far off ridges and valleys of our region as well as places close to home in village centers. We invite you to invest in the lands that grow food and forest products, in clear water and resilient natural areas, in irreplaceable gifts that enrich and sustain our whole community.

The more that we do, the more we can imagine. We thank you for your part in the unfolding story of land conservation.



Jeanie McIntyre, President



Chris Nesbitt, Chair, Board of Trustees

UVLT has been awarded a grant from the Ellis L. Phillips Foundation to produce a short film about the "why" of land conservation. Filmmaker Jon Huberth interviewed six landowners this summer. The following pages include some of their statements.



I THINK THE OUTDOORS IS NECESSARY FOR WELLBEING. THERE'S JUST A PEACEFULNESS OUT THERE THAT CANNOT BE EXPERIENCED INDOORS. NATURE HAS A SYSTEM THAT WE'RE A PART OF, AND WHEN YOU'RE OUT IN NATURE YOU FEEL, I GUESS, JUST A PIECE OF THAT SYSTEM.

-- LAURA STILLSON

Conservation Solutions

MEADOW BROOK, CORINTH, VT

Culminating a six-year collaboration with Second Growth Holdings, LLC and the Orange County Headwaters Project, UVLT conserved 79 acres of open space that extends a corridor of protected land and provides wildlife habitat and buffers along Meadow Brook in Corinth, a cold fast-flowing stream that cascades toward the South Branch of the Waits River. The collaboration has conserved 732 acres in total, including 3.25 miles of headwater brooks and 74 acres of wetlands. Funding was provided by a grant from the Upper Connecticut River Mitigation and Enhancement Fund of the NH Charitable Foundation.

CHASE FIELD, POMFRET, VT

A campaign led by Pomfret residents and town Planning Commissioners, combined with grants from the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board and USDA, enabled the purchase of a conservation easement on a 22-acre field in North Pomfret that had been in the family of Elaine and Lysle Chase for decades and is a cherished part of the local landscape. Because the property's value was far higher for development than for farming, the Chases sought assistance from UVLT when the time came for an ownership transition. Immediately after conserving it, the Chases sold the land to the owners of North Pomfret's Thistle Hill Farm who had been leasing it for their award-winning cheese operation.

ELY MOUNTAIN, THETFORD, VT

Ely Mountain lies at the northern edge of Thetford's largest block of unbroken forest land, between the Connecticut River Valley and Lake Fairlee. The Thetford Conservation Commission has identified this area as one of the town's most significant "crown jewels." Jock and Deecie Denison donated 208 acres to UVLT following a local fundraising campaign that raised \$40,000 in six weeks to cover legal and subdivision costs and establish a permanent fund for management. This new conservation area has vernal pools and ledges, the biggest ash tree in Orange County, gorgeous old maples, and views to Lake Fairlee and distant peaks.

RICHARDSON FAMILY FARM, HARTLAND, VT

Gordon and Patricia Richardson sold a conservation easement protecting nearly 200 acres of farm and forestland in Hartland that has been in the Richardson family since 1905. The Richardson family operates an award-winning Jersey cow dairy, makes maple syrup and runs a split rail fencing business on the property. Their farm was recognized in 2009 as the Vermont Dairy Farm of the Year. Three generations of Richardsons are presently involved in farm operations, and it had long been a goal to conserve it for the family's future generations. Partial funding for the purchase of the conservation easement was provided through a grant from the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board and USDA. The Richardsons donated the balance of the value of the conservation easement.

BALLOCH'S CROSSING, CLAREMONT, NH

Bill and Jenny Lipfert conserved 200 acres of forest and farmland in Claremont and Cornish. The Lipferts sold a conservation easement to UVLT for less than its fair market value in a charitable transaction known as a "bargain sale." The property is the third parcel to be conserved in the immediate area, and links the previously conserved parcels to the Cornish Town Forest. Altogether, UVLT has conserved over 300 acres, more than a mile of frontage on Route 12-A, a mile and a half of frontage on the Connecticut River and an east-west conservation corridor over one mile long. This portion of Sullivan County is a conservation priority because of its very productive agricultural soil, outstanding scenic qualities and habitat connectivity.



THE HILLS, AND THE WOODS, AND THE MIX OF HILLS AND FIELDS, THEY DO MEAN A LOT TO US. IT SUSTAINED MY FAMILY AND WE'VE SORT OF SUSTAINED IT OVER A NUMBER OF GENERATIONS. IMAGINE IF YOU SPENT A LONG TIME MAKING A WONDERFUL QUILT OR A PAINTING. AND SOMEONE DECIDED IT WOULD BE BETTER AS PLACEMATS AND CARVED IT UP INTO A NUMBER OF PLACEMATS. THEY'D STILL BE NICE PLACEMATS. BUT THEY WOULDN'T BE THE QUILT OR THE PAINTING. -- WILLIS WOOD



HANCHETT'S BROOK, PLAINFIELD, NH

Over 100 acres including stream frontage, meander wetlands and mature upland forest were conserved and brought into new ownership when UVLT purchased a conservation easement from Sybil Williamson. Near the height of land on Governor's Hill, the land includes an outstanding example of a red oak-ironwood-Pennsylvania sedge woodland and nearly 1/3 of a mile of Hanchett's Brook. The owner of an adjacent conserved 447-acre property will own and manage the now 547-acre block. UVLT obtained funding to purchase the conservation easement through grants from the Plainfield Conservation Commission and the NH Dept of Environmental Services' Aquatic Resources Mitigation Program. The NH program uses developer's fees from wetlands dredging, filling and alterations to purchase compensatory land and easements that protect high quality wetland and associated upland resources.

HI-HOPE, CORNISH, NH

Tim Schad donated a conservation easement to protect 58 acres of meadows and forestland with spectacular views to Mount Ascutney from Cornish's scenic Upper East Road. The productive hayfields and old barn evoke the area's agricultural history, dating back to the late 1700's. Protecting rural landscapes and active agricultural fields is a priority for the Cornish Conservation Commission which provided funding to support UVLT's work on this project. Tim acquired the "Hi-Hope Farm" from Harold Fox when Harold was getting on in years. Harold retained a life estate and Tim told Harold that he intended to conserve the farm in the future. Following Harold's death last summer, Tim worked on a plan to conserve the land, obtaining agreements from two abutters and a third buyer of the old farmhouse and barn to purchase portions of the land with conservation easements in place. He then worked with the town and UVLT to place conservation easements on all three parcels before they were sold.

CLAY BROOK, LYME, NH

The Connecticut River and its tributaries have long been a UVLT focus. In Lyme, we've conserved stream corridors at Grant Brook, Hewes Brook and Clay Brook. The purchase of this conservation easement adds another half mile of protected stream frontage adjoining the Town-owned Chaffee Sanctuary and includes a mile of scenic frontage on Route 10, Whipple Hill Road and North Thetford Road and the sites of a historic mill and schoolhouse. Most of the property is used as cropland. The balance is wetland and wetland-associated uplands, ranked as the highest quality in their ecological region by the state Wildlife Action Plan. The project was supported by major grants from the US Department of Agriculture and the NH Department of Environmental Services, a contribution from the Lyme Conservation Commission and donations from area residents.

RIX LEDGES, LEBANON, NH

Through a partnership with the City of Lebanon, UVLT has acquired 33 more acres at Rix Ledges, an area identified in the City's 2012 Master Plan as one of three geologic features that should be a focus of conservation efforts. The property features large boulders and den habitat for bobcat and supports bear, deer, raccoon, porcupine, and many other species. The east-facing slope is highly visible from Etna Road and nearby Signal Hill Conservation Area (owned by the City of Lebanon), and was identified as a Significant Ecological Area in a city-wide natural resource inventory. The parcel is the third to be acquired by UVLT at Rix Ledges. The City provided funds associated with mitigation permits for safety improvements at the Lebanon Airport.

SAMPLE'S WOODS & ROSEMARY RIESER TRAIL, NORWICH, VT

UVLT, the Upper Valley Trails Alliance, the children of Rosemary Rieser and Norwich community members came together to conserve 11 acres in the heart of Norwich and protect a popular recreational corridor. The land includes a field and woods along Hopson Road and 630 feet of frontage on Blood Brook extending from Warner Meadows as well as the site of historic "Sample's Hill" ski jump popular in the 1950's. The Norwich Conservation Commission has recognized the ecological, recreational and scenic significance of this area. After inheriting the land, Len, Abby and Tim Rieser sold a conservation easement at a deeply discounted value and over 100 local families contributed funds. The protected trail will be named for Rosemary Rieser, an avid walker and devoted member of the Norwich community for many years.

IT'S HELD ME TOGETHER IN A LOT OF WAYS. IN TOUGH TIMES IN VIETNAM, BOTH TRIPS OVER THERE, YOU KNOW YOU HAD SOMETHING TO HANG ONTO. I HAD SUNDAY SCHOOL, BUT I ALSO HAD THAT FARM AND THAT PROPERTY AND THOSE HILLSIDES. YOU KNOW, YOU CAN BE IN A BAD SPOT AND THINK ABOUT A PARTICULAR SUNRISE YOU SAW... SOME MORNING CLIMBING A RIDGE BECAUSE YOU'RE DEER HUNTING... OR WATCHING A DOE AND A FAWN WALK THROUGH OR A BEAR COME THROUGH AND RAVAGE ONE OF YOUR APPLE TREES. ALL THAT SORT OF STUFF IS JUST FOOD FOR THE SOUL. AND I'M NOT THE ONLY PERSON, OBVIOUSLY, THAT LOOKS AT THINGS LIKE THAT. I MEAN, THAT'S WHY THE LAND TRUST EXISTS.

-- CHUCK EATON



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Caring for Lands & Trails

CONSERVATION AREAS

While many of the properties that UVLT conserves remain in private hands, our goal in outright ownership is to ensure that all Upper Valley residents can enjoy the benefits of conserved land and participate in its stewardship. We choose to own and manage properties where we can provide significant educational or recreational opportunities and care for important natural resources. In fiscal year 2015, we acquired two more properties for long-term ownership bringing our Conservation Areas to a total of ten, including high forests and ledgy outcrops, grassland, wetlands, and two islands. We improved trails at Zebedee Wetland and Lyme Hill, created a parking area at Ely Mountain, and led winter expeditions to Leavitt Hill and Snow Mountain. Six local businesses supported our activities through employee service days.

EASEMENT STEWARDSHIP

With more than 460 conservation easements entrusted to us, property visits and landowner assistance are a big part of our commitment to permanence. Supported by a group of trained volunteers, we inspect all properties at least annually. In addition, we meet with prospective owners when land changes hands, we provide referrals for landowners seeking land management guidance, and work with colleagues to develop field skills and mutual support among both volunteers and landowners. In fiscal year 2015 we played a lead role in initiating successful legislation in Vermont to protect easement permanence in the event of "merger," and resolved an instance of non-compliance involving improvements to an old farm building on conserved land.

TRAILS AND CAMPSITES

As of June 30, our website contained descriptions, maps and directions to 42 trails and natural areas at UVLT-conserved land! There's something for everybody -- these places include quiet walks, spectacular vistas, opportunities for birding, or trail running, or tracking. Moreover, we've identified end-to-end routes that link our Conservation Areas; with the "O" Section of the Green Mountain Club we host monthly hikes that highlight unfragmented forest, remote ponds and wetlands, landscapes of historic significance. Our eight campsites on the Connecticut River anchor the mid-section of the Connecticut River Paddlers Trail which is now growing south and north.

HABITAT RESTORATION

The spread of non native invasive plant species is a serious threat to our region's forests, fields and stream corridors. UVLT stewardship staff have led efforts to remove glossy buckthorn, garlic mustard, honeysuckle and barberry at Rix Ledges, Zebedee Wetland, Norwich Gateway and Mink Brook. In spring 2015 we collaborated with local volunteers and conservation colleagues to promote a region-wide "Garlic Mustard Muster." We joined with the Hanover Biodiversity Committee to co-sponsor a forum on white-tailed deer management and followed up with comments on long term impacts of unsustainable deer populations for NH Fish and Game's Management Plan.

LAND FOR LEARNING

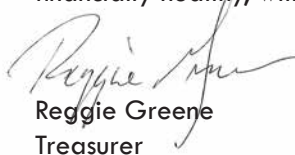
Conserved land provides outdoor classrooms for people of all ages. In Cornish and Thetford, we found and measured some of the largest trees in the county. Our Lyme Hill Conservation Area was the site of an ILEAD course on natural landscapes. Second and third graders visited our Zebedee Wetland weekly, observing and writing about their experiences in journals. Girl Scout troops from around the region convened at our Buck Road property to build camaraderie by pulling garlic mustard together -- and removed 900 pounds from the Mink Brook forest and stream front! With AVA and the Hopkins Center we offered a multi-cultural camp centered on a Dartmouth artist-in-residency program. Children ages 5-14 visited conserved land at the confluence of the Mascoma and the Connecticut Rivers, saw a bald eagle, rode Advance Transit, made art in the Hood Museum, and had a private audience with international musicians from the Nile Project.

Treasurer's Report

This year the total financial value of the conservation easements and land parcels acquired by UVLT far exceeded \$2 million, but you won't find a line item for those on our balance sheet. Our conservation interests represent obligations -- very long term obligations. And so the measure of UVLT's commitment and preparedness can be seen in our endowments. Each time we accept a new property or conservation easement, we make a promise for perpetuity, and we set aside funds to monitor, defend and fulfill this commitment. At June 30, 2015 our permanently restricted investment balances stood at just under \$3.5 million.

UVLT continues to be a lean and efficient organization, managing charitable gifts and assets to responsibly maximize conservation impact and public benefit. In fiscal year 2015, every dollar UVLT received from individual donors generated approximately \$5 in conservation value.

Operating expenditures in fiscal year 2015 were slightly below budget. Over 100 new members joined and more than 300 households contributed to campaigns for local conservation projects. There was some reduction in unrestricted contributions as some members gave instead to hometown projects. Thus, operating revenue was slightly below budget. Nevertheless, UVLT continues to be financially healthy, with strong community support producing outstanding conservation results.



Reggie Greene
Treasurer

Sources

61%	\$433,530
Gifts from Individuals	
18%	129,602
Foundation Grants and Public Funds	
18%	128,000
Endowment Income	
3%	<u>24,160</u>
Other	
Total	\$715,292

Uses

59%	\$425,741
Land Conservation & Stewardship	
21%	150,610
Community Relations	
12%	84,168
Management	
8%	<u>57,526</u>
Fundraising	
Total	\$718,045

Permanently Restricted Funds					
For fiscal year ending 6/30/2015	Stewardship	Operating	Conservation	Special	Total
Beginning Balance	2,169,854	620,928	545,113	140,298	3,476,193
Distributions	-107,880	-20,120	-2,613	-3,745	-134,358
Additions	110,350			100	110,450
Change in Market Value	<u>-19,142</u>	<u>1,020</u>	<u>-3,524</u>	<u>-2,004</u>	<u>-23,650</u>
Ending Balance	2,153,182	601,828	538,976	134,649	3,428,635

IT'S BEEN INCREDIBLY SATISFYING TO HAVE PEOPLE ENJOY THE LAND. ONE OF THE THINGS THAT I NEVER ANTICIPATED WAS HOW MUCH PLEASURE I GET FROM TALKING TO PEOPLE ABOUT THE LAND. IF THEY KNOW I AM THE LAND OWNER, THEY ARE ALWAYS SAYING THANK YOU. THANK YOU FOR LETTING US WALK ON YOUR TRAILS. THANK YOU FOR KEEPING THIS OPEN. ONE OF THE THINGS I HEAR REPEATEDLY IS HOW PEACEFUL IT IS. HOW QUIET IT IS THERE. -- LIZ RUSSELL



Thank You

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WE'RE NO LONGER A RURAL SOCIETY THE WAY WE WERE 100 YEARS AGO. A LOT OF PEOPLE JUST HAVE NEVER EXPERIENCED THAT. AND I'M GRATEFUL THAT I'M ABLE TO LIVE IT... I DON'T TAKE IT FOR GRANTED. EVERY DAY I PINCH MYSELF AND SAY, HOW DID I END UP HERE? WHY ME? IT'S JUST THE WAY IT TURNED OUT. I TRY AND REMEMBER THAT. AND I LIKE TO SHARE IT WITH PEOPLE. -- JOHN HAMMOND

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\$25-49

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WHEN I AM IN THE FIELDS DOING WORK, I FEEL MYSELF IN A LONG PROGRESSION OF PEOPLE ON THIS PIECE OF LAND. OUR FARM WAS FIRST CLEARED FOR AGRICULTURE IN THE LATE 18TH CENTURY, SO IT'S BEEN PRODUCING FOOD FOR AT LEAST 225 YEARS. I CAN KIND OF SEE THOSE PEOPLE OUT THERE AHEAD OF ME. IT FEELS REALLY WONDERFUL AND PEACEFUL TO BE PART OF THIS. I KNOW THIS LAND WILL BE PROTECTED. PART OF WHY WE MADE THE DECISION TO PROTECT THIS LAND NOW WHILE WE'RE RELATIVELY YOUNG, IS THAT FEELING OF SATISFACTION AND COMFORT ABOUT THE FUTURE. -- CHUCK WOOSTER

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ROUTE 12A ALONG THE CONNECTICUT RIVER IS ONE OF THE MOST SCENIC DRIVES THAT I KNOW OF IN THE UPPER VALLEY. I WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO DRIVE DOWN THAT ROAD IF THERE WERE HOUSES OUT IN THE FIELD. THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO SAY WHEN YOU CONSERVE LAND YOU GIVE AWAY YOUR RIGHTS. AND MY ARGUMENT IS YOU DON'T LOSE CONTROL, YOU GAIN CONTROL. BECAUSE AFTER YOU'RE GONE THAT LAND IS STILL GOING TO BE THE WAY YOU CONSERVED IT. -- JOHN HAMMOND

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 In Memory of James W. Ashley
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 Courtney & Megan
 Christopher, Terri, Chris,
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 Cooper, Barb, Sarah, Claire &
 Graham
 Courtney, Mark, Miles, Julia &
 Eleanor
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 Manning Rountree
 In Recognition of Pete Helm,
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 In Memory of Robert J. Bryant
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 In Memory of Dale Peters Bryant
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 In Honor of Sara Cavin
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 Gitlen's wedding
 Elizabeth Denning*



**I DO LOVE THE LAND. I HAVE BEEN WALKING; NOT ONLY OUR LAND, BUT I'VE WALKED THE
 WHOLE VALLEY ALL MY LIFE. IT KIND OF GROWS ON YOU. -- CHUCK EATON**

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