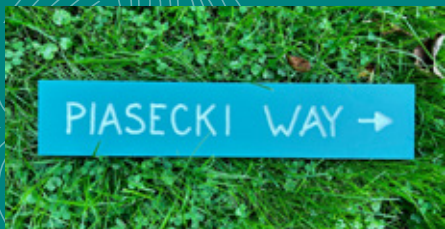




UPPER VALLEY
LAND TRUST

2023 ANNUAL REPORT



IN MEMORIAM

This year's Annual Report is Dedicated to
GREG PIASECKI, UVLT BOARD MEMBER & TREASURER
(1970 - 2023)

Greg Piasecki joined UVLT's Board of Trustees in 2020 and quickly became an ardent explorer and champion of its conserved lands. He shared joyful snapshots as he and his children hiked and maintained UVLT trails. He found his way all over the Valley undeterred by snow or brambles. He loved flying over the lands and waters of this region.

Greg served on UVLT's Stewardship Committee and was UVLT's Treasurer. He played a major role when UVLT was the recipient of the cell tower at Snow Mountain Conservation Area in Enfield. Greg was a great questioner. His inquiries led to far-ranging strategic discussions as well as practical outcomes. Smart, funny, and always surprising us with obscure talents.

Greg was 30 minutes late to our last Executive Committee meeting because he was out turkey hunting. When he joined our meeting, he was flushed with the enthusiasm of a morning outdoors covering the ground he so enjoyed. His contributions to UVLT were many – deep awareness of how the outdoors is part of family life and generational knowledge, insights about business and management, and lived experience finding his way in the woods and hills.

We are forever indebted to Greg's invaluable contributions. His legacy and impact will live on through many, including the newly renamed "Piasecki Way" at Snow Mountain Conservation Area in Enfield, NH.

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT & CHAIR

Dear Friends,

We are grateful and proud to share the Upper Valley Land Trust's Annual Report, for work in fiscal 2023. The stories and photos in these pages express the profound connection between the resilience of nature and the resilience of the human community. Each conserved place contains innumerable relationships – between soil and water and species, across generations. Each conserved place is a promise looking forward, full of hope and care and opportunity.

UVLT is nearing two generations from its founding, with a track record of statistics to celebrate: **57,000 acres permanently protected, 36 Conservation Areas owned, 250 miles of trails**... wild places and rivers and streams and farmland and woods.

UVLT has become one of the most accomplished regional land trusts in the country. These accomplishments are the work of thousands of people like you: landowners who chose conservation for their properties, donors and volunteers and area employers, Trustees, public agencies and private foundations. Though our home ground is a tiny portion of the whole, it matters to the health of the planet. The Upper Valley exists in a connected world of climate change, species loss, fragmentation and displacement. So our celebration of accomplishment is also a call to action, because much, much more is needed.

The good news is that because the landscape of the Upper Valley is more intact, connected and resilient than much of the rest of our country, we have a tremendous opportunity to make meaningful impact through our conservation work. UVLT's achievements demonstrate the powerful alchemy of vision and generosity, professional competency and passion that drive far-reaching land conservation and stewardship results, that extend beyond our regional network.

Thank you for joining us in this mission.

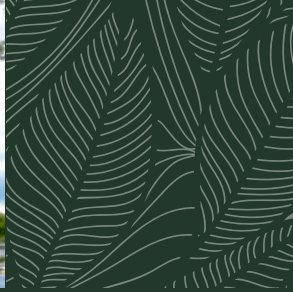


Jeanie McIntyre, President



Allan Wieman, Chair, Board of Trustees





OUR MISSION & VISION

The Upper Valley Land Trust provides conservation leadership, tools and expertise to permanently protect the working farms, forested ridges, wildlife habitat, water resources, trails and scenic landscapes that surround residential areas and commercial centers and make the Upper Valley a truly special place to live.

UFLT focuses its mission in **45 Vermont and New Hampshire towns** in the upper Connecticut River Valley. We work with local conservation commissions and volunteer groups to identify and prioritize land conservation opportunities. We provide technical assistance and conservation solutions for landowners. We steward permanent agreements that conserve key properties forever.

OUR WORK INCLUDES



Conserving lands that meaningfully contribute to the vibrancy and resilience of the Upper Valley (both people and nature) now and in the future; conserving land resilient to climate change;



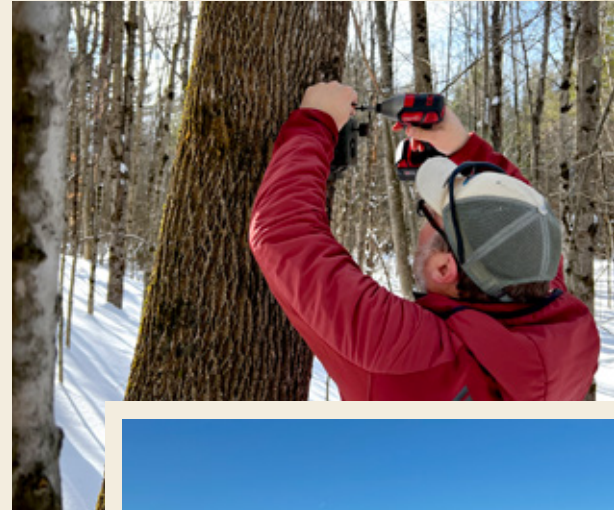
Upholding the conservation protections on the lands we conserve; responsibly stewarding the lands we own to protect ecological systems and enhance adaptive capacity;



Engaging and inspiring people in caring for land resources; being welcoming and inclusive in our work and broadening the relevance of land conservation;



Collaborating with partners across the Upper Valley to develop and pursue a broad, integrated vision of regional health in which conserved land – our green infrastructure – supports and reinforces environmental, social, economic, and regional planning goals.



BOARD OF TRUSTEES

- Allan Wieman, Hanover, **Chair**
- Patty Armstrong, Hanover, **Vice Chair & Secretary**
- Harry Pease, Orford, **Treasurer**
- John Gerstmayr, Reading
- Christie Hedges, Orford
- Kendall Hoyt, Lyme
- Debbie Klene, Brownsville
- Chris Nesbitt, Brownsville
- Ernst Oidtmann, Lebanon
- Lynne Parshall, Lyme
- Gordon Richardson, Hartland
- Steve Taylor, Meriden
- Renée Vebell, Hanover
- Stan Williams, Norwich



STAFF

- Jeanie McIntyre, President
- Jason Berard, Vice President, Stewardship
- Cassie Bernyk, Stewardship Programs Coordinator
- Andy Boyce, Senior Conservation Mapping & Field Specialist
- Lorie Hood, Office Manager
- Susie Howard, Conservation Project Manager
- Bill Little, Vice President, Operations
- Peg Merrens, Vice President, Conservation
- Craig Privett, Conservation Project Manager
- Micah Tilles, Land Steward
- Cheryl Twerdowsky, Bookkeeper
- Sayer Wickham, Land Steward

BY THE NUMBERS

555

Properties, 56,842 acres
conserved since 1985

11,748

Acres of productive
agricultural soil

6,280

Acres of wetlands and
stream frontage

25,511

Acres ecologically
significant habitat

36

Conservation areas

55

Conserved trails

8

Connecticut River
paddler's campsites and
2 cartop boat launches

981

Species identified, including
6,630 observations uploaded
to iNaturalist from UVLT's
Conservation Areas

45

Towns served

7,000+

Pounds of food produced for
hunger relief programs at
UVLT's 2 Food Pantry Gardens
(since 2020)

36

Cords of firewood cut,
stacked, distributed for
home heating assistance
since 2018

57

Members of the Swan
Bedrock Society have made
plans to benefit UVLT through
their wills

\$6.1 M+

Endowment to monitor and defend
conservation protections in
perpetuity



FINANCIAL UPDATE

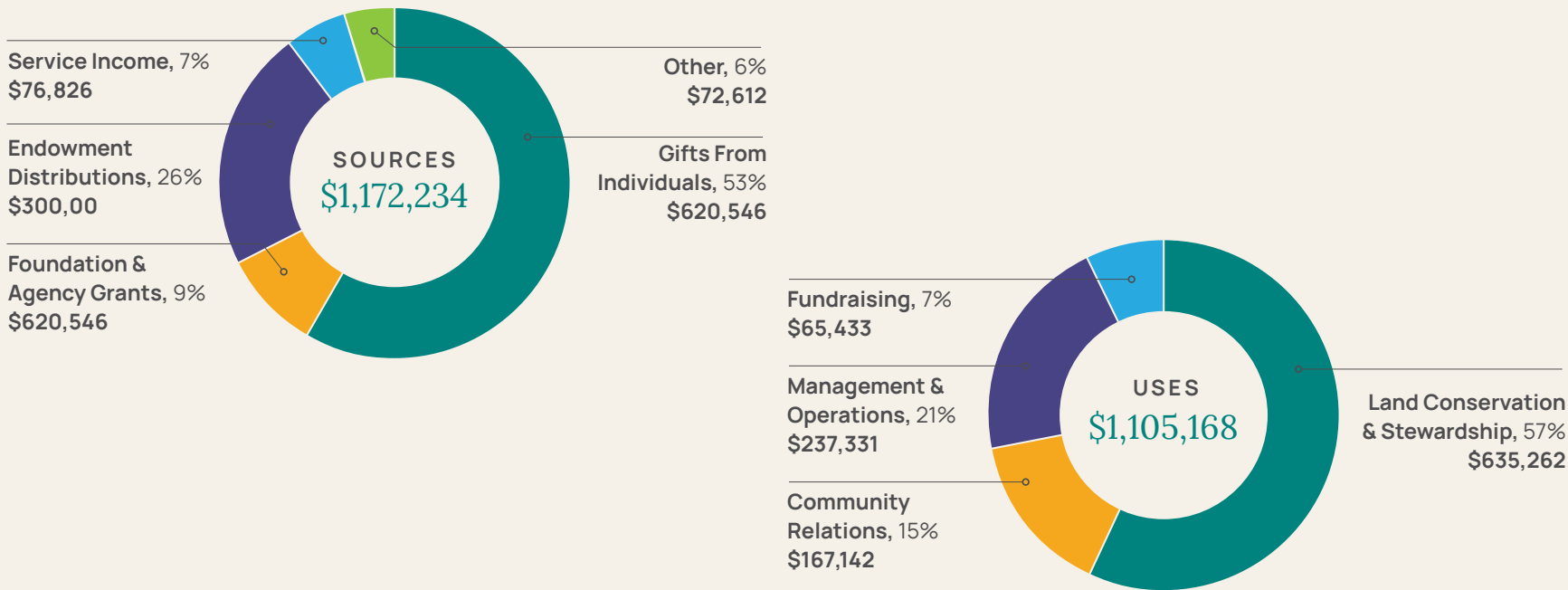
For the fiscal year ended June 30, 2023, staff did an excellent job managing expenses and realizing savings in most expense line items. Overall, revenues from the annual Operating Budget (sources) exceeded expenses (uses) by approximately \$67,000.

During fiscal '22, UVLT completed the acquisition of Snow Mountain Cell Tower and finalized leases with the three wireless carriers resident on the tower. Fiscal '23 was the first year of cell tower operations, where UVLT benefited from a full year of positive cash flow.

The sale of land in Tunbridge was a win-win-win in fiscal '23. The transaction realized the intentions of the donors who contributed the land in a prior year. Sale proceeds were contributed to UVLT's capital campaign Fund for Conservation Action, which supports transformational land conservation transactions. The win-win-win? Beloved land is protected forever; UVLT will be able to do additional conservation work with the sale proceeds, and new owners stepped in to experience the joy of stewarding this special property.

UVLT's permanent endowment funds exist to protect the conservation easements we hold and to provide for the on-going management of the properties we own. Distributions from our endowment flow to the annual Operating Budget — in fiscal '23 distributions were \$322,409. During the fiscal year, UVLT received two legacy gifts, which were added to our permanent endowment. Coupled with solid portfolio gains, UVLT's total endowment ended fiscal '23 at \$8,724,185.

FISCAL '23 OPERATING BUDGET RESULTS



PERMANENT FUNDS INVESTED

	Stewardship	Operating	Conservation	Other	Board Designated	Total
Beginning Balance	\$3,467,710	\$2,669,591	\$799,555	\$170,783	\$881,284	\$7,988,923
Distributions	(\$178,885)	(\$136,075)	(\$3,144)	(\$4,305)	-	(\$322,409)
Additions	\$8,885	\$177,575	\$100,000	\$10,000	-	\$296,460
Investment Return	\$338,565	\$246,217	\$78,523	\$10,147	\$87,759	\$761,211
Ending Balance	\$3,636,276	\$2,957,308	\$974,934	\$186,625	\$969,043	\$8,724,185



YEAR IN REVIEW

LAND CONSERVATION

After several years of disruption caused by the Covid pandemic and its aftermath, UVLT's pipeline of projects moved forward with great results! Conservation staff met with landowners outdoors in the woods, and around kitchen tables, making plans for big blocks of habitat and the lands that connect them; helping farmers keep land available and affordable; supporting communities as they choose the open spaces around which development will occur.

In fiscal '23, UVLT completed seven land conservation transactions including the purchase of a conservation easement on a prominent sugarbush in Lyme. Donated conservation easements protected riverfront farmland and forested riparian buffer in Orford and a property in the historic Cornish Art Colony. A trail easement added a new segment to one of our most popular trails in Norwich. Two properties were donated to UVLT for long-term conservation ownership.

As the fiscal year came to a close in June, we were wrapping up a project to conserve wetlands with the City of Claremont and helping Thetford conserve its Town Forest. UVLT was awarded USDA grant funding for the purchase of conservation easements on working farmland in Charlestown and Lyme, transactions that will be completed in fiscal '24. As this report goes to press, two dozen conservation transactions are underway.





YEAR IN REVIEW

CONSERVATION EASEMENTS

UVLT-held conservation easement deeds protect more than 516 properties and more than 50,000 acres. Each deed describes UVLT's permanent commitment and obligation to uphold the conservation values entrusted to us and defend and enforce the terms of legal agreements. Communication with landowners and periodic property inspections are key to fulfilling that responsibility.

UVLT's stewardship team is assisted by dozens of volunteers who have completed an easement monitoring curriculum. Volunteers visit conserved properties to document conditions on the ground, noting manmade and natural changes. In fiscal '23 volunteers logged many hours inspecting 32 conserved properties.

In 2021, UVLT joined with other land trusts in a national assessment of remote monitoring technologies sponsored by the Land Trust Alliance. Through that program we evaluated the efficiency of using satellite imagery. UVLT summarized our experience in a report to a national forum last year and plans to continue to purchase satellite imagery for use in easement monitoring. In fiscal '23 about half of UVLT's easements were monitored using this technology.



WHAT IS A CONSERVATION EASEMENT DEED?

Conservation easements are powerful, permanent agreements that specify how a property can be used and developed no matter who owns the property in the future. The conserved land usually remains in private ownership, used for farming and forestry or as open space and natural areas. In this way, UVLT's conservation work sustains the patterns of stewardship that have created our region's rural landscape.





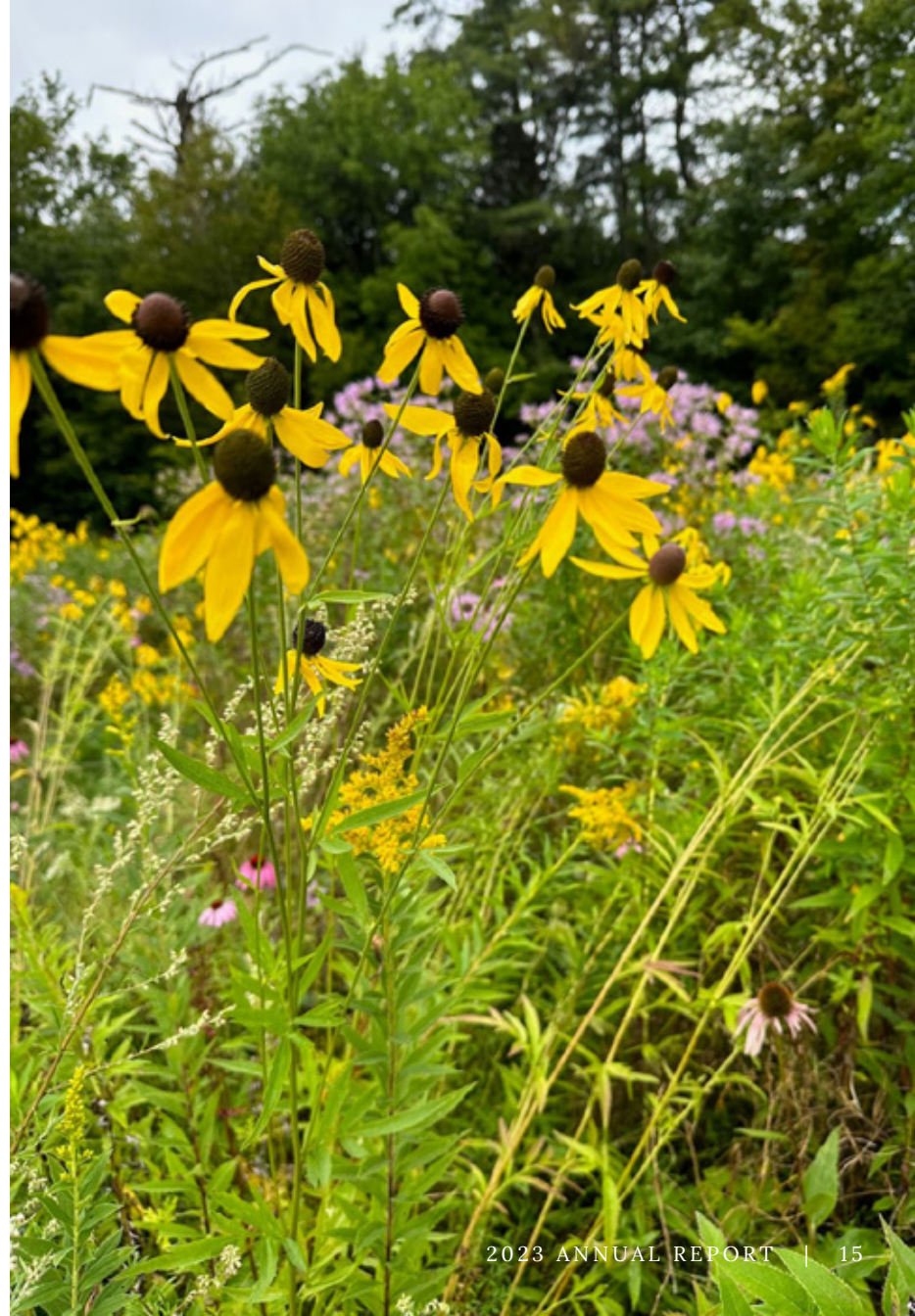
YEAR IN REVIEW

AT UVLT CONSERVATION AREAS

UVLT-owned Conservation Areas include nature preserves, trails and working farm and forest land. In fiscal '23 we installed a "Story Trail" at Lyme Hill Conservation Area and celebrated the opening with author/illustrator DB Johnson whose book *Henry Climbs a Mountain* is the first to be featured. Led by local volunteers, this project also involved accessibility improvements contracted to the Upper Valley Trails Alliance, and wheelchair friendly picnic tables constructed and donated by Eagle Scout candidate Jordan Lee Davis from Boy Scout Troop 280.

At 1110-acre Up On the Hill Conservation Area, a timber harvest designed to seed the future forest using several regeneration methods was advised and overseen by Full Circle Forestry and supported by the USDA Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP). This harvest site was visited by staff of UNH Cooperative Extension and USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service for their in-the-field group learning and discussion of acceptable and unacceptable growing stock.

At 350-acre Brookmead Conservation Area in Norwich, intern Mary Loreto assisted with delineation of areas of wet pasture to support fencing that will protect soil and water from the impacts of grazing animals. UVLT has relocated the trailhead access and parking to better protect riparian areas there.





YEAR IN REVIEW

LAND IN SERVICE

UVLT's food pantry gardens in Norwich and Charlestown are building community and feeding the community! A core of dedicated volunteers, joined by service clubs, scouts and camp groups plant, tend and harvest crops that feed people in need. Food from our Norwich garden is donated to our partner Willing Hands; the Charlestown garden supplies the Claremont Soup Kitchen and Food Pantry and the Charlestown Food Shelf.

As the fiscal year began, the region was entering drought conditions; the spring of '23 brought cool and wet conditions that delayed planting. Nevertheless, our fertile land produced thousands of pounds of food.





YEAR IN REVIEW

RESEARCH & EDUCATION

Portions of the Upper Valley are key connections between New Hampshire's White Mountains and the Green Mountains of Vermont. These connections will play an important role in adaptation to climate change. UVLT's multi-year study of wildlife corridors and connectivity in the northern portion of the Upper Valley continued in fiscal '23. Volunteers and our contractor, Native Geographic, used wildlife cameras, winter tracking, and driving surveys, to collect data that will be used to prioritize protection and restoration of connections needed for an ecologically healthy Upper Valley, now and in the future. The results will inform UVLT conservation planning and the work of our partners at local, state and federal levels.

At Brookmead Conservation Area, our study of deer browse impacts on forest health entered its sixth year. Data collected at the 15 study plots indicates the significant pressure that deer are placing on the forest understory. Hardwood seedlings cannot get established and saplings in the plots cannot outgrow the deer. This will alter forest composition for years to come. UVLT engaged with the Norwich Conservation Commission in planning potential deer exclosures and steps to address the implications of deer population levels in Norwich.

American chestnut trees once thrived across much of the United States. The Upper Valley region was at the northern edge of its range. Today, the species has almost completely disappeared due to blight. But in the Upper Valley, there are several trees on UVLT-conserved properties. At Up On the Hill Conservation Area, UVLT unsuccessfully planted nuts in a forest clearing where there had once been a chestnut tree. In spring 2023, researchers visited UVLT properties to look at chestnut trees that might be suitable recipients of genetically modified pollen following EPA, USDA and FDA approval of this approach.

At UVLT-owned Conservation Areas, we're watching the mortality of ash trees due to arrival of the emerald ash borer in this region. Though the larvae of this exotic beetle are expected to kill most of the ash trees in Vermont and New Hampshire, it is hoped that some trees may survive. Identifying and protecting the survivors will maximize the chances that there will be future seedlings. The management plan for UVLT's Old Town Farm designates a 16-acre area for white ash regeneration, where small openings could encourage the success of ash seedlings.



THE SWAN BEDROCK SOCIETY

Bedrock is foundational, the core geology supporting the earth and life above it. Bedrock also means the principles and ideas on which something is based. For UVLT, bedrock is generosity and stewardship. It is our future.

Through bequests, life income gifts and beneficiary designations, members of UVLT's Swan Bedrock Society are sustaining our intact landscape, creating a "green legacy" of protected and connected places. Upper Valley residents are finding an easy and powerful way to protect what they love about this region – their wills.

Anyone can join the Swan Bedrock Society. Creating your estate plans can be an easy, inexpensive, affirmative experience; appreciative of the people and causes important in your life. Members of the Swan Bedrock Society have in common one thing – a love of this landscape and a commitment to its future. To learn more about the Swan Bedrock Society and discuss how your estate plans can contribute to land conservation and stewardship in the Upper Valley, contact Jeanie McIntyre, jeanie.mcintyre@uvlt.org or (603) 643-6626.

- | | | | |
|------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|
| • Anonymous (16) | • Blynn Garnett | • Doug & Jean Loudon | • Rick & Linda Roesch |
| • Jim & Joan Ashley | • John & Pam Gerstmayr | • Peter Martin & Lynn Freeman | • Elisabeth Russell |
| • Charles & Lynn Bohi | • Kurt Gotthardt | • J. Michael McGean | • Rika & Carl W. Schmidt |
| • Peter Bryant | • Marion Weathers Grassi | • Jeanie McIntyre | • Don & Irmi Snowden |
| • Roald & Lois Cann | • Justin Gullotta | • Christopher Milanesi | • Elizabeth & Edmund Speer |
| • Lisa Cashdan & Peter Stein | • Marion McCollom Hampton | • E.J. Moorhead | • David & Anne Stephens |
| • Robert W. Christy | • Bob & Christie Hedges | • Chris & Nancy Nesbitt | • Edward & Virginia Taylor |
| • Ray & Tina Clark | • June Hemberger | • Anne Peyton | • Bob Wetzel |
| • Patricia Ayres Crawford | • Bill & Sylvia Hill | • David & Sarah Drew Reeves | • Genevieve Williamson |
| • James & Deborah Crowell | • Carol Langstaff | • Patricia Richardson | • Doug & Joanne Wise |
| • Marilyse de Boissezon | • Carola Lea | • Lorrin Riggs | |





ACQUISITIONS



MARY ELIZABETH KINCAID WOODLANDS TOPSHAM, VT

The anonymous gift of this 210-acre property protects the summit of a forested hill and two beaver ponds, each completely surrounded by wetlands. Located in an area identified as highest priority habitat in Vermont, the land is part of an interior forest block that supports native plants, forest songbirds and wide-ranging mammals like bobcat, American marten and black bear.



MCINDOE FARM TRAIL NORWICH, VT

Working together, UVLT and landowner Watt Alexander extended and relocated public trails to provide better separation between agricultural operations and recreational use. The result was a new donated trail easement connecting a previously protected trail on the Alexander property with a new trail built at UVLT's Brookmead Conservation Area.



LEGGAT PERERA TUNBRIDGE, VT

Barbara Leggat and Joan Perera donated 153 acres that was once a hill farm and later a place their families camped and hiked. With their gift, in 2020, they intended to support UVLT's Fund for Conservation Action campaign, which provides capital for conservation transactions. UVLT placed a conservation easement on the property and sold it in 2023 to another family that expects to hike and camp and love the land as the Leggat and Perera families have done.



MAPLE LEAF FARM LYME, NH

Rich and Jackie Menge sold a conservation easement on the land where Rich has been making maple syrup for over 50 years. The 43 acres include huge landmark maples along Route 10 near the town line between Hanover and Lyme, 20 acres of hayfield presently supporting a local dairy farm and a 1500-tap sugarbush.



HOOPER HOMESTEAD CORNISH, NH

Mark Hooper's plan to conserve 60 acres in Cornish involves three parcels in the historic Cornish Art Colony, a longstanding priority for the Cornish Conservation Commission and UVLT. Mark's family's ties to this land go back nearly two centuries. In fiscal '23 he donated a conservation easement on the first of the three, a 12-acre parcel that's the site of a 1790 farmhouse. The remaining parcels will be conserved in fiscal '24.



CREAM STREET CONSERVATION AREA THETFORD, VT

Donated anonymously in May 2023, this 151-acre property includes upland forest, more than 20 acres of wetland and a white cedar swamp. Ranked highly for physical landscape diversity and connectivity, the land contains unique ecological resources and habitat which offer educational and research opportunities.



PARADEE ORFORD, NH

Six acres of flat, tillable farmland and 2 acres of floodplain and riverine habitat at the confluence of the Connecticut River and an unnamed tributary, this property has been a priority for conservation for more than 20 years. The conservation easement donated by Linda Paradee adds approximately 1000 feet of protected river frontage located near other previously conserved properties.

UVLT ACCREDITATION

UVLT completed the second cycle of accreditation by the national Land Trust Accreditation Commission and was recently approved (August 2023) for Accreditation for a third period. The land trust accreditation program recognizes land conservation organizations that meet the highest national quality standards for excellence and conservation permanence. The goals of the accreditation program are to: build and recognize strong land trusts; foster public confidence in land conservation; and help ensure the long- term protection of land. UVLT was first awarded accreditation in 2012.

Each accredited land trust completes a rigorous review process and joins a network of organizations united by strong ethical practices. The accreditation process involves an independent audit of conservation transactions and stewardship practices as well as a review of governance, financial management and treatment of charitable funds. As of August 2023, there are 461 accredited land trusts in 46 U.S. states and territories.



UPPER VALLEY
LAND TRUST

19 Buck Road
Hanover, NH

(603) 643-6626
www.ulvt.org

Nonprofit Org
US Postage
PAID
Wht Riv Jct, VT
Permit No. 73

