



News & Notes

U P P E R V A L L E Y L A N D T R U S T

Conserving Maple Leaf Farm

Succession Planning with Confidence

Rich Menge has been making maple syrup at Maple Leaf Farm for over 50 years, but sugaring on the property has been going on for much longer. Rich remembers stories from the families that used the land before his family did, stories that reach back at least a century. Huge old maples are older than that, iconic figures visible along Route 10 near the town line between Hanover and Lyme.

Rich and his wife Jackie are looking forward, imagining the future of Maple Leaf Farm and taking deliberate steps to protect agricultural opportunities on the land they know so well. Along with the sugarbush, Maple Leaf Farm includes 26 acres of prime and locally important agricultural soils which the Menges hope will be productive for years to come. In conserving this land, UVLT and the Menges sought support from the NH Farm Future Fund which provided funding to begin business and succession planning.

Rich grew up in Lyme. In his youth, without access to a tractor, he and his friends hauled and dragged firewood to the sugarhouse to fuel the arch. Later, he tended the sugarbush and boiled sap on nights and weekends while pursuing his "day job" engineering career. In 2018, Rich and Jackie bought the farm from his family and moved there full-time.

Rich and Jackie average 750-850 gallons of syrup annually which is almost double the statewide average. They work hard to chase down vacuum leaks in their sap collection tubing network. By implementing a "zero leak" policy they exceed average production figures of other NH producers and mirror the production at the UVM Proctor Maple center while striving for .75 gallons of syrup per tap. Solar arrays help to power the property. The 1500-tap maple operation is well established and Maple Leaf Farm has capacity to accommodate double or triple

"Maple Leaf Farm" story continues inside...

Background photo: The sugarbush at Maple Leaf Farm in Lyme, NH

GOOD DEEDS



Rich, Jenn, and Katherine Menge in the sugarhouse

CONSERVED

Mary Elizabeth Kincaid Woodlands
Topsham, 210 acres

McIndoe Farm Trail
Norwich, 1200 feet of trail

Leggat-Perera Property
Tunbridge, 148.5 acres

Maple Leaf Farm
Lyme, 43 acres



UPPER VALLEY
LAND TRUST

19 Buck Road
Hanover, NH 03755

Published by:
Upper Valley Land Trust
(603) 643-6626
contactus@uvlt.org

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Vital Statistics

- 43 acre mix of farm and forestland
- Highly productive sugarbush
- 26 acres of prime and locally important agricultural soils
- Watershed of Hewes Brook, a Connecticut River Tributary
- Conservation Easement purchased with funds from UVLT's Fund for Conservation Action, and grants from the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service, NH Moose Plate, and NH Farm Futures Fund

"Maple Leaf Farm" continued from front...

the amount of sap that is currently being processed. The sugarhouse is well located on a highway with a fully paved shoulder and there is a sap unloading pipeline connected to the sugarhouse that is about 100' away.

Maple Leaf Farm is situated along a state road with 1600 feet of frontage not far from a commercial zoning district. There is significant development pressure for both single family homes and businesses, but this land feeds people too, with the potential to expand this vital resource.

"We recognize the challenge that encroaching urban development poses on farmland. However, with these challenges there are opportunities," Rich and Jackie wrote in a 2021 letter to the NH Farm Future Fund. Location of the farm on a state highway provides for easy access to local markets, including direct market options and a grocery cooperative chain. A grant from the NH Farm Future Fund has supported the Menges' work with Land For Good, a non-profit that assists farmers and farmland owners. This support enabled the Menges to research and establish a lease with a local dairy farmer for use of the fields. Rich and Jackie look forward to assessing other sustainable farm activities for the 20 acres of fields and pasture land in addition to a possible expansion of the maple business.



Photo: Rich and Jackie at Maple Leaf Farm sugarhouse
Background Photo: Hayfield, Maple Leaf Farm

CELEBRATE

Land Conservation and Stewardship



Please Join Us!
UPPER VALLEY LAND TRUST
Annual Conservation Celebration

Wednesday, May 31
Outdoors* at Poverty Lane Orchards
98 Poverty Lane, Lebanon, NH

5:00 pm Food Trucks & Social Time
6:30 pm Program

4:00 pm Come early for an Orchard
Talk with Steve Wood and
learn about research and
stewardship practices at
Poverty Lane Orchards.

More info at www.UVLT.org / BYOB OK
*In the event of inclement weather, we will be
meeting in the packing house, masks optional.
Photos courtesy of Poverty Lane Orchards



Land That Keeps Giving

For more than 50 years, the families of Barbara Leggat and Joan Hulme Perera enjoyed a property they owned jointly in Tunbridge. Between them, the two families raised 7 daughters, spending weekends camping and exploring the fields and forests on their 153-acre parcel and the beautiful, unfragmented landscape around it. As their grandchildren grew up, the two friends, now both widowed, discussed how best to transition the land to new owners. Their decision to give the land to the Upper Valley land Trust supported UVLT's Fund for Conservation Action capital campaign and ensures that their beloved property is forever conserved.

The land on Gilley Road has forests, fields, streams, privacy, views, and serenity. A former hill farm with rolling topography, diverse habitats, mature sugar maples and hemlocks,

old stone walls, younger brushy areas with smaller openings, beaver ponds, and perennial stream, this is the kind of land "that holds the earth together" as the saying goes.

In March, UVLT sold the land subject to a conservation easement that allows farming and forest stewardship and offers a potential housesite sited as Barbara and Joan had thought appropriate. But the new owners do not expect to build there in the foreseeable future. They are looking forward to camping and orienteering with their daughters, much as the Leggat and Perera families once did. "Caring for a property such as this would be a privilege, and an opportunity to enhance forest ecology while continuing to instill an appreciation for natural wonders with our kids," they wrote. And so this land keeps giving.



Leggat-Perera property conserved in Tunbridge

Vital Statistics

- 132.6 acres of productive forests
- 18.4 acres of open land
- 2.2 acres of wetland
- 6,100 feet of frontage on Gilley Road
- 4,975 feet of frontage on perennial and intermittent streams
- Proceeds from the sale of conserved property added to UVLT Fund For Conservation Action

Brookmead in May

For one month this spring, high school senior Mary Loreto will be focused on UVLT's Brookmead Conservation Area. As a full-time volunteer, she will collect forest data for our long-running deer browse study, research and document amphibian life in and around Brookmead's vernal pools, assist with trail improvements and plantings to protect wetlands, remove invasive buckthorn and honeysuckle, and help with planting this year's food pantry garden.



Mary Loreto

Mary expects to major in Environmental Science/Studies in the fall. Her internship at Brookmead is her Senior Project at

Holton-Arms High School in Bethesda, Maryland, which grants its students the opportunity to pursue a project that provides an enriching educational or professional experience to close out their high school career and prepare them for future opportunities.

Mary has spent the majority of her summers and school breaks in the Upper Valley and proposed her project because UVLT's mission aligns with her core values. She says, "I am passionate about maintaining precious land and providing safe opportunities for individuals to explore the wilderness." Earlier this year, she's been volunteering at Brookside Nature Center in Wheaton, Maryland on a bi-weekly basis as a Nature Center Host.



Look for updates about Mary's Brookmead learnings at www.UVLT.org

Wildlife Connectivity

Study Update

UVLT enters the second year of our Wildlife Habitat Connectivity study in partnership with Jesse Mohr (Native Geographic), Vermont Fish and Wildlife, and New Hampshire Fish and Game. The Upper Valley region plays a critical role in connecting the Green Mountains of Vermont and the White Mountains of New Hampshire.



Tracks spotted at Lyme Pinnacle by volunteer Tii McLane

Most of what we know about which areas are important to wildlife for maintaining critical connections between large habitat blocks comes from modeling, and not from "boots on the ground" data collection. The main goal of this study is to confirm where those important areas are.

Since the winter of 2020, we have been tracking animal activity at priority road crossings and habitat blocks. UVLT staff, with the assistance of 9 volunteers, have been collecting presence/absence data on the target species activity at 24 locations across our region. In addition, we've placed 21 wildlife cameras as a means of long-term continuous data collection. The target species we are collecting data on for this study include bear, bobcat, otter, fisher, mink, long-tailed weasel, ermine, moose, deer, coyote, and fox.

This work is only possible with the generous support of our landowners who have offered their land to be used in the study.

The volunteer effort on this project has been so successful, that we've even expanded the scope of the project to include a

"Wildlife Connectivity Study Update" continued to the right...

Volunteer Experiences

with UVLT

If you would like to learn more about volunteer opportunities with UVLT, send an email to Cassie Bernyk, cassie.bernyk@uvlt.org.

A lot of our work at UVLT depends on the support and dedication from our hard working volunteers. From growing food in our gardens to give back to the community, to making sure our campsites along the CT River Paddlers trail are maintained, we couldn't do it all without them.

Here are some highlights from a few of UVLT's dedicated volunteers:

"I recently retired, and since I have always enjoyed canoeing and kayaking, I thought a good way to force myself to get out on the river regularly would be to volunteer as a campsite caretaker. In the spring I clean up from winter storms or spring flooding, and in the fall picnic tables and privies need to be secured in case of severe spring flooding. During the summer, I check my campsites regularly. Checking the logbooks is a genuine delight. Last year I found a note from a group that truly appreciated all the campsites along the river, and they said that watching a meteor shower from one of the sites was the highlight of their trip. Seeing entries like that one makes everything worthwhile. Caring for campsites along the Connecticut River is a great way to get outdoors regularly, and has rewards I never expected."

— Ted Unkles,
Campsite Adopter for Howard Island North,
South and Vaughan meadow sites



King Aruthur Flour, Brookmead Potato Harvest 22'

"The Wildlife Connectivity Study is a great project because it gets some results without putting too much stress on volunteers. It was a really fantastic way to visit a UVLT property and spend some time there; while feeling like we were helping UVLT and wildlife, stretching our tracking skills that sometimes get rusty, and taking a beautiful walk."

— Tii McLane, Volunteer for
Wildlife Connectivity Study



Potato Harvest, Brookmead 22'

"Monitoring easements for Upper Valley Land Trust has certainly been a worthwhile endeavor. What could be better than furthering the cause of conservation? For Kristi and me, the additional "perks" are many. There are the challenges of following property lines, finding hidden corner posts, visiting wild places of small scale spectacular beauty where few folks go and spending time with like-minded property owners.....all this within short driving distance from home."

— Alex Medlicott,
Volunteer Easement Monitor

"Wildlife Connectivity Study Update" continued...

larger geographic area than originally planned. We'll be continuing to collect data over the rest of 2023. Stay tuned for further updates on this study!

If you would like to support this work, please make contributions on UVLT's donation page and select Wildlife Connectivity Study.



Scan QR code to be directed to the donation page.



Playful Bears at Lyme Hill Conservation Area



Bobcats at Rix Ledges