

SPRING 2024

OutsideIN

NEWS & NOTES FROM UPPER VALLEY LAND TRUST

GOOD DEEDS

**Conservation transactions completed
January – March, 2024**

Whitewater Reservoir
48 acres, Claremont, NH

Metcalf Easement Additions
159 acres, Norwich, VT

Fin and Feather
9 acres, Thetford, VT



UPPER VALLEY
LAND TRUST

CONSERVATION SPOTLIGHT

FROM FOREST *to Faucet*

**PROTECTING CLAREMONT'S
PUBLIC WATER SUPPLY**

Continue reading inside...



VITAL STATISTICS

- 5 acres of open water and 1600 feet of shoreland frontage
- 40 acres of white pine, hardwood, and hemlock forest
- 1270 feet of stream frontage
- Buffers protecting the pristine public drinking water supply for the City of Claremont
- Vernal pools supporting amphibian indicator species, including frogs and salamanders
- Conservation easement conveyed by the City of Claremont in collaboration with the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services

City of Claremont representatives were all smiles after the signing of the conservation easement for the Whitewater Reservoir. From left, Avery Hallbauer, Project Manager; Peg Merrens, UVLT Vice President, Conservation; Nancy Merrill, Director, Planning & Economic Development; and Mayor, Dale Girard.

FROM FOREST *to Faucet*

PROTECTING CLAREMONT'S PUBLIC WATER SUPPLY

According to the City of Claremont, the Whitewater Reservoir is its **“most pristine and valuable source of public drinking water.”** Now, thanks to a collaborative conservation effort organized by Claremont, UVLT, and the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES), that vital resource will be protected for generations to come.

The new conserved area includes 48 acres at the Whitewater Reservoir, which sits within one of Claremont's most significant ecological areas — a nearly 50,000-acre block of unfragmented forest that extends north and east into Cornish and Croydon and is home to moose, bear, bobcat, mink, and river otters.

Claremont has owned the 17-acre reservoir for more than a century. Fed by Whitewater Brook, which flows from the western flanks of the Croydon Mountains approximately 2.5 miles away, its watershed spans more than four square miles across three towns and includes numerous wetlands, streams, seeps, and vernal pools.

The conserved land comprises the four forested parcels nearest the dam that impounds the reservoir, just south of the Cornish town line in Claremont. Dominated by white pine, hardwood, and hemlock-dominated stands located on very steep slopes, the land is essential to the reservoir's health.

“You need to have significant buffers along the reservoir to protect a clean water supply from erosion,” explains former City Project Manager Michael McCrory, who was involved in the earlier phases of the project.

Claremont first proposed the conservation easement as a mitigation measure in 2021, when its reconstruction of a dangerous intersection at North and Main Street impacted 800 feet of stream and half an acre of wetlands. Since the reservoir lands are considered high-priority, NHDES approved the offset.

Members of the Claremont Conservation Commission, the City Council, and City Planning staff strongly supported the easement project, which took shape over several years.

“We have to protect that reservoir, certainly as we look into the future with drought and other [ecological] conditions,” Claremont City Councilor James Contois told the Eagle Times in 2020. **“It's a valuable asset and critical to the city.”**

The conserved land currently provides a right-of-way for recreational trails, including one used by snowmobilers. These trails will remain accessible under a conservation management plan, provided that users do not pose a hazard to the watershed. State law prohibits boating, swimming, fishing, and other recreational activities in the waters or on the ice of Whitewater Brook Reservoir.

For the City of Claremont, its residents, and their wild neighbors, this strategic easement is a win-win that preserves public access and a crucial wildlife habitat, all while protecting an irreplaceable natural resource.

FIN AND FEATHER PARCEL ADDED TO ELY MOUNTAIN CONSERVATION AREA

As development encroaches on more wild spaces, habitats can become cut off, leaving animals stranded and disrupting the ecosystem. That's why natural corridors that allow wildlife to transit between habitats — like UVLT's Ely Mountain Conservation Area — are critical.

Now, that protected area is even larger, thanks to Deecie Denison's recent donation of an additional 9.6-acre parcel. For Deecie, the gift fulfills a longtime ambition to build on the work she and her late husband Jock started when they donated 200 acres to create the conservation area in 2014. With the new land, plus the 2020 purchase of the former Mans property, Ely Mountain Conservation Area now spans 404 acres in Thetford and Fairlee. It is home to a broad range of species, including the endangered Northern Long-Eared Bat.

The newly conserved parcel is primarily open fields, with a forested eastern section. The Vermont Agency of Natural Resources identified that area as "highest priority" in

its Vermont Conservation Design report, which guides the state's efforts to preserve an ecologically functional landscape.

In addition, the parcel will also help more Upper Valley residents enjoy this serene stretch of woodland. The property is the previous site of Fin and Feather, a hunting and fishing camp run by longtime State Representative Webster Keefe. The property is now cleared of all structures and offers a good base for a parking area and room for UVLT to add picnic tables and a pavilion for visitors. The gift will allow us to relocate the current parking area and trailhead to more suitable soil, and to remove a stream crossing that has proven difficult to maintain.

The Thetford Conservation Commission was strongly involved in creating the Ely Mountain Conservation Area and has recommended that the town contribute some of its conservation funds to the UVLT's stewardship fund for this addition.



METCALF EASEMENT ADDITIONS

Charlotte Metcalf has been protecting lands in Norwich since 2005 — almost two decades — and has protected and supported other land protection efforts in and around Westport, MA and Buzzards Bay. Last month she donated a conservation easement to conserve more of her Norwich land, bringing the contiguous total to 159 acres. Her generosity protects significant habitat including wetlands, fens, and over a mile of frontage on streams.



SEEING THE FOREST FOR THE TREES

DECLINING BIODIVERSITY IN UPPER VALLEY FORESTS

This spring, UVLT has joined with more than 20 conservation and environmental groups and public agencies to present a series of discussions about forest health, forest ecosystems, and the future of Upper Valley forests, with a focus on the effects of deer overabundance and invasive species. The series began **April 18** and will include additional discussions on **May 1** and **May 22, 2024**, with field visits and outdoor programs to be scheduled over the summer. **Please email contactus@uvlt.org to get a link to the recorded panel discussions.**

May 1: Oh Deer: Impact of Deer on Upper Valley Forests

6:00 - 8:00 pm, Howe Library Mayer Room, Hanover, NH

Learn about the pressure deer are placing on our wild areas, how deer herd size is measured, and the role of hunting and landowner practices in managing the deer population.

May 22: (Open) Space Invaders: How Invasive Plants Threaten Biodiversity

6:00 - 8:00 pm, Howe Library Mayer Room, Hanover, NH

Deer overbrowsing of certain plants is allowing other, non-native plants to invade our forests and impact wildlife habitats. Speakers will discuss how to plan, prioritize, budget, and recruit public support for efforts to remove these invaders, as well as what will replace them.



Upcoming EVENTS

JOIN US FOR SPRING PADDLE THE BORDER!

Sunday, May 19, 10:30-11:30 am launch

Meet at Bedell Bridge State Park Boat Launch off Route 10, Haverhill Corner, NH from 10:00 - 11:00 am for a shuttle to the launch site.

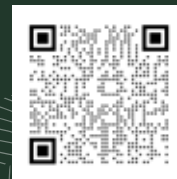
Join us for the twice-yearly Paddle The Border (PTB) event on Sunday, May 19! PTB was started as a way for community organizations from Vermont and New Hampshire to work together to showcase our shared asset, the Connecticut River. The event is sponsored by The Newbury Conservation Commission (NCC), Haverhill Recreation Commission (HRC), and Lower Cohase Chamber of Commerce, with support from Upper Valley Land Trust, Cohase Rotary Club, Strawberry Farm Band, and Butler's Bus Service.

The Spring Paddle goes from Woodsville Community Field in Woodsville to the Bedell Bridge State Park Boat Launch off Route 10, Haverhill Corner, NH. Butler Bus Company is providing a shuttle service from the takeout at Bedell Bridge to the launch site (we thank them!). The shuttle will be available from 10:00 - 11:00 am, with a suggested launch time of 10:30 - 11:30. Estimated paddle time is three and a half to four hours.

At the end of the paddle, we'll enjoy music by the Strawberry Farm Band and a cookout by the Cohase Rotary Club. **For more information, contact Michael Thomas at mikethom1@charter.net or (802) 757-3960.**

HAVE THE OUTSIDE DELIVERED TO YOUR INBOX!

Looking for new ways to explore the Upper Valley or tips for what flora and fauna to watch as the seasons change? Sign up for Field Notes to ensure you never miss an event or update!



Volunteer SPOTLIGHT

SUPPORT UVLT AS AN EASEMENT MONITOR

Did you know that UVLT has conserved over 56,000 acres? That means conducting our annual land inspections is a significant undertaking — and our volunteer Easement Monitors make it possible.

These volunteers walk conserved properties, meet with landowners, take photos, and file reports with UVLT. Here's what new easement monitor Mimi Pearson from Piermont has to say:

"I just completed UVLT's two-session volunteer easement monitor training and came away from it feeling very eager to start doing this work. UVLT is a great organization; having known of it for years, I became an active "participant" in 2016, when I purchased my current home, as my acreage includes a small hayfield with a UVLT easement. That jumped me into being both supportive bystander AND landowner. I've received annual monitor reports on my little acreage, and they're a pleasure to review. Now, I'm so pleased to be able to join in "the action"!"

I love being in the woods, fields, and marshes; this role allows me a wonderful new array of opportunities to get out there. The training provided all the info needed to get a comfortable start; furthermore, for those who'd prefer to do their first outing with a seasoned monitor, buddying up is a nice option that's offered."



INTERESTED IN JOINING THE TEAM?

Sign up for our volunteer opportunities newsletter to learn about upcoming training sessions.



UPPER VALLEY
LAND TRUST

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SEEDS OF CHANGE

How does our garden grow? With generous support from Johnny's Selected Seeds!

Last month, Johnny's Selected Seeds donated a generous package of seeds to UVLT's Food Pantry Garden program. We received carrots, parsnips, tomatoes, snap peas, bush beans, zucchini, squash, kale, and more! With this donation, our gardens are now set for the whole growing season. We are so excited to grow a wide variety of fresh fruits and vegetables for our neighbors in need, and very grateful to Johnny's Selected Seeds for supporting our Food Pantry Garden program and the Upper Valley community.