

# VERMONT HOUSING & CONSERVATION BOARD

# VERMONT LAND TRUST

**Senate Committee on Agriculture**

**January 19, 2024**

Presented by

Gus Seelig,  
Executive Director, Vermont Housing and Conservation Board

Tracy Zschau, President and CEO, Vermont Land Trust



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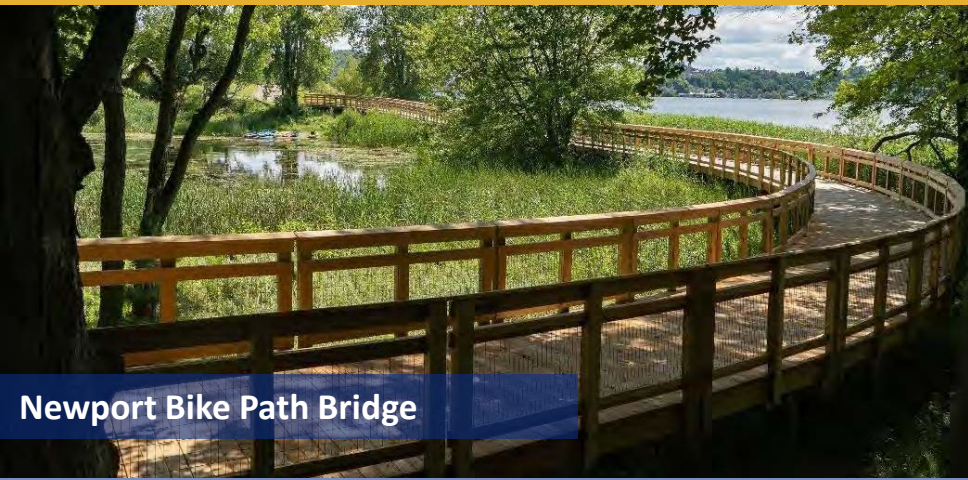
**Farmworker Housing**



Lake Memphremagog, Newport



Newport Crossing, Newport City



Newport Bike Path Bridge



## Statutory Purpose

“the dual goals of creating affordable housing for Vermonters, and conserving and protecting Vermont’s agricultural land, forestland, historic properties, important natural areas, and recreational lands of primary importance to the economic vitality and quality of life of the State.”

10 V.S.A.15 §302



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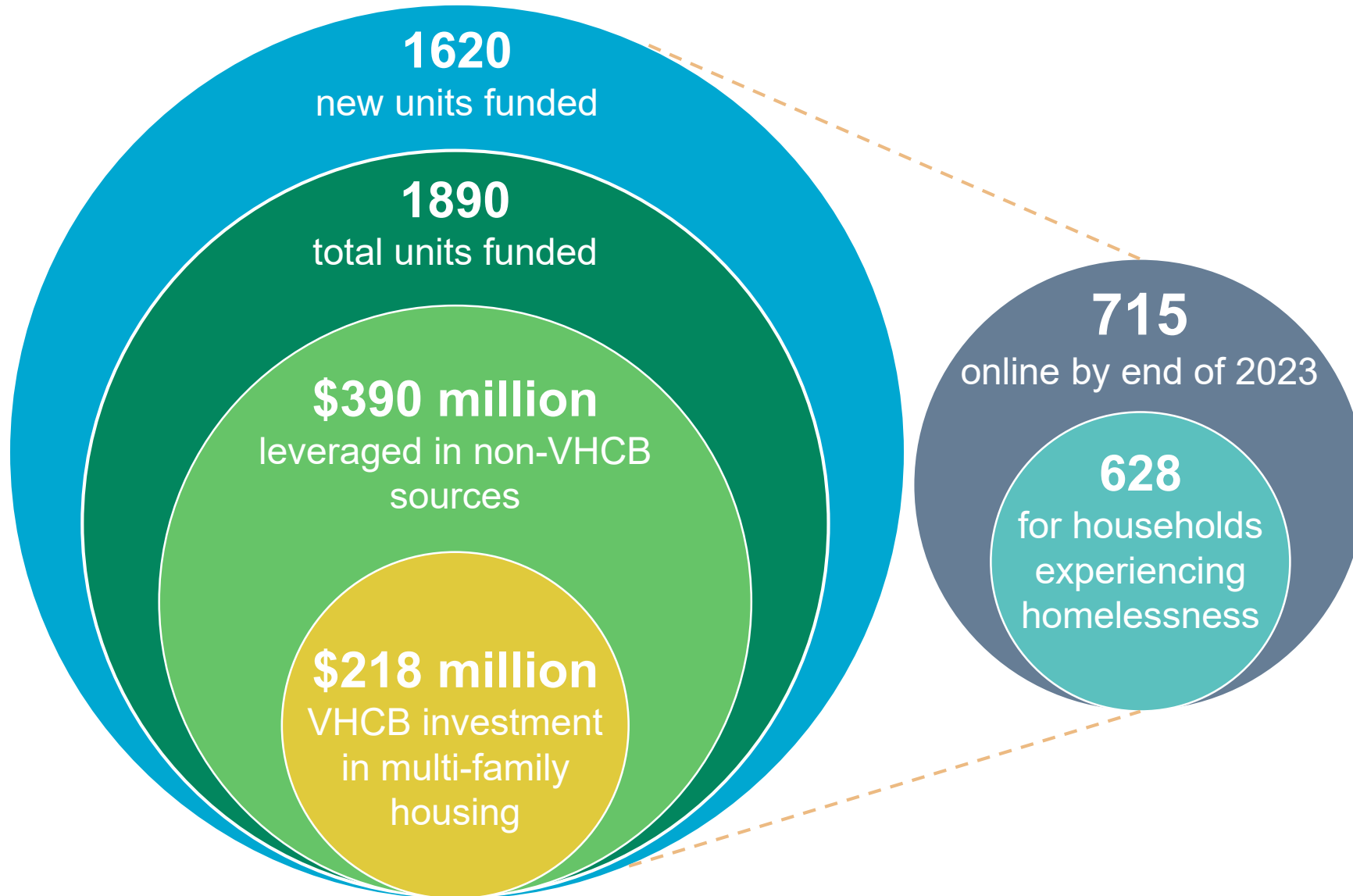
# Housing Programs

- Multi-Family Rental Housing
- Home Ownership
- Permanent Supportive Housing
- Shelter Improvement and Expansion
- Manufactured Home Communities
- Home Accessibility Improvements
- Community Planning & Technical Assistance
- Farmworker Housing
- Recovery Residences

**15,000 homes across Vermont**



# Rental Housing Investment 2020 - 2023



# Farmworker Housing Repair Loan Program

**Total VHCB investment:**  
\$3,355,000 loan program  
\$1,116,000 replacement program

**Program administered by  
Champlain Housing Trust in partnership  
with UVM Extension**

**Elysian Fields, Shoreham**



0% interest forgivable loans for:

- repair of existing housing
- replacement of housing beyond repair/ not suitable for habitation

## **PHASE I**

Buildings repaired: 38

Buildings replaced: 6

Farmworkers impacted:

Repair Program: 166

Replacement Program: 25

**PHASE II:** inquiries for 66 farms so far

# Conservation Programs

- **Recreational Lands, Forests, and Natural Areas Conservation**
- **Historic Preservation**
- **Water Quality**
- **Land Access & Opportunity Board**
- **VHCB AmeriCorps**
- **Farmland Access**
- **Farm & Forest Viability Program**
- **Rural Economic Development Initiative (REDI)**



# Vermont Farm & Forest Viability Program

“It’s been so reassuring. It’s easy to feel isolated, but they’ve helped me find a path forward and motivated me to keep going.”

~ Hannah Pearce



Hannah Pearce, Hillside Farm,  
East Albany



# Rural Economic Development Initiative (REDI)



Alex Englert and Mike Scheps,  
Maplebrook Farm, Bennington

“In dairy, there’s never a budget for equipment improvements that are forward thinking vs putting out fires. We’ve never applied for a grant, and this would’ve been too daunting without a strong team to help us. This grant will get us to a stage in one year that would’ve taken 5+...the impact is hard to put into words.”

~Alex Englert, Maplebrook Farm

**\$800,000** → **\$18,822,078**

REDI FUNDS SINCE 2017

GRANTS TO COMMUNITIES

(LEVERAGED 22:1; \$276,795 AWARD AVG.)



# Farmland Conservation



Gray Farm  
Charleston, Morgan, and Derby



Clark L&A Farm, Pawlet

Since 1987:

- 173,000 acres of farmland conserved
- 808 farms conserved
- \$96M in State funds
- \$87M in Federal funds

Between 2018 and 2023, nearly 40% of projects were farm transfers.

18 month pipeline: 76 projects, 15,000 acres, \$31M funds needed



Baird Farm, Chittenden

# Farmland Access & Succession

Land conservation and business planning support to farm and forest businesses helps new farmers afford farmland and diversifies agriculture.



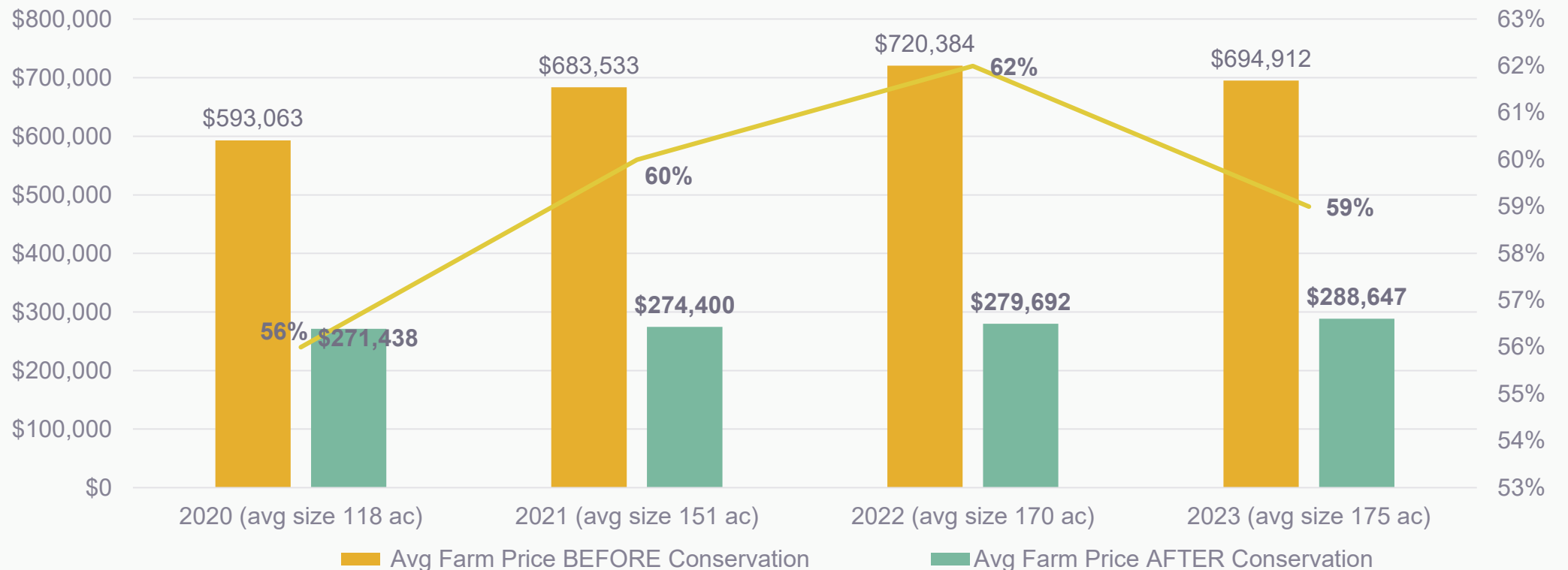
Wood's Market Garden Brandon



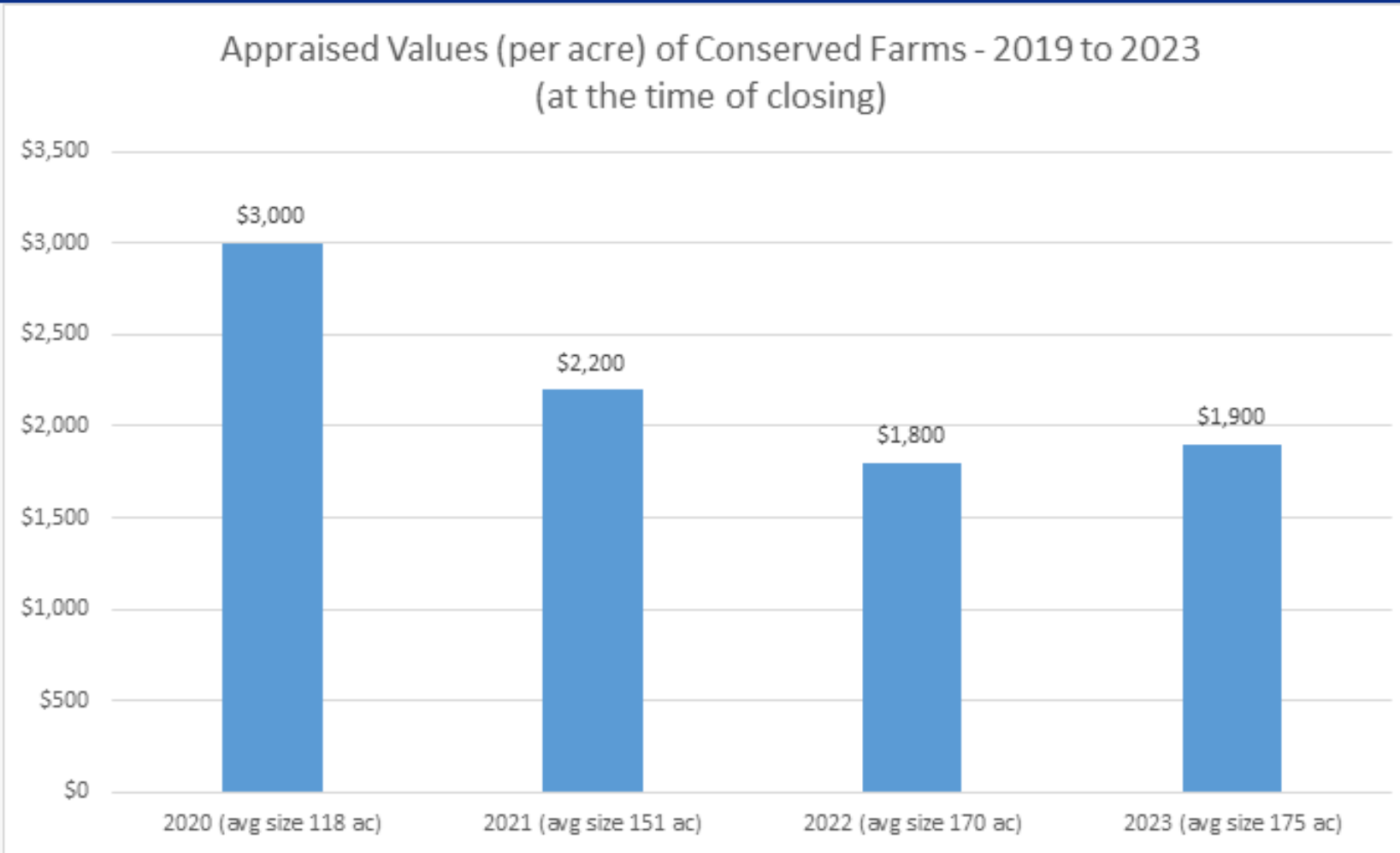
Hursch Farm, Morristown

# Price of Conserved Land

VHCB Funded Farms - 2020 to 2023

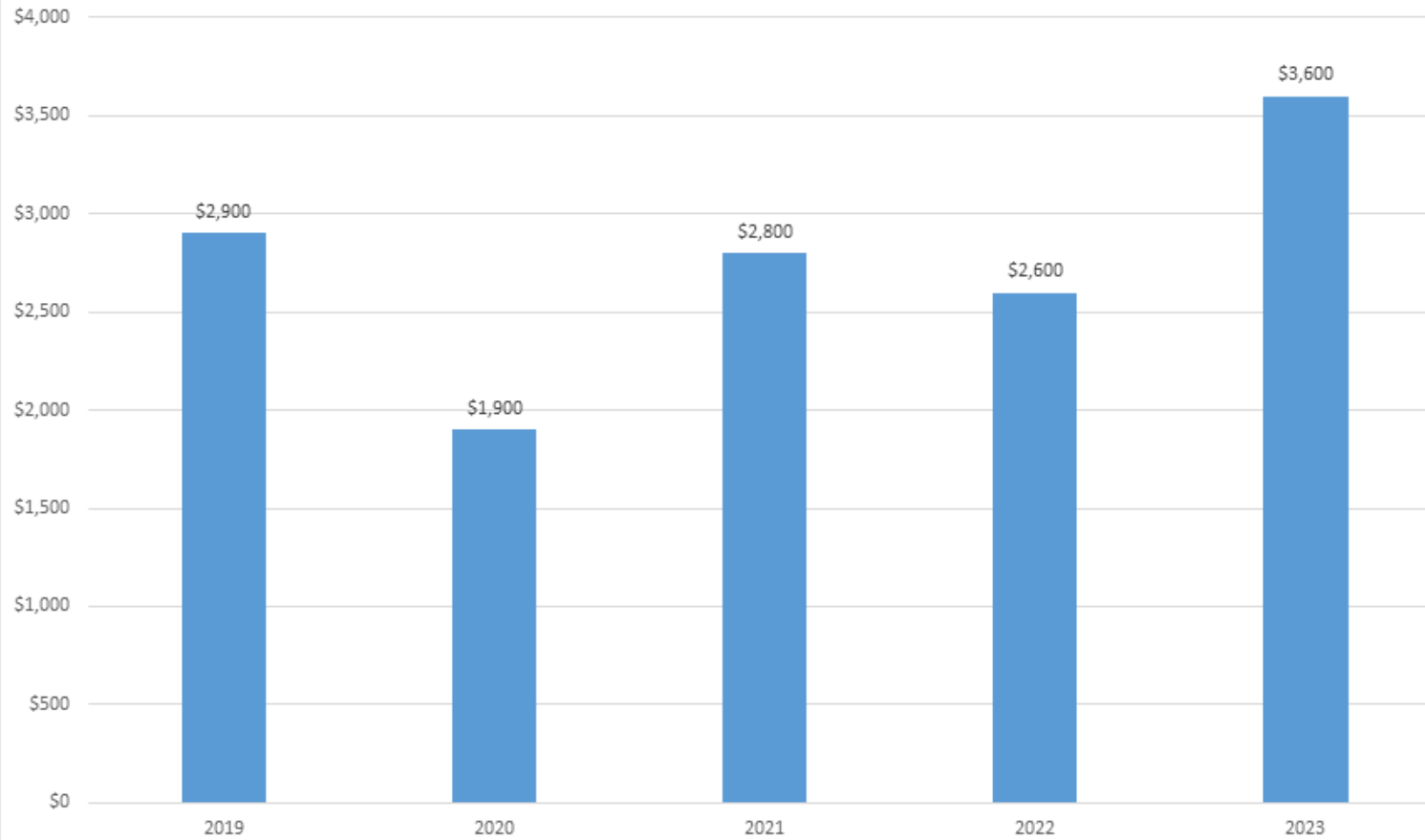


# Price of Conserved Land



# Price of Conserved Land

Average per acre conserved farm price 2019 - 2023  
*Franklin, Orleans, Essex, Lamoille, Caledonia, and Grand Isle Counties*





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## NRCS ACEP ALE & Future Funds

ACEP-ALE is a critical source of match funds to State dollars: ~\$3 - \$4M annually

Inflation Reduction Act will bring more opportunities (on top of ACEP-ALE):  
~\$6M in 2025  
~7M in 2026



The Farm Upstream, Jericho

# 18-month Pipeline

## Housing, Conservation & Historic Preservation

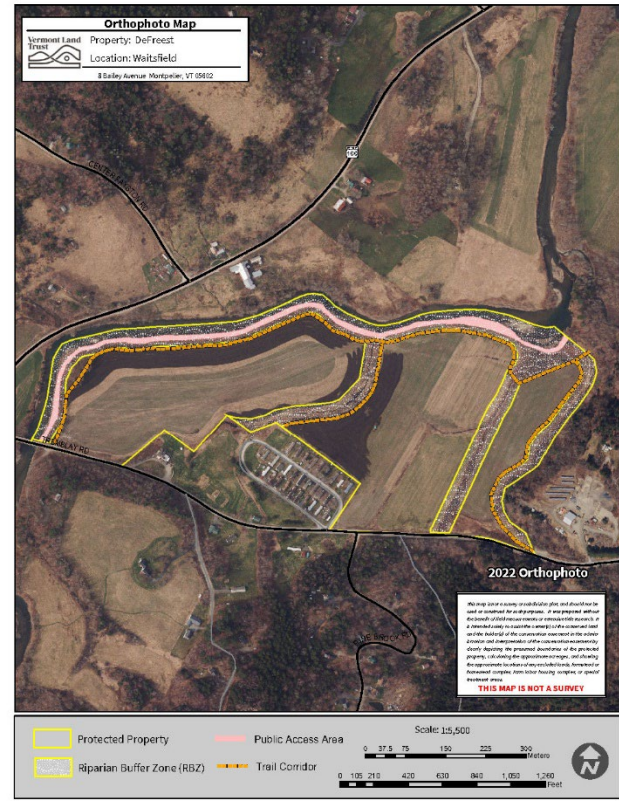
- 200 million to house over 940 households through rental units, shared equity homes, shelter beds and farmworker housing improvements
- Agricultural and natural resources projects in the near term exceeds \$50 million in requests to conserve approximately:
  - 85 farms
  - 43,204 acres of natural areas and outdoor recreation sites
  - 24 historic buildings.





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# Water Quality on Farms



Defreest Farm, Waitsfield



# Vermont Land Trust



UNITING LAND AND LIVES

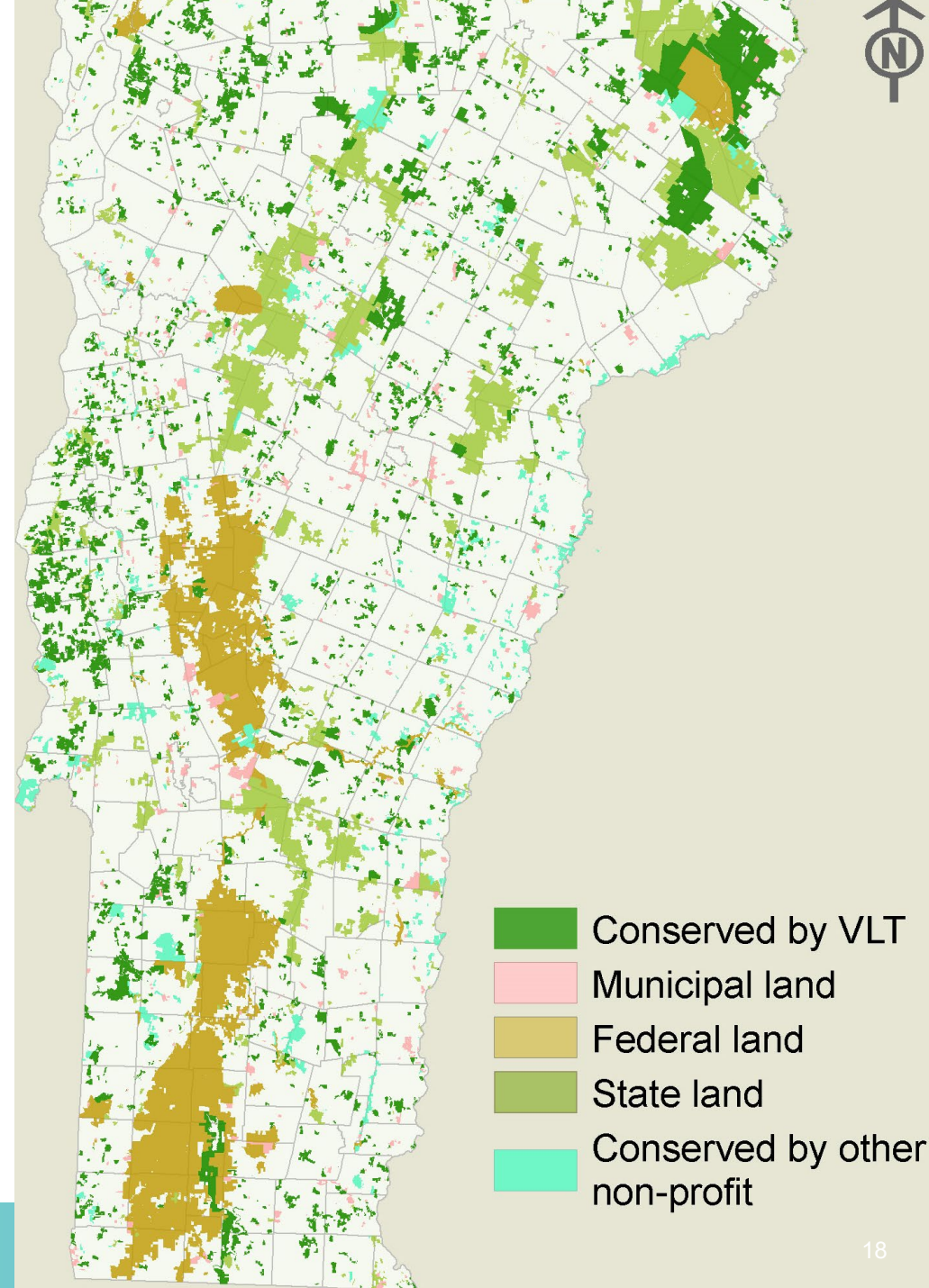
Helping people

- **Protect**
  - **Care for &**
  - **Connect to**
- the home we share



# About us

- Founded in 1977
- Conserved 11% Vermont, over 630,000 acres
- Focus on farms, forests, community lands
- Steward 2,300+ easements
- 3,500 members
- Funds come from VHCB/state, federal, foundations, individuals
- 45 employees statewide





Harrison Farm, Addison

## Farmland Protection and Access

- Over 1,000 farms conserved
- 158,000 acres protected
- Over 100 successful transfers
- Hundreds of streams protected and wetlands improved



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# THANK YOU

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The Doyle Family  
Boneyard Farm, Fletcher

