



Vermont Housing & Conservation Board

House Committee on Natural Resources, Fish & Wildlife

Friday, February 3, 2017



VHCB Results: FY 2016 and FY 2017

What we accomplished

2016

State Investment: \$9.7M
Leverage: \$60M

429 affordable housing units
24 farms - 3,443 acres
7 natural areas - 3,638 acres
1 historic project
80 Viability Program participants

2017

State Investment: \$9.6M
Leverage: \$65M

411 affordable housing units
25 farms – 2,860 acres
11 natural areas - 1,826 acres
1 historic project
82 Viability Program participants



Title 10: Conservation and Development

Chapter 15: VERMONT HOUSING AND CONSERVATION TRUST FUND

§ 302. Policy, findings, and purpose

(a) 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 are of primary importance to the economic vitality and quality of life of the State.

§ 303. Definitions

(F) the protection of lands for multiple conservation purposes, including the protection of surface waters and associated natural resources;

VHCB PROGRAMS

- Multi-Family Housing Development and Preservation
- Farmland Conservation
- Forestland, Recreational land and Natural Area Conservation
- Vermont Farm & Forest Viability Program
- Home Ownership
- Farmland Access
- Home Access
- Vermont Lead Paint Hazard Abatement/Healthy Homes
- AmeriCorps
- Community Planning & Technical Assistance
- Historic Preservation
- Modular Housing Innovation Program
- Housing Opportunities for Persons living with HIV/AIDS



Willoughby Peaks, private conserved forestland

Jon Binhammer, The Nature Conservancy photo

In 2015, VHCB helped conserve this 2,695-acre private forest in Westmore, protecting 199 acres of wetlands, 8 miles of headwater streams, much of the shoreline of 2 ponds, 4 miles of public trails, and 5 peaks over 2,000 feet.

The Vermont forest products industry contributes 10,555 jobs and \$1.5 billion in economic output, including value-added manufacturing and tourism.

BURLINGTON COLLEGE LAND CAMBRIAN RISE HOUSING MASTER PLAN



Architect's illustration of proposed housing – a mixed income development with 700 new homes composed of family rental, senior housing and homeownership condominiums.



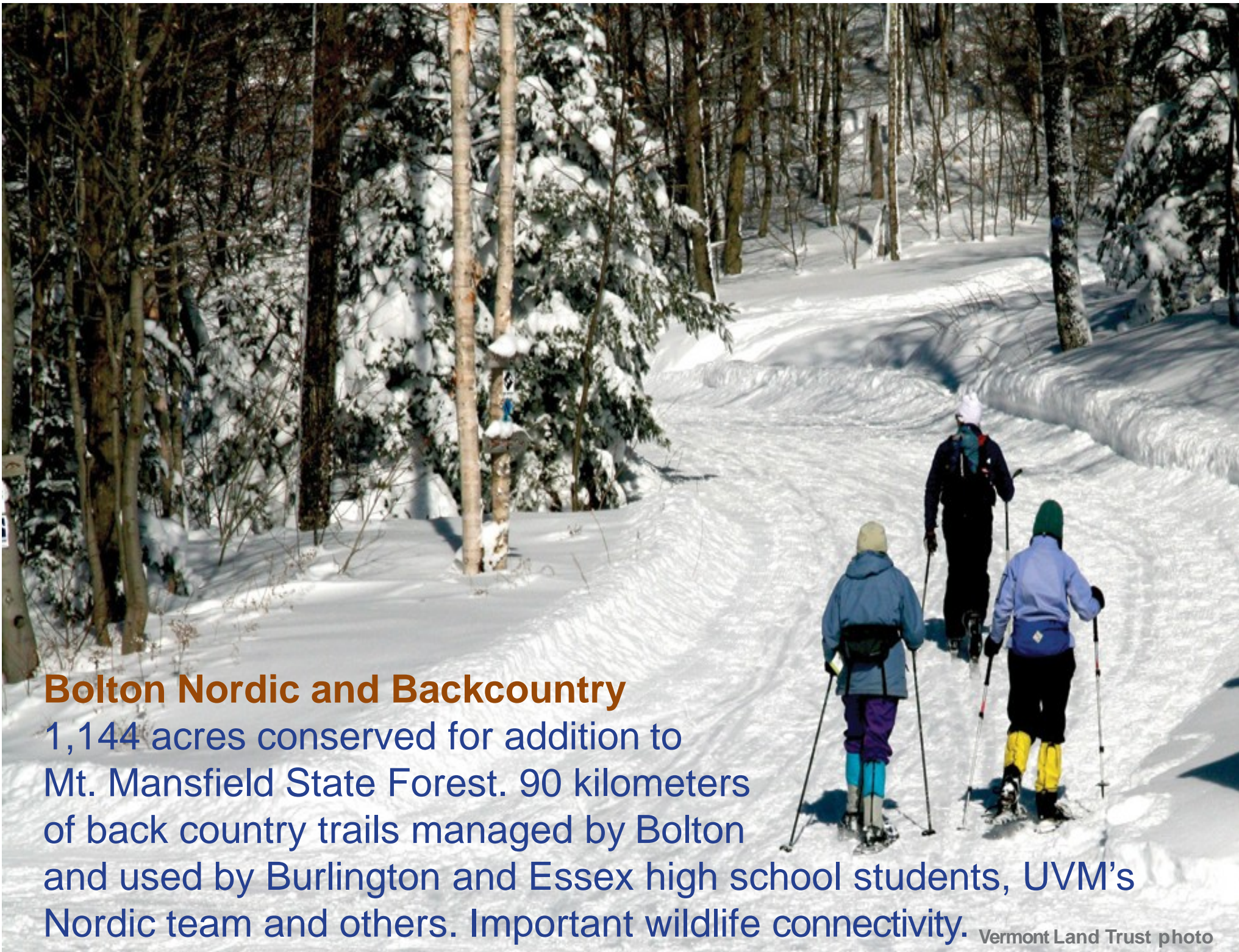
This home, built by Brattleboro Habitat for Humanity Chapter, is on a lot donated by The Nature Conservancy at their 553-acre Black Mountain Natural Area. The energy efficient home abuts several other house lots. The home belongs to a family with kids who can enjoy the proximity to the West River, a nearby swimming hole and a trail leading to the summit of Black Mountain.



In Ira and Poultney, The Conservation Fund protected 2,874 acres to be transferred to the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department for addition to the Bird Mountain Wildlife Management Area. The acquisition protects a large unbroken tract for wildlife habitat, hunting, fishing and hiking in the Taconic Mountains and protects the headwaters of the Castleton, Poultney and Clarendon Rivers.



John G. Van Hoesen photo



Bolton Nordic and Backcountry

1,144 acres conserved for addition to Mt. Mansfield State Forest. 90 kilometers of back country trails managed by Bolton and used by Burlington and Essex high school students, UVM's Nordic team and others. Important wildlife connectivity.

Vermont Land Trust photo



Housing as a Community Catalyst

Turning blighted and underutilized properties into linchpins for economic development

Infill and redevelopment with housing and commercial space following fires in Enosburg and Burlington, and new housing created above a health center and pharmacy in a vacant, former industrial building in the center of Richford are examples of how VHCB investments help revitalize downtown and village centers.



Conservation is Key to Water Quality

“Vermont’s lakes and rivers are critical assets that support a \$2.5 billion tourism industry. Protecting and restoring natural infrastructure – river floodplains, wetlands, and riparian forests – will help offset the 20-year, \$1.25 billion cost gap in reducing pollution.”*

Conservation is a cost-effective strategy in delivering clean water, providing flood resilience and driving down compliance costs. The economic impact of water quality on property values has been quantified: In 2015 the Georgia grand list dropped by \$1.8M due to reassessments of 37 lakeside properties with declining water quality.

“Securing these benefits will further justify the use of public funds for land conservation and protection.” - *Report on Clean Water, Vermont State Treasurer, January, 2017

There are significant economic and environmental values to riparian buffers on farmland. Two-thirds of the farms conserved by VHCB in the past two fiscal years are located in the Lake Champlain Basin. All farms with surface waters have water quality protections in the easement, including over 13 miles of riparian buffers.

VHCB and Water Quality Since 2012

- Adopted Water Quality and Flood Resilience Guidelines;
- Revised Conservation of Agricultural Lands policy to incorporate water quality/flood resilience attributes;
- In partnership with USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), now requires a management plan addressing soil health & water quality prior to closing on a farm easement;
- Special easement language protects surface waters;
- Pledged over \$5 million match to the state's \$16 million Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) award from NRCS;
- The VHCB Farm & Forest Viability Program has awarded \$796,631 in Dairy Improvement Grants to 32 farmers; 17 of the grants were for water quality improvements;
- The Viability Program offers farms financial planning and technical services related to water quality investments and practices.

What was achieved:

VHCB Farmland Conservation Investments, FY 16 – FY17

FY16:

- 24 farms (includes 2 retroactive OPAVs and 1 sugarbush)
- 3,443 acres
- 21 include water quality easement protections
- 4.25 miles riparian buffers
- 13 transfers: 7 to new farmers; 1 intergenerational, 5 to existing farmers

FY17:

- 25 farms (including 3 retroactive OPAVs)
- 2,860 acres
- 22 include water quality easement protections
- Almost 9 miles of riparian buffers
- 16 transfers: 6 to new farmers; 3 intergenerational, 7 to existing farmers

Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) Matching federal funds focused on Water Quality

- To date, VHCB has committed \$700,000 in state funds leveraging \$600,000 in private funds and \$1.3 million in federal funds for 10 RCPP farm projects
- These projects are eligible to receive additional technical assistance and implementation funds through RCPP for water-quality related conservation practices.
- VHCB and its partners—VLT, VACD, DEC, and VAAF—**M**—are working on another 7 possible RCPP farm projects for FY18.





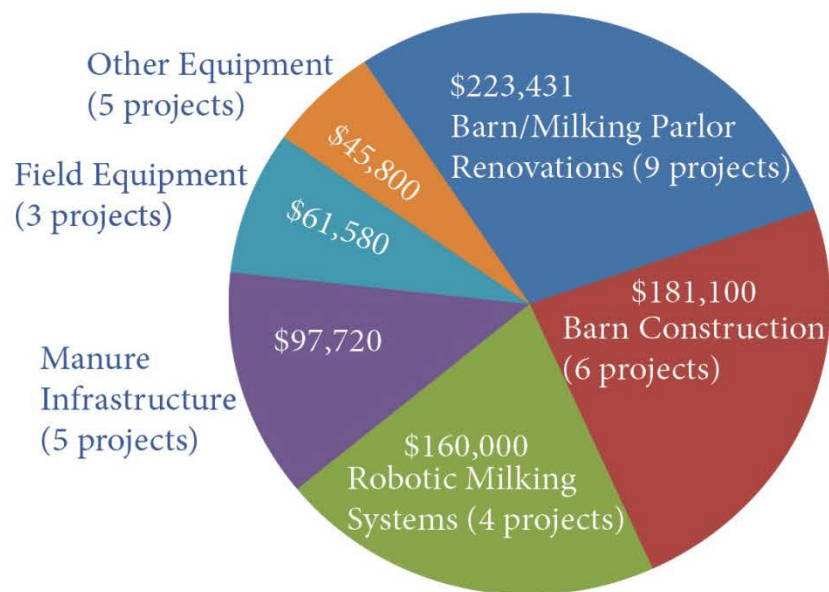
2014-2016 Dairy Improvement Grants

32 projects funded

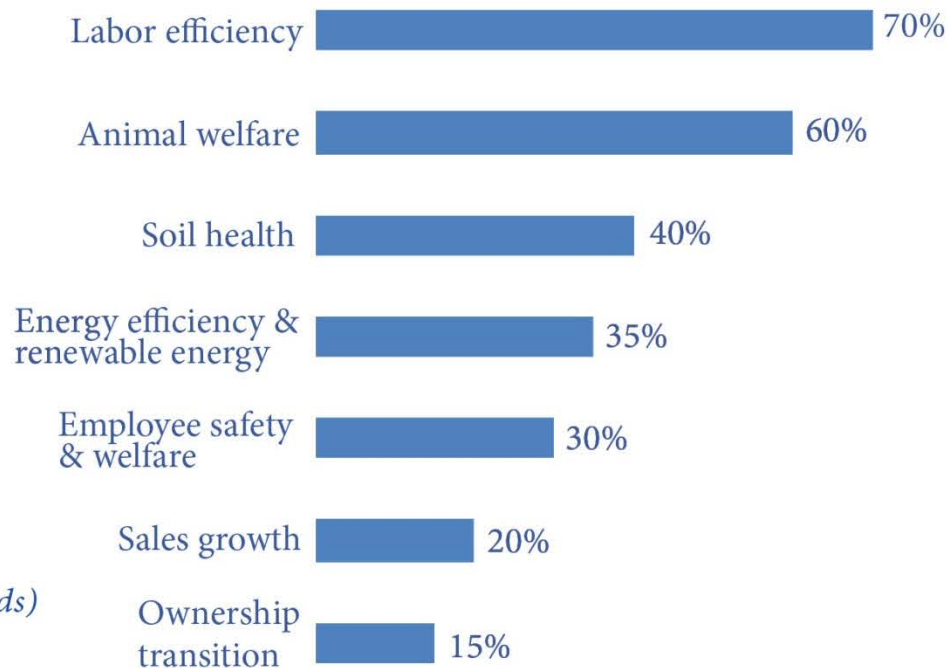
\$796,631 awarded
(32% of requests)

\$3,464,254 leveraged
(4.3 to 1)

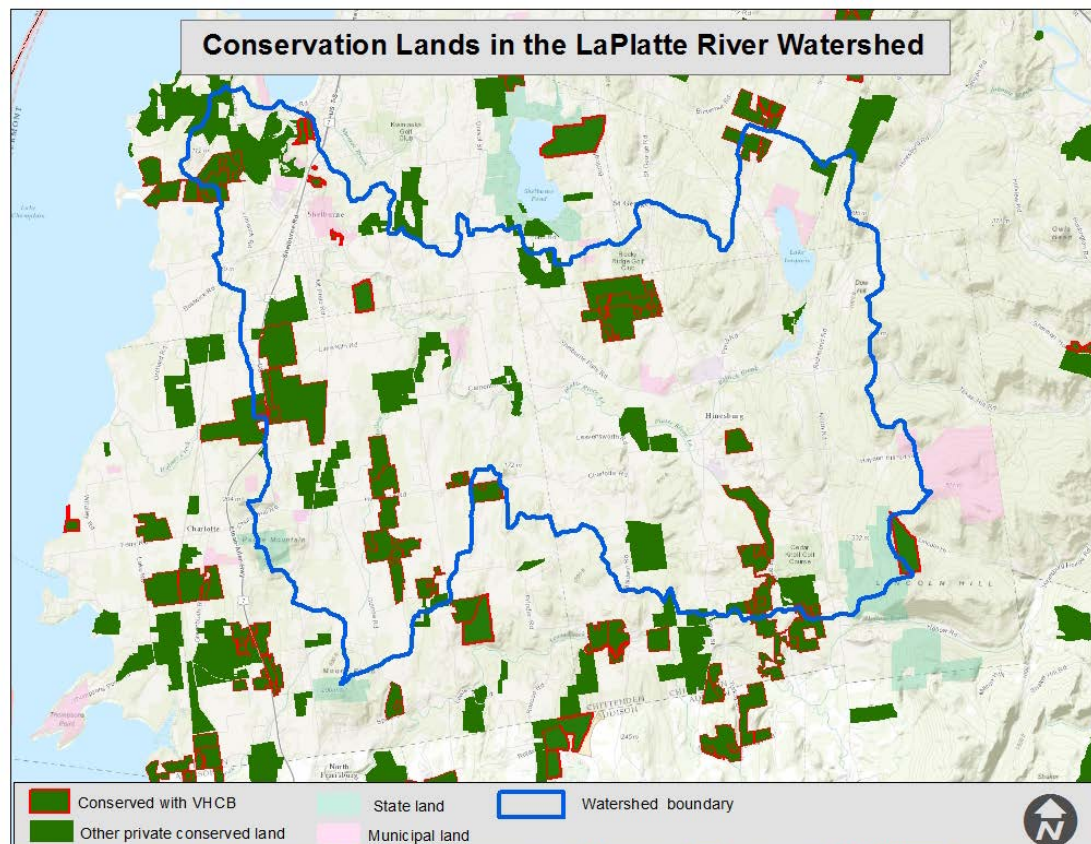
Types of projects funded...



Percent of projects with improvements in...



**Seventeen of the 32 projects (and 51% of granted funds) will result in water quality improvements.*



Success Story #1—The LaPlatte River Watershed

For years, DEC and local conservation partners had recommended preservation of undeveloped portions of the LaPlatte River watershed as an important action to support water quality goals. In total, VHCBS has now funded 17 conservation projects in the watershed totaling over 2,200 acres.



Decline of Phosphorous in the LaPlatte River

According to the U.S. Geological Survey, between 1990 and 2012, total phosphorous loading in the LaPlatte decreased 2.6% as a result of improvements in nonpoint source management and upgrades to wastewater treatment facilities.

Marquis Farm, Newport

90-COW ORGANIC DAIRY ON ROUTE 100 IN MISSISQUOI WATERSHED

- Fields identified as critical source areas for potential phosphorous loading
- At least 35' buffers on all ditches and wet meadows specified in easement
- FY16 RCPP project – VHCB committed RCPP & WQ Bond funds for easement on 120 acres of cropland purchased to support organic dairy operation
- Farmers working with NRCS through EQIP on new manure pit, paved barnyard and fencing on home farm
- Home farm (126A) – potential RCPP project in 2017
- Conserving cropland parcel and home farm will reduce debt and cover EQIP cost share

Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) Matching federal funds focused on Water Quality



Randall farm, Lowell

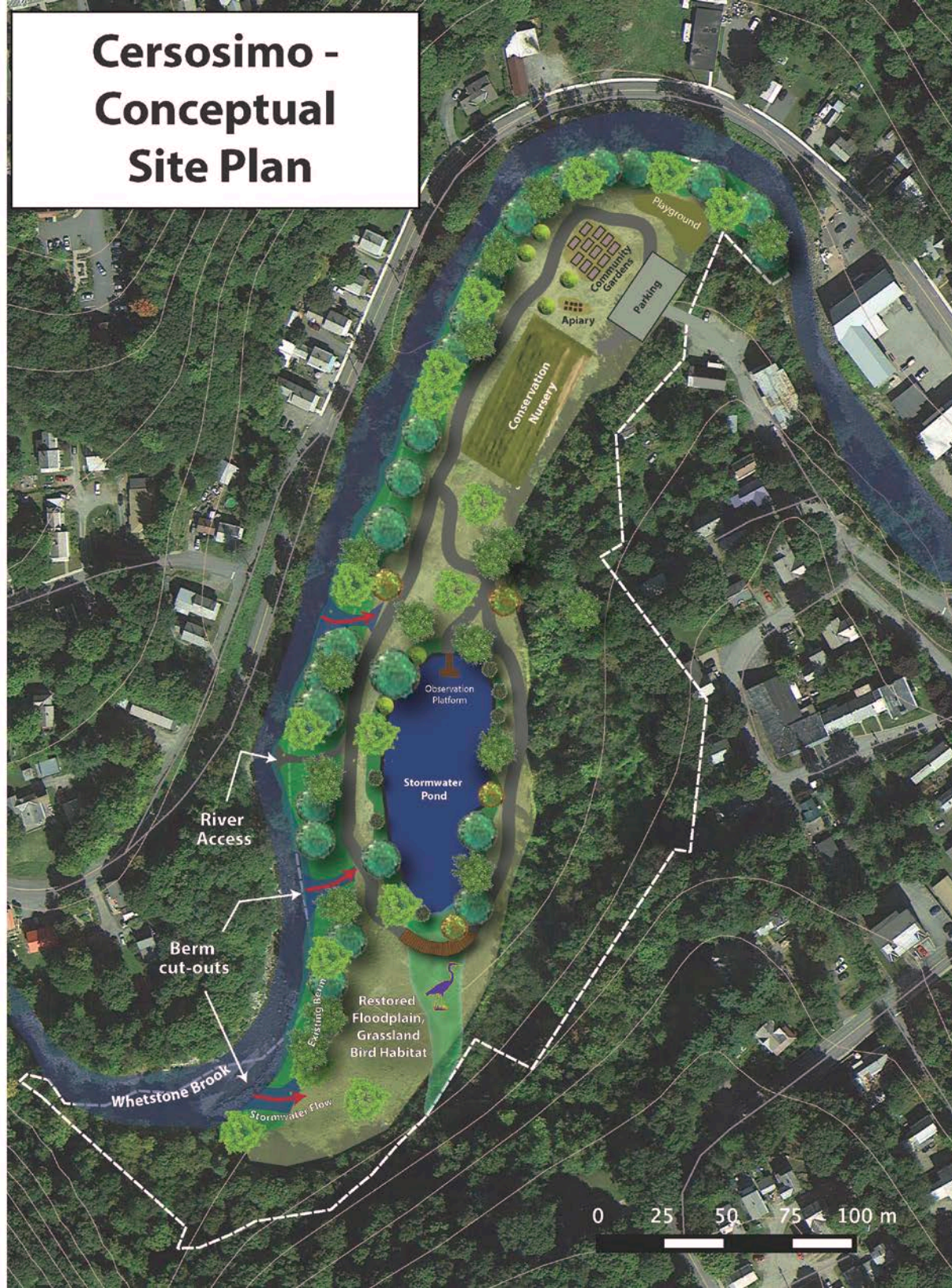
- organic, grass-based dairy
 - extensive Missisquoi River frontage
 - 212 acres conserved in 2016, with the Vermont Land Trust
-
- Easement includes riparian buffer on nearly a mile and a half of Missisquoi River frontage
 - Special protection of 30 acres of diverse wetlands, with open water, marshland, forested wetlands, and swamps.



Choiniere Family Farm, Highgate Missisquoi Bay Watershed

The Choinieres implemented numerous conservation practices: installed buffers along the river, installed cattle lanes and fencing, and kept manure under cover using bedded pack barns. The farm now produces milk without feeding grain. The Choinieres are in the process of purchasing a neighboring conserved farm.

Cersosimo - Conceptual Site Plan



Along the Whetstone Brook in Brattleboro, the Vermont River Conservancy is helping the town acquire a former floodplain parcel that has been filled in over the years. The parcel will be restored to its former level, potentially lowering downtown flood levels by 4-5 feet while also providing for storage and treatment of stormwater runoff from the surrounding neighborhood. A new neighborhood park will feature riverside walking paths and a community garden. Funding from VHCB, the town, and the Agency of Natural Resources Ecological Restoration Program.



Red Clover Commons

Brattleboro

Developed by Brattleboro Housing Partnerships and Housing Vermont, replacing housing lost at Melrose Terrace during Tropical Storm Irene. 55 homes with rental assistance for seniors and persons with disabilities. VHCB's investment leveraged nearly \$12 million in federal funding and private investment. The old buildings at Melrose Terrace will be removed to restore the site to a natural condition and provide flood storage for Brattleboro.





Harrington Village, Shelburne

This VHCB-funded housing project features 13 acres of conserved natural area on the LaPlatte River as well as a fully engineered stormwater retention facility.

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