



Vermont Housing & Conservation Board

House Committee on Agriculture & Forestry

Friday, January 19, 2018



30 Years of Housing & Conservation

Since 1987, VHCB funding has helped protect, conserve and create:

- 265,000 acres of working forests, natural areas and recreational lands
- 12,500 affordable homes – rental and homeownership
- 162,000 acres of farmland
- 68 historic buildings have been restored for community use
- 650 businesses have enrolled in our Farm & Forest Viability Program
- 450 AmeriCorps members have served through VHCB AmeriCorps
- 2,500 homes with reduced lead paint hazards



VHCB Results: FY 2017 and FY 2018 *What we accomplished*

State Investment: \$27.9M
Leverage: \$167M

937 homes and apartments

44 farms; 5,845 acres conserved

2 historic preservation projects

21 projects conserved; 2,706 acres of natural areas, forestland,
and public recreational land

254 farm and forest enterprises were provided business
planning and technical assistance.



Title 10: Conservation and Development

Chapter 15: VERMONT HOUSING AND CONSERVATION TRUSTFUND

§ 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.

VHCB PROGRAMS

- Rural Economic Development Initiative (REDI)
- Water Quality Grants
- Farmland Conservation
- Vermont Farm & Forest Viability Program
- Farmland Access
- Forestland, Recreational land and Natural Area Conservation
- Multi-Family Housing Development and Preservation
- Home Ownership
- 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



Conserving working forests & supporting the forest economy

- Forests provide a backdrop for Vermont's world-class tourism industry and boost rural economies, as demonstrated by the Westford Town Forest, Mount Ascutney in West Windsor, and Kingdom Trails, all conserved with VHCB funding.
- The Vermont forest products industry contributes 10,555 jobs and \$1.5 billion in economic output, including value-added manufacturing and tourism.
- VHCB has protected 6 town forests totaling 1,865 acres over the past two years.

Rainbow Rock, Chester



Rainbow Rock Swimming Hole was conserved by the Vermont River Conservancy with VHCB funding in 2017, protecting public access to this cherished community resource in perpetuity. This popular swimming destination is within walking distance of the village.

VHCB Farmland Conservation 1987 - 2017

- 701 farms – 164,000 acres
(185,000 acres total – 15.5% of VT's ag land)
- All farms in active ag production
- 11% of prime/statewide soils protected
- 410 include the Option to Purchase at
Agricultural Value (OPAV)

What was achieved:

VHCB Farmland Conservation Investments

FY 2017 – 2018

FY 2017

25 farms (including 3 retroactive OPAVs)

2,860 acres

22 include water quality easement protections

Almost 9 miles of riparian buffer protected

16 transfers: 6 to new farmers;

3 intergenerational, 7 to existing farmers

FY 2018

24 farms (including 2 retroactive OPAVs)

3,184 acres

20 include water quality easement protections

Over 13 miles of riparian buffers protected

14 transfers: 5 to new farmers;

4 intergenerational, 5 to existing farmers



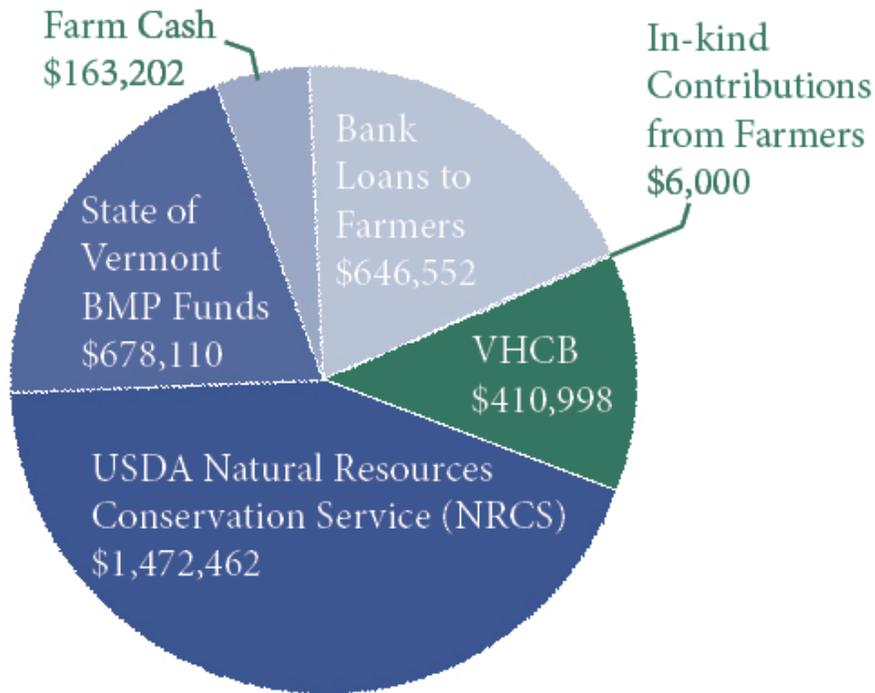
VHCB and Water Quality

- Adopted Water Quality and Flood Resilience Guidelines and revised Conservation of Agricultural Lands policy to incorporate water quality/flood resilience attributes
- Management (ALE) plans are now required to address soil health and 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:
 - 16 farms funded with 9 closed; \$2.2 million in federal match approved
- The VHCB Farm & Forest Viability Program has awarded \$410,998 in water quality grants to 14 farms, and \$629,799 in dairy improvement grants to 25 farms

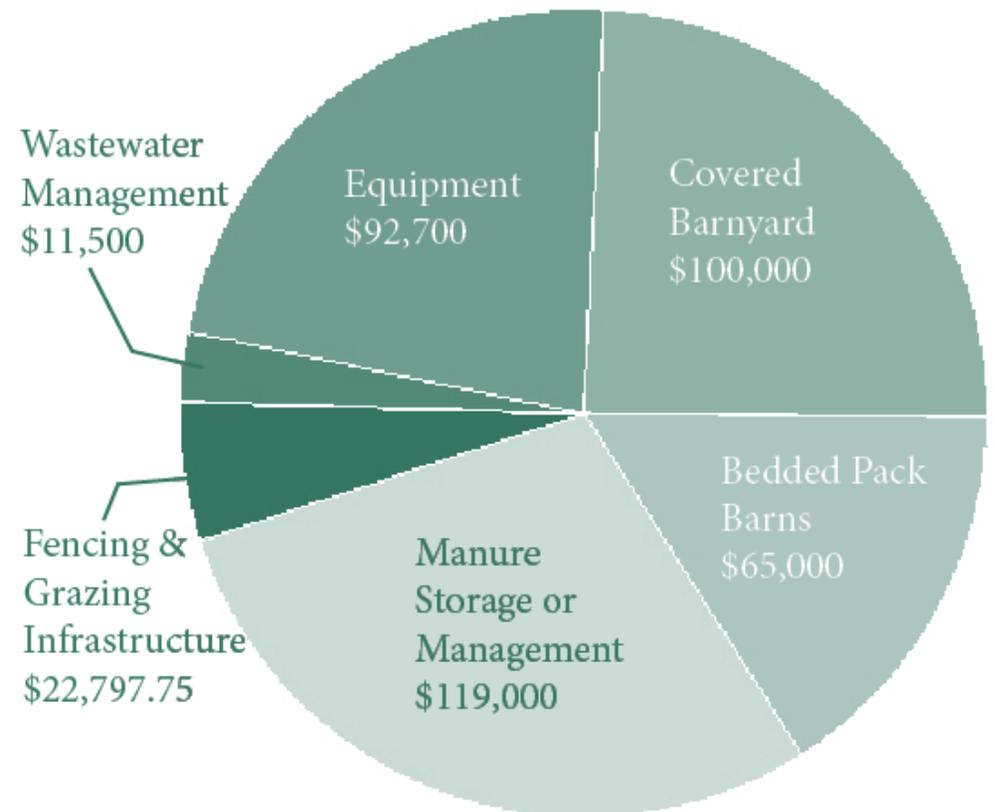
Water Quality Grants

In calendar year 2017, the Viability Program made 25 awards totaling \$629,799, leveraging 7:1 an additional \$2,664,364.

Total funding for all projects...



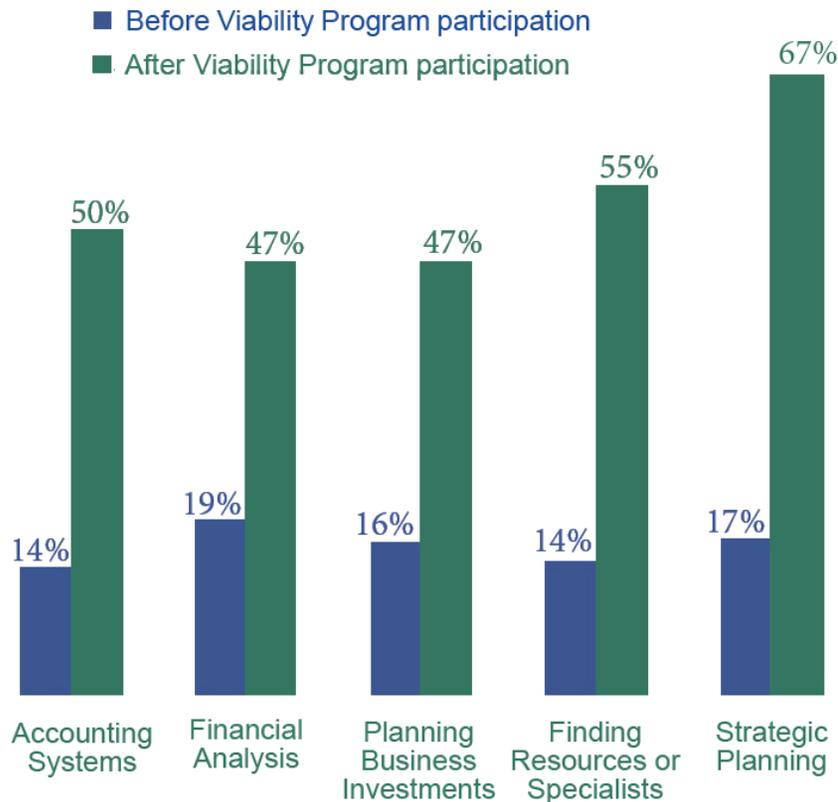
Uses of Water Quality Grant funds





VT Farm & Forest Viability Program in 2017

The percent of farmers who report high skills in:



- 51 farms newly enrolled for a business/transfer plan
- 40 farms in a second year of planning
- 54 farms received shorter-term planning assistance
- 2 food hubs received one-on-one technical assistance
- 9 forest products businesses enrolled
- 58 loggers attended 2 business workshops
- 21 forest landowners and estate attorneys attended succession planning workshops
- 8 forest landowning families received succession assistance
- 25 farms received Dairy Improvement Grants
- 14 farms received Water Quality Grants



Housing Revenue Bond Initiative

Six regional outreach meetings in Hartford, Bellows Falls, Middlebury, Manchester, Burlington, & St. Johnsbury.

VHCB has awarded \$9.5 million in HRB funds for 11 housing developments in 10 communities. 310 homes in five counties. Accessibility improvements for 60 homes statewide

Construction of 86 units in 3 developments is underway





Housing Helps Solve Community Problems

On Summer Street in Barre, Downstreet Housing & Community Development and Housing Vermont turned blighted property into 27 new apartments with community meeting space and offices for Downstreet.

With a \$20,000 grant from VHCB, the City of Newport has begun planning for the redevelopment of the vacant block in the heart of its downtown.

Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)

Matching federal funds focused on Water Quality



Marc and Tiffany Marquis Farm, Newport Center

- 90-cow grass-based organic dairy
- 124-acre parcel conserved in 2015; 122-acre home farm conserved in 2017
- Located in Mississquoi watershed (critical source area for phosphorous loading)
- Surface water protections (buffers) in easement for small streams
- Farm needed manure pit, barnyard, ditching, pasture watering system—all installed in 2017 with NRCS cost share

Corey and Ann Chapman Farm, Tunbridge



- 50-cow organic grass-based dairy conserved in 2017
- Conservation reduced debt and provided cost share for EQIP
- Extensive frontage on First Branch of the White River
- Easement includes 50-foot riparian buffers along the river
- Also includes a wetland protection zone
- River corridor overlay easement
- Manure pit, barnyard, and fencing being installed with NRCS assistance

Armstrong Farm, Calais

- Easement includes wetland and riparian buffer protections.
- River corridor protection will allow the channel to migrate naturally
- VLT Farmland Access Program project – transfer of ownership to Mike Betit for diversified veggie/livestock operation
- The farmer is enrolled in the VHCB Viability Program for support with business planning and land access



Poulin & Daughters Family Farm, Randolph

Justin and Angie Poulin farm, Randolph: Beef and maple farm conserved by VLT with VHCB funding in 2013; easement includes 50-foot riparian buffer along Third Branch of the White River. Received VHCB water quality grant in 2017 to install manure containment structures.



Poulin & Daughters Family Farm Brookfield

“In the past, we have not ranked highly enough to get funding from NRCS or the Ag Agency’s BMP program. That is what brought us to VHCB. The process worked great. The new manure storage facilities are functional, they serve the purpose, they were affordable, and it was fast.”

— Justin Poulin

A photograph of a man and a woman standing in a barn aisle. The man is on the left, wearing a dark blue hoodie and jeans. The woman is on the right, wearing a purple jacket and dark pants. They are standing in front of a large pile of hay. In the background, several cows are visible behind a metal fence. The barn has wooden walls and a metal roof structure. The sky is overcast.

Photo: Vermont Smoke & Cure

Harrison's Homegrown, Addison



“By using a concrete barnyard with runoff collection rather than old barnyards with old curbs or animal access to frozen/ muddy fields, we will improve water quality in the Dead Creek watershed.”

- Patrick & Melanie Harrison

- 432 acres of pasture and hayland for 200-head organic dairy conserved in 2016
- Conservation provides funds to re-invest in barn expansion and improved manure management system; working with NRCS on EQIP-funded projects
- Tributaries flowing to Dead Creek WMA have riparian buffers and are enrolled in CREP
- All waterways are fenced to exclude livestock

Root 5 Farm, Fairlee



Ben Dana and Danielle Allen bought an existing, organic veggie operation on the banks of the Connecticut River in Fairlee in 2013, and sold an easement in 2015, reducing debt. The Viability program provided business planning and land access support.

- VLT Farmland Access project
- 28 acres of excellent agricultural soils, with existing infrastructure (perennials, irrigation, pack shed, etc.)
- Easement includes riparian buffer on 1,700 ft. Connecticut River frontage
- Ben and Danielle got their start farming at the Intervale on leased land



Pigasus Meats South Hero

“We gained a realistic view of what it actually means to run a farm business and the steps we need to take next in order to guarantee our success going forward with our operation.”

— Kelsey Chandler & Phelan
O’Connor

Pigasus Meats has a new, permanent home – the conserved Landon farm in South Hero, which they just purchased.

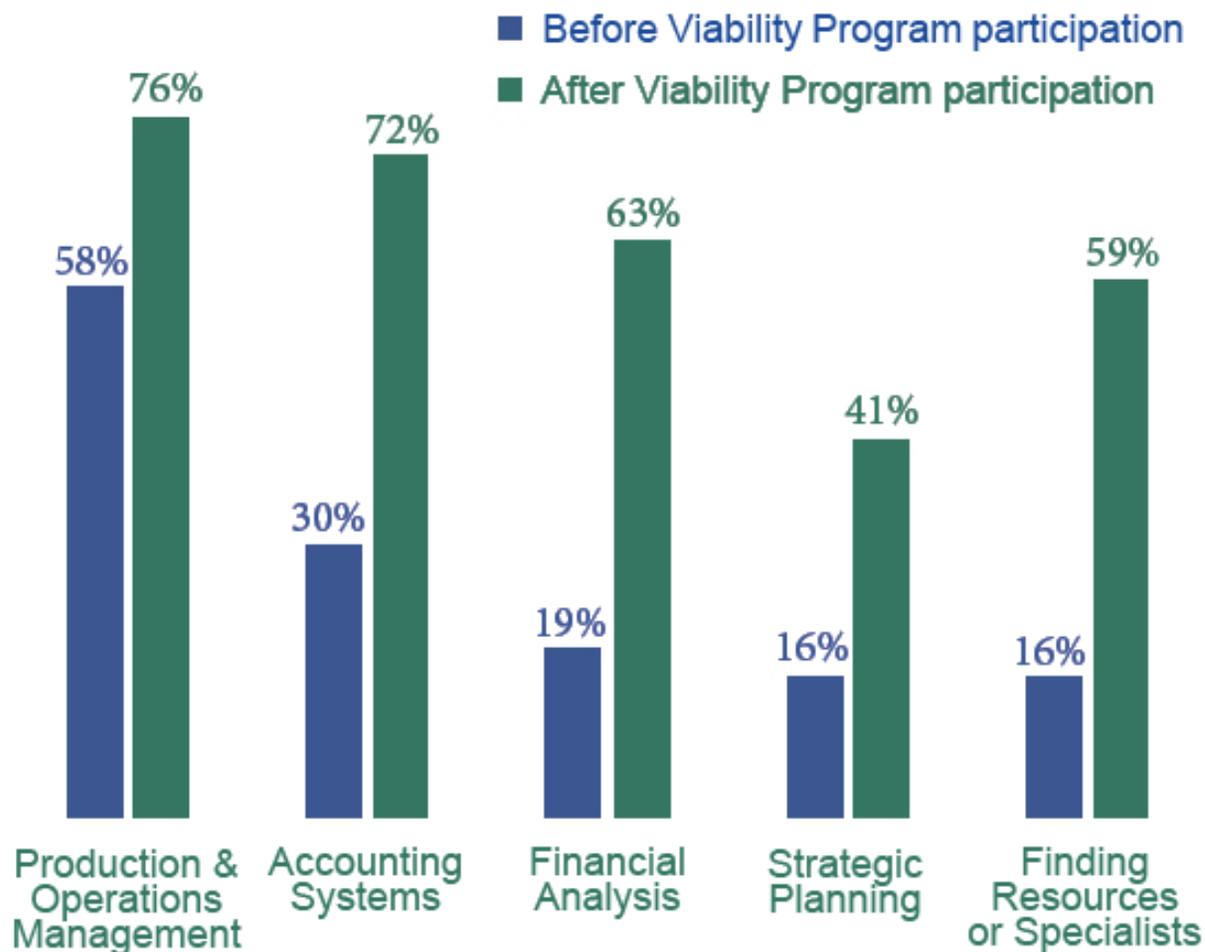


Photo: Food Connects

The Viability Program also provides business, financial, and strategic planning to local food hubs, like Food Connects in Windham County.

Increasing Business Skills in the Forest Products Sector

The percent of forest products business owners reporting high skills over the last 3 years



Jon Parker, Brookside Timber Harvesting
Westminster



Since 2015, Forest Viability Participants Report

+15% in gross income

+2% employment

+9% payroll

Gus Seelig, Executive Director

Nancy Everhart, Agricultural Director

Ela Chapin, Viability Director



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