

Hello, my name is Jon Binhammer, I am the Protection Director for the Vermont Chapter of The Nature Conservancy. The Nature Conservancy has been the recipient of many competitive grants over the 37 years the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board has been in existence. As a result we have conserved thousands of acres of lands that have been additions to State Parks, State Forests, and State Wildlife Management Areas, as well as our 58 Natural Areas open to the public for recreational uses and nature study. I am here today to discuss the Tanguay Farm Retirement Project, located in the Essex County town of Brunswick, population 86, according to my recent conversation with the Town Clerk.

On the left is a locator map, showing where the Tanguay property sits in relation to the conserved Kingdom Heritage Lands, in blue, the West Mountain Wildlife Management Area, also in blue with green hashmarks, and New Hampshire's 400-acre Fort Hill Wildlife Management Area in red. On the right, the property is shown in partial flood stage.

The Tanguay Dairy, like the 11 other farms in the county, have been struggling lately because of low milk prices and labor shortages. So Mike Tanguay decided that he would take advantage of the Vermont Clean Water Funding, bonded by the Legislature, sell his cows and then sell his land to The Nature Conservancy. The Nature Conservancy has been acquiring land from farmers in this stretch of the Connecticut River since 2006 in order to support water quality, restore riverbanks, restore floodplain forest, and balance agricultural uses with habitat protection.

With \$492,000 from VHCB, along with a larger grant from the Upper Valley Mitigation and Enhancement Fund, we purchased 182 acres of floodplain land and upland from the Tanguays, with 2 miles of frontage on the Connecticut River,

And an existing canoe campsite, seen here in this photo montage.

From the Tanguay lands, the former Coos Valley Railroad abutment can be seen in this slide, with the Kingdom Heritage Lands directly behind it.

As I said, the upper Connecticut River is undammed, and experiences natural flooding during Spring snowmelt. Mike Tanguay says the river floods three times before he can plant his corn. This flooding is important for water quality, wildlife habitat, and to prevent flooding downstream. Floodplain forest provides roots to hold the banks in place and roughness that slows the water down, allowing nutrients to be deposited on farm fields instead of in Long Island Sound. This photo is taken a couple of miles downstream of the Tanguay farm, but the flooding is similar there as well.

The roots of floodplain trees hold the banks in place, and unfortunately, where they are missing, such as on this hayfield, the grass roots are just not enough to hold the banks and they slough off into the river. Restoring floodplain forest trees along the banks is important to provide stability.

And of course, the habitat benefits of this rare ecosystem that has largely been replaced by agriculture along our rivers are numerous. From offering shade to mitigate river temperatures for trout, to wood duck and other waterfowl habitat, bald eagle nesting and roosting sites, plentiful food for migratory birds, bear habitat in early spring when there is little to eat except for fiddlehead ferns, and on and on. Our objective is to balance agricultural uses with buffers and floodplain forest restoration, and we are very grateful to VHCB for sharing our vision in the upper Connecticut River. Thank you.