



Vermont
Housing &
Conservation
Board

House Agriculture Committee

January 23, 2026

Presenters:

Gus Seelig

Executive Director

Stacy Cibula

Associate Conservation Director

Liz Gleason

Vermont Farm & Forest Viability
Director



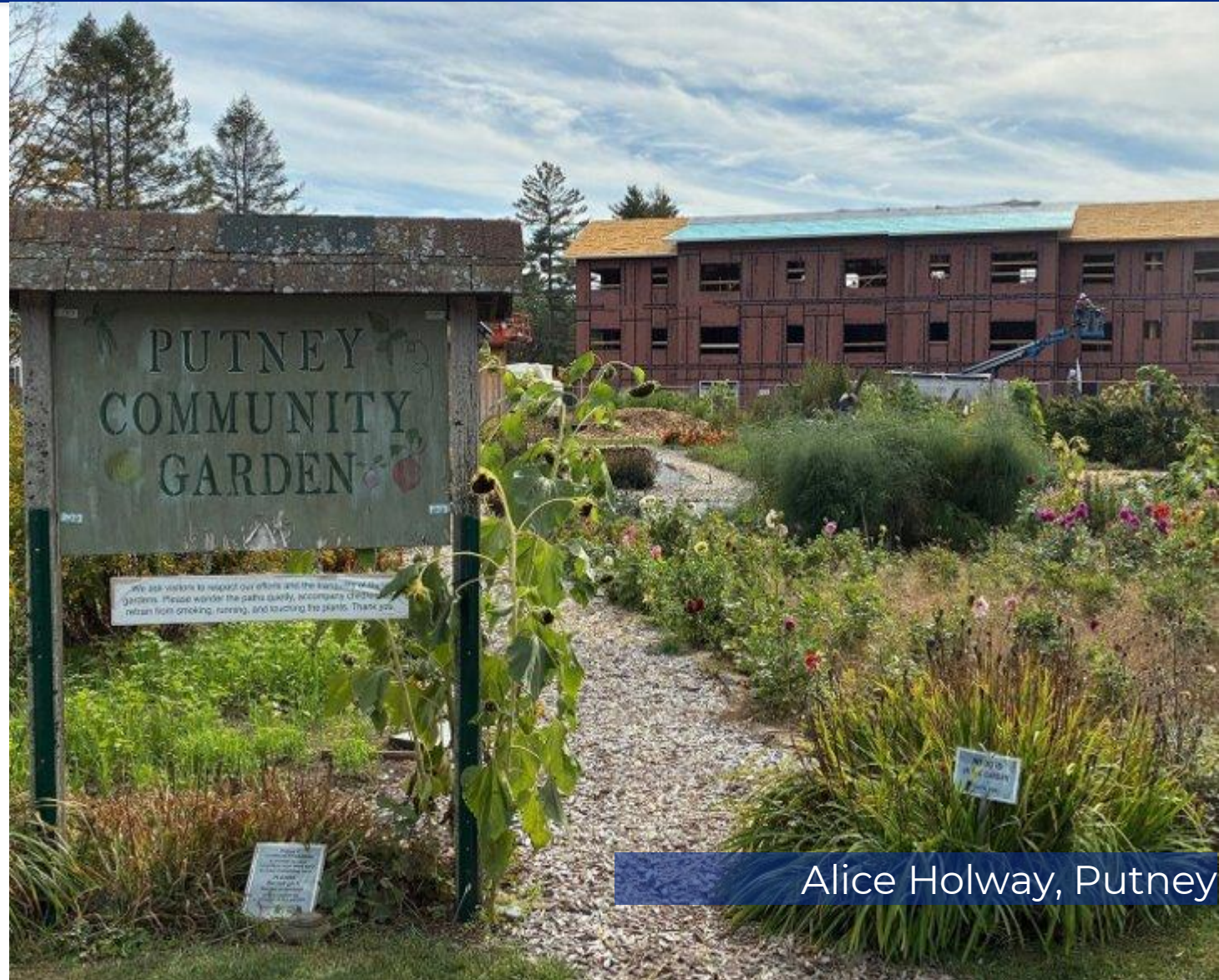
Cobb Hill, Hartland

VHCB 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



Alice Holway, Putney

Conservation and Rural Economy



VT Adaptive,
Rochester



East Calais General Store,
E. Calais



Whetstone Brook,
Brattleboro



Mighty Food Farm,
Shaftsbury

VHCB Housing Impacts Since 2020



TOTAL VHCB INVESTMENT: \$450,998,013.55



Total Leverage: \$828,194,698.16

HOMEOWNERSHIP

448 households supported
191 new construction single-family
homeownership units

RENTAL

2,721 total units
2,253 new units
718 homes for unhoused Vermonters

MANUFACTURED HOME COMMUNITIES

24 infill units
1077 lots in 10 communities

FARMWORKER HOUSING

74 repair projects
6 replacement projects
305 farmworkers to be served

SHELTER

26 shelters served total
13 new shelters
629 beds
313 new beds total

RECOVERY RESIDENCES

4 projects
59 residents benefitted

LEAD ABATEMENT

90 households served
70 apartments
20 single-family homes

ACCESSIBILITY IMPROVEMENTS

471 households received
accessibility improvements

5,651

Households
Served

Average Per
Unit

Investment:

\$80,000

Pipeline



Conservation, Viability and Rural Development

- FY26 (12/25): \$8,111,298
- FY26 anticipated projects: \$16M
- FY27 anticipated projects : \$19M

Housing

- FY26 committed (12/25): \$23,787,231
- FY26 anticipated projects: \$26-\$28M
- FY27 anticipated projects: \$40M+

Farmland Loss in Vermont



American Farmland Trust:
Farms Under Threat (2016 and 2040)

41,200
ACRES

Predicted Loss
by 2040

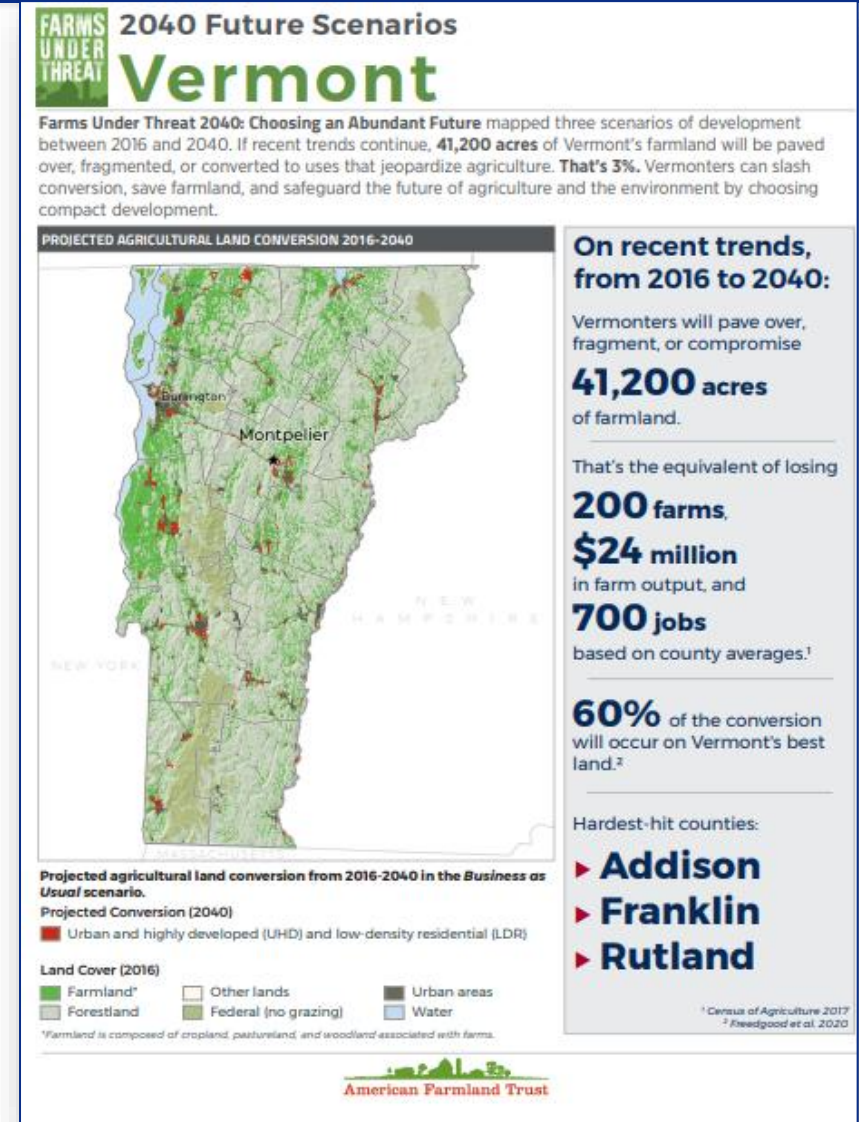
48%
ALREADY LOST

19,547 acres
(2022 Census)

65%
FASTER

Than Forecasted
Rate

Full report: <https://farmlandinfo.org/publications/farms-under-threat-2040/>



VHCB Tools for Farms



Badger Brook Meats, Danville
photo credit Badger Brook Meats

Farmland Conservation Program:

Purchase of development rights

Farm & Forest Viability Program:

Business planning support for working lands businesses, accompanied by:

- Implementation Grants
- Water Quality Grants

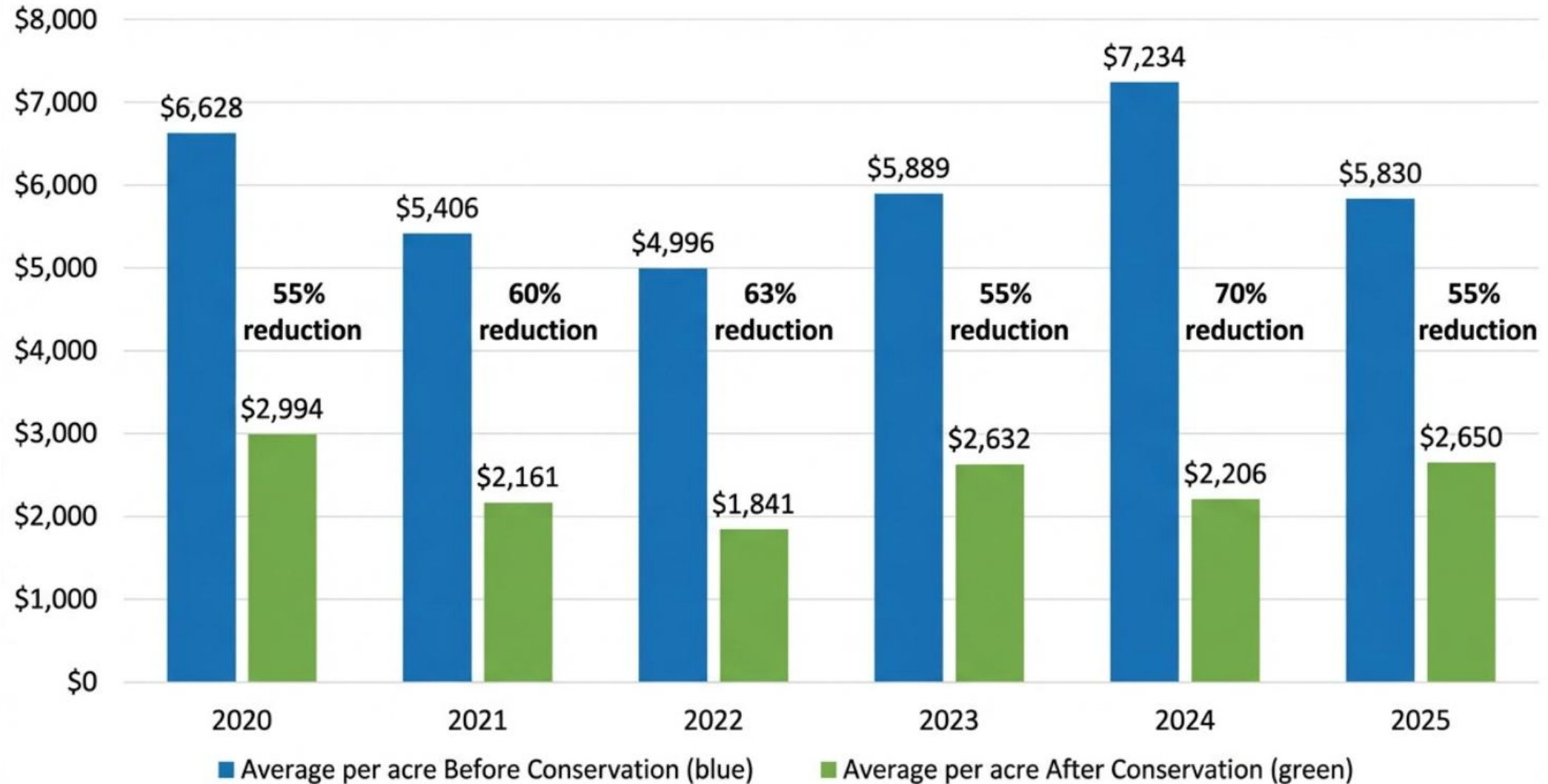
Rural Economic Development Initiative:

Grant writing support and technical assistance to working lands businesses and rural communities

Water Quality Programs:

Clean Water Service Provider for the Lake Memphremagog Basin

Farmland Values Before & After Conservation



Farmland Conservation Benefits



Makes farmland more affordable



Facilitates farm transfers



Infuses cash into farm businesses



Provides ecological co-benefits



Keeps working land working!



Ricketson Farm, Stowe

Co-benefits of Conserved Farmland



CC1



Defreest Farm, Waitsfield

VHCB Conserved Land Composition



33%
Forested

43%
Pasture/Hay



10%
Wetlands



14%
Annual Crops



DeFreest Farm Project Highlights:

-  63 acres prime agricultural soil
-  10,000 feet of 50' buffers on Mad River
-  38 acres Mad River frontage in River Corridor Easement
-  8 acres riparian protections (USDA CREP)
-  6 acres permanently retired cropland
-  1+ mile public trails - Mad River Path extension

Statewide Impact:

-  Since 2019, 80 miles of buffers established and 1,400 acres of wetlands protected on conserved farms.
-  71% of all cultivated acres in Vermont were managed for no-till or reduced till. (2022 USDA Ag Census)

Farm Transfers on Conserved Land



Hurricane Flats Farm,
South Royalton



Clearfield Farm,
Granville

CC2



Old Soul Farm,
Barre



June Farm,
Charlotte

Farm and Forest Viability Program



110 Businesses Served in 2025

In-depth, individualized business assistance

Program Focus Areas



Succession
Planning



Financial
Management
& Capital



Land Search
& Access



Profitability &
Quality of Life

2025 IMPACT

71%
OF BUSINESSES
INCREASED
GROSS SALES

82%
ADDED
NEW JOBS

ON AVERAGE
BUSINESSES
INCREASED SALES BY
\$52K

CLIENTS
ACCESSED OVER
\$5.4M
IN GRANTS
AND LOANS

100%
IMPROVED BUSINESS
MANAGEMENT SKILLS

Collaborative Network of Partners



Service Provider Network

- Center for an Agricultural Economy
- Intervale Center
- Land For Good
- NOFA-VT
- UVM Extension

Other Partners

- Vermont Land Trust
- VT Sustainable Jobs Fund
- Liberation Ecosystems
- Healthy Roots Collaborative
- Northeast Forests
- Food Connects

Navigating Complex Challenges



Ongoing recovery
from floods
and drought



Extremely low
commodity
milk prices



Farm transfers
to the next
generation



Rockbottom Farm & Strafford
Organic Creamery, Strafford



Maple Grove Farm, Derby

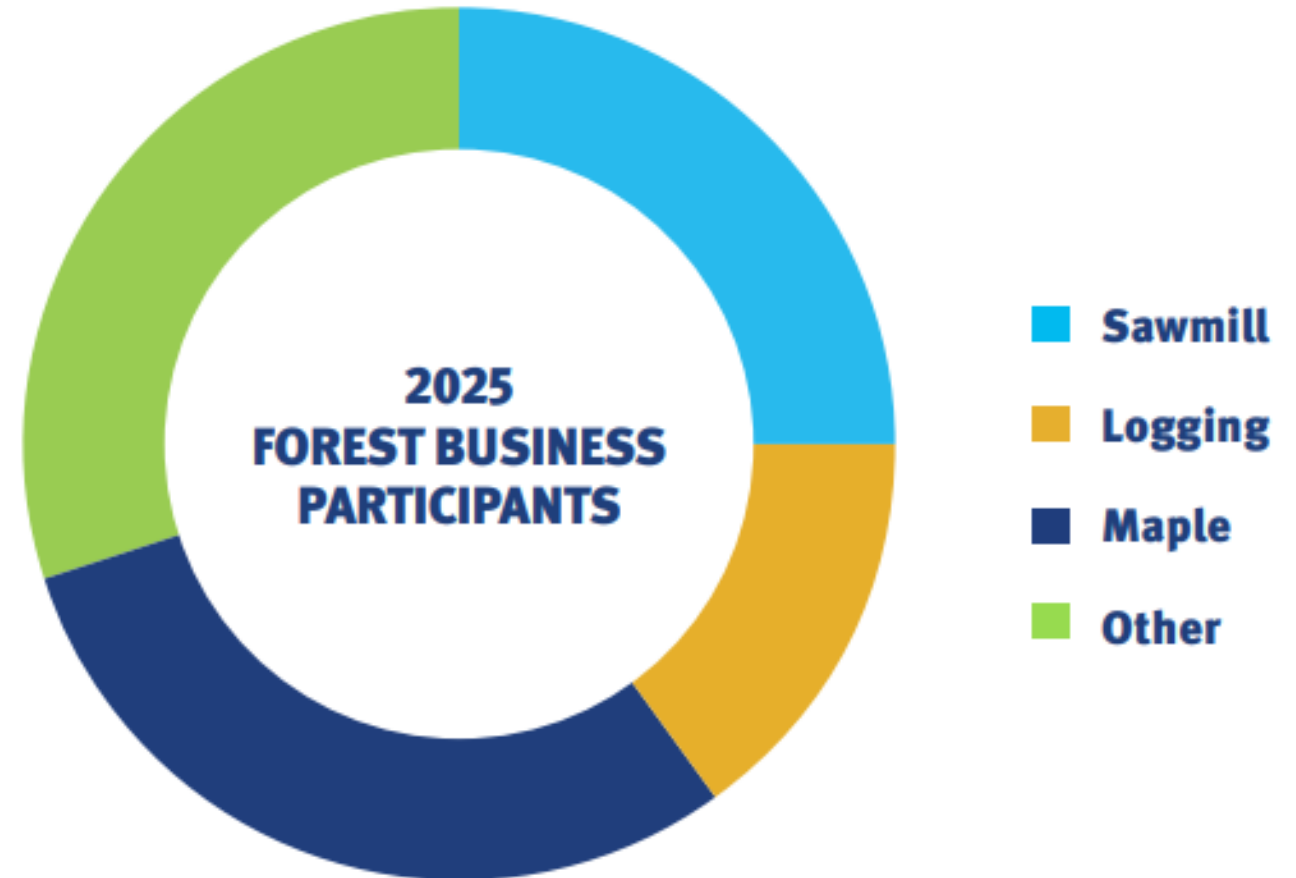


Woodlawn Farm, Pawlet

Forest Economy



Best Wood Custom Sawing,
Putney



Grant Programs Impact



Lincoln Peak Vineyard,
New Haven



27

Business Plan Implementation Grants

Increase climate resilience
and grow local food and
forest businesses



16

Water Quality Grants

Reduce runoff, boost soil
health, improve manure
management, and increase
grazing infrastructure



7

Community Garden Grants

meeting the needs of
underserved communities
and growing local food, in
collaboration with LAOB



Grass Cattle Co.,
Charlotte



Blackbird Organics,
Plainfield

Rural Economic Development Initiative (REDI)



Miss Bellows Falls Diner,
Rockingham

\$1,270,477  **\$35,512,800**

REDI FUNDS SINCE 2017

GRANTS TO COMMUNITIES



REDI assists **small towns** and **working lands businesses** access capital for critically needed economic development projects



Focus areas: community-based **economic development** and downtown revitalization, working lands, outdoor recreation

FY25 Conservation Outcomes



Farmland

- **21** farms supported
- **2,877** acres conserved
- **\$4,474,00** federal dollars leveraged

Natural Areas

- **18** projects
- **2,865** acres hunting, fishing, public access and outdoor recreation areas
- **\$3,624,833** additional leveraged funds

Water Quality

- Clean Water Service Program Administrator for the Memphremagog Basin.
 - **6 projects** supporting floodplain and stream restoration

Leahy Memphremagog Clean Water Program

- **10 projects** supporting partner capacity, land acquisition and habitat restoration



FY 25 Viability & REDI Outcomes



“Without a doubt, my farm business has more potential for success because of the support and assistance from Farm Viability.”

—Becca Knouss

The Goat Project, Bennington

SC5



Long Winter Farm, Stowe



Sunday Bell Farm, Danville

Working Lands Business Planning

- **110** farm/forest businesses completed business and transfer plans
- **100% of client increased management skills**

Grants for Local Food, Water Quality, and the Working Landscape:

- **27** grants to increase climate resilience and grow local food/forest businesses
- **16** grants to improve on-farm water quality
- **7** grants for new or expanded community gardens

Rural Economic Development Initiative

- **61** communities supported with grant writing and fundraising strategy
- **12** of those communities have accessed \$12.1 million for their projects so far

SC

Thank you!

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