



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



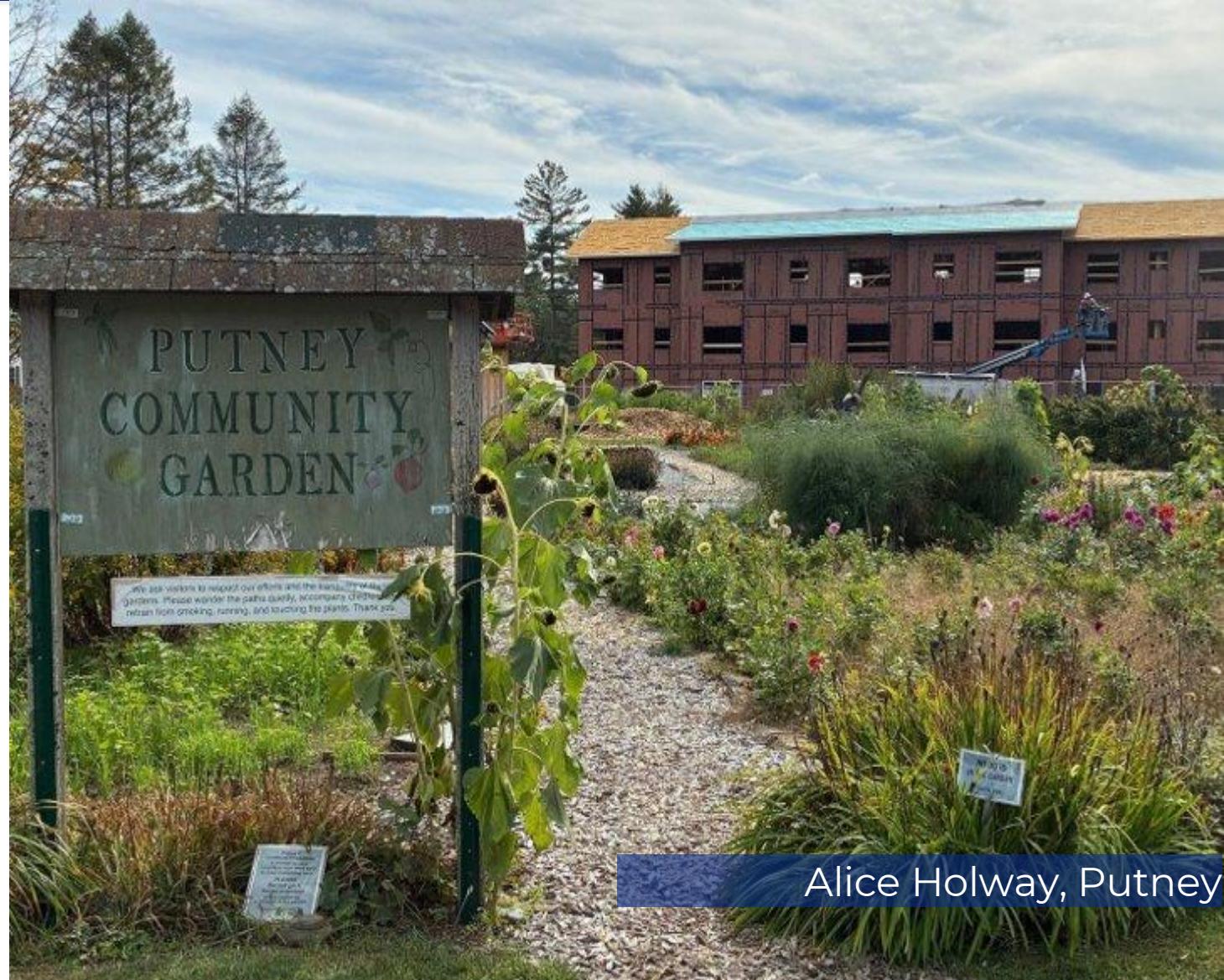
Cobb Hill, Hartland

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



Conservation and Rural Economy



VHCB Housing Impacts Since 2020



TOTAL VHCB INVESTMENT: \$450,998,013.55



Total Leverage: \$828,194,698.16

HOME OWNERSHIP

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/>

FARMS UNDER THREAT 2040 Future Scenarios **Vermont**

Farms Under Threat 2040: Choosing an Abundant Future mapped three scenarios of development between 2016 and 2040. If recent trends continue, **41,200 acres** of Vermont's farmland will be paved over, fragmented, or converted to uses that jeopardize agriculture. That's 3%. Vermonters can slash conversion, save farmland, and safeguard the future of agriculture and the environment by choosing compact development.



Projected agricultural land conversion from 2016-2040 in the Business as Usual scenario.

Projected Conversion (2040)

■ Urban and highly developed (UHD) and low-density residential (LDR)

Land Cover (2016)

■ Farmland*
■ Forestland
■ Other lands
■ Federal (no grazing)
■ Urban areas
■ Water

*Farmland is composed of cropland, pastureland, and woodland associated with farms.

**On recent trends,
from 2016 to 2040:**

Vermonters will pave over,
fragment, or compromise

41,200 acres
of farmland.

That's the equivalent of losing

200 farms,
\$24 million

in farm output, and
700 jobs
based on county averages.¹

60% of the conversion
will occur on Vermont's best
land.²

Hardest-hit counties:

- **Addison**
- **Franklin**
- **Rutland**

¹ Census of Agriculture 2017

² Freedgood et al. 2020

VHCB Tools for Farms



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

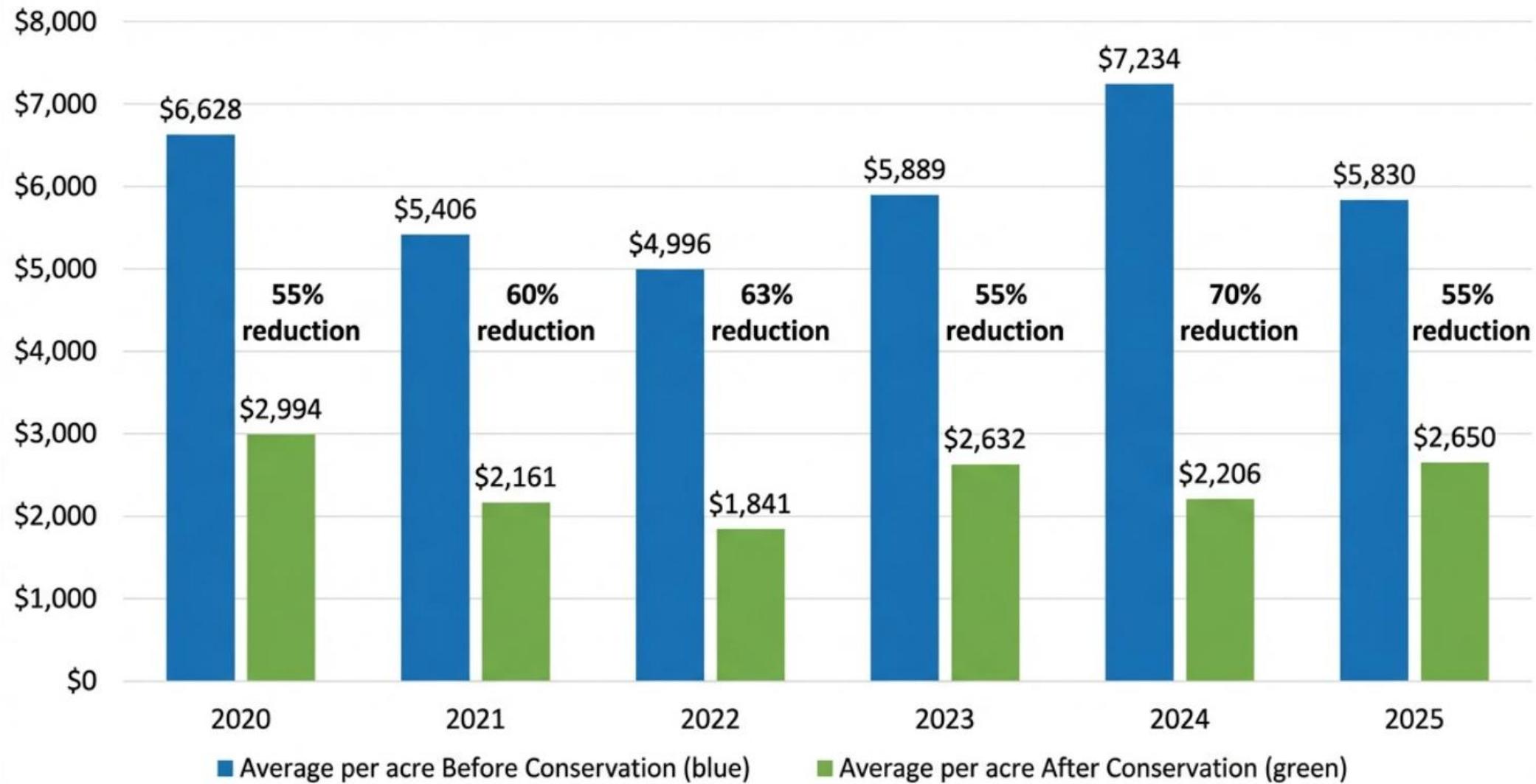
Rural Economic Development Initiative:

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!**



Co-benefits of Conserved Farmland

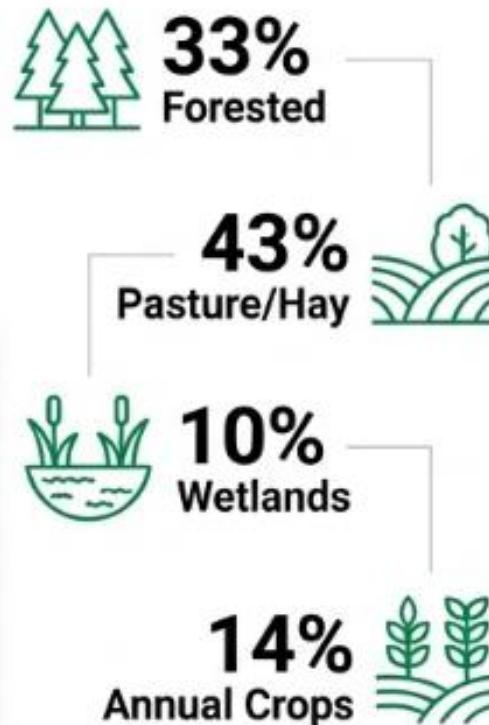


CC1



Defreest Farm, Waitsfield

VHCB Conserved Land Composition



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



Farm and Forest Viability Program



Roots Market,
Middlesex

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



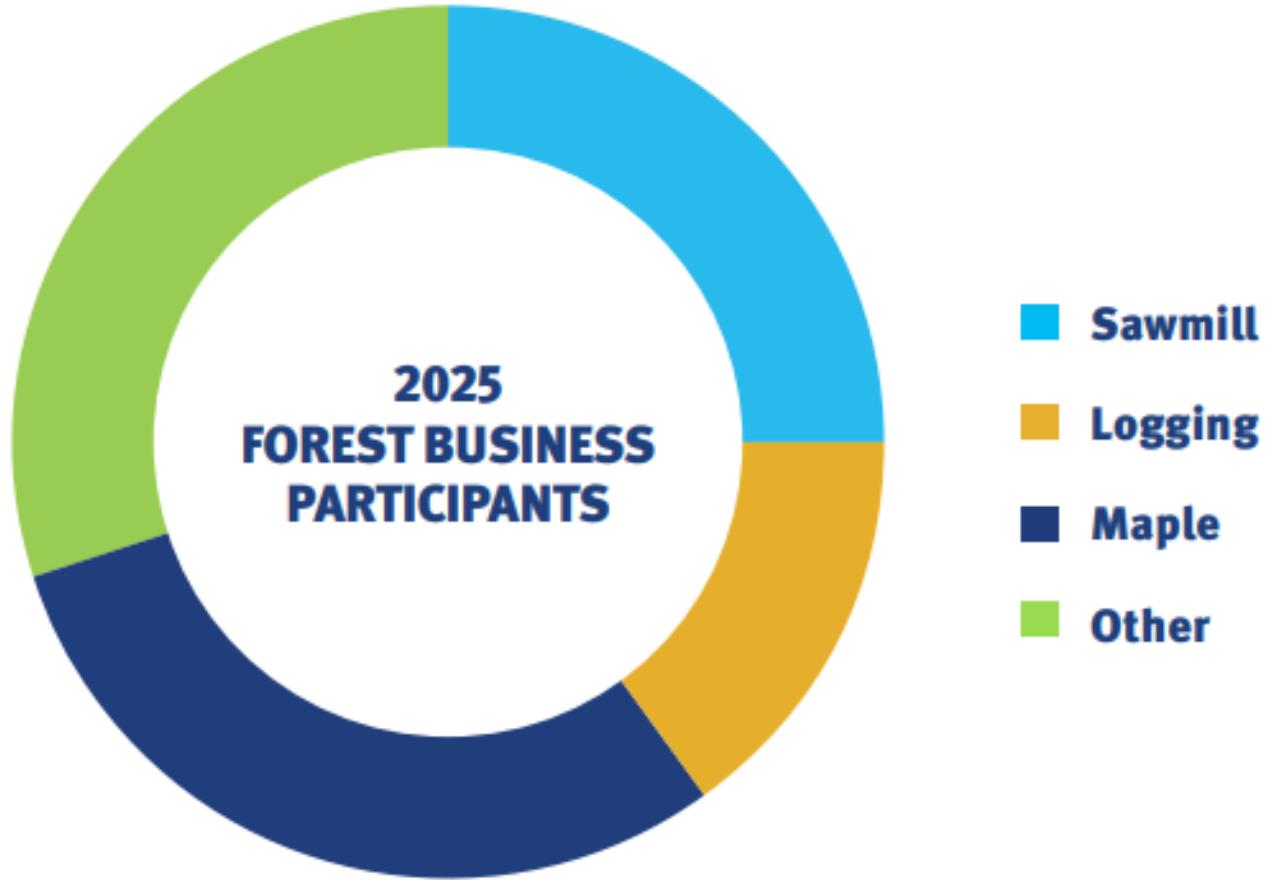
Extremely low
commodity
milk prices



Farm transfers
to the next
generation



Forest Economy



Best Wood Custom Sawing,
Putney

Grant Programs Impact



Rural Economic Development Initiative (REDI)



Miss Bellows Falls Diner,
Rockingham

\$1,270,477

REDI FUNDS SINCE 2017



\$35,512,800

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



Laughing Child Farm,
Pawlet



Williams Farm,
Bakersfield



Clearfield Farm,
Granville

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



The Goat Project, Bennington

SC5

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

—Becca Krouss



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!

Gus Seelig

Executive Director
gus@vhcb.org

Stacy Cibula

Associate Conservation Director
stacy@vhcb.org

Liz Gleason

Director, Vermont Farm and
Forest Viability Program
e.gleason@vhcb.org



Vermont
Housing &
Conservation
Board

