

House Committee on Environment

February 12, 2025



Vermont
Housing &
Conservation
Board

Trey Martin
Dir. of Conservation & Rural Community Development



Birdseye Wildlife Management Area, Poultney

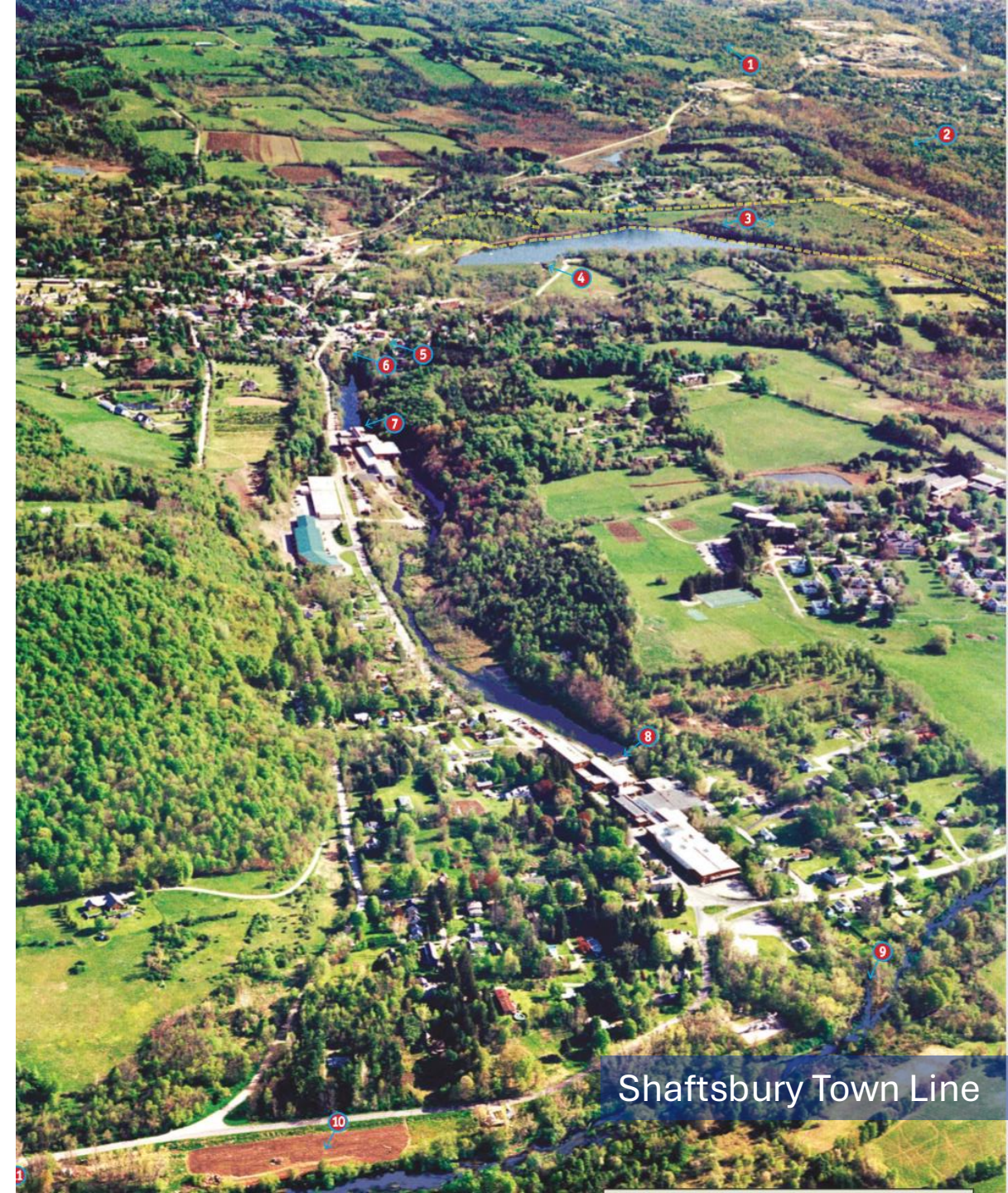


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Statutory Purpose

“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



Shaftsbury Town Line



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A Conservation Vision for Vermont

Act 59 of 2023, The Community Resilience and Biodiversity Protection Act, set forth a vision to maintain an ecologically functional landscape that:

- Sustains biodiversity
- Maintains landscape connectivity
- Supports watershed health
- Promotes climate resilience
- Supports working farms and forests
- Provides opportunities for recreation
- Supports historic settlement patterns



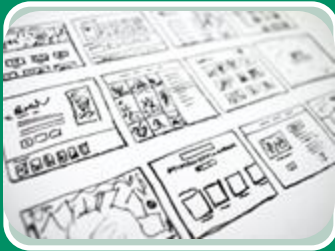
Rupert Valley Holsteins, Rupert

Act 59 Timeline



Phase 1. Conservation Inventory - completed July 2024

An assessment of existing and potential conservation data, practices, programs, equity, and funding with recommended next steps



Phase 2. Conservation Plan - due December 2025

A comprehensive strategy for achieving the vision and goals of the Community Resilience and Biodiversity Protection Act



Phase 3. Implementation. 2026 - 2050

- 30% of Land Conserved by 2030
- 50% of Land Conserved by 2050

Phase I: Public Process & Engagement

47
Interviews

Nov. '23 – Feb. '24

Community members interviewed to complete inventory

147
Survey Respondents

Nov. '23 – Feb. '24

Open to the general public and on the VHCB website

21

Focus Groups

Mar. '24 - May '24

Affinity-based focus groups with over 350 participants

4

Working Groups

Nov. '23 - June '24

Working groups to answer three specific questions posed by the legislature

6

Public Meetings

Nov '23 - July '24

Meetings open to the public with opportunities for public feedback





Lily Pond Highlands, Athens

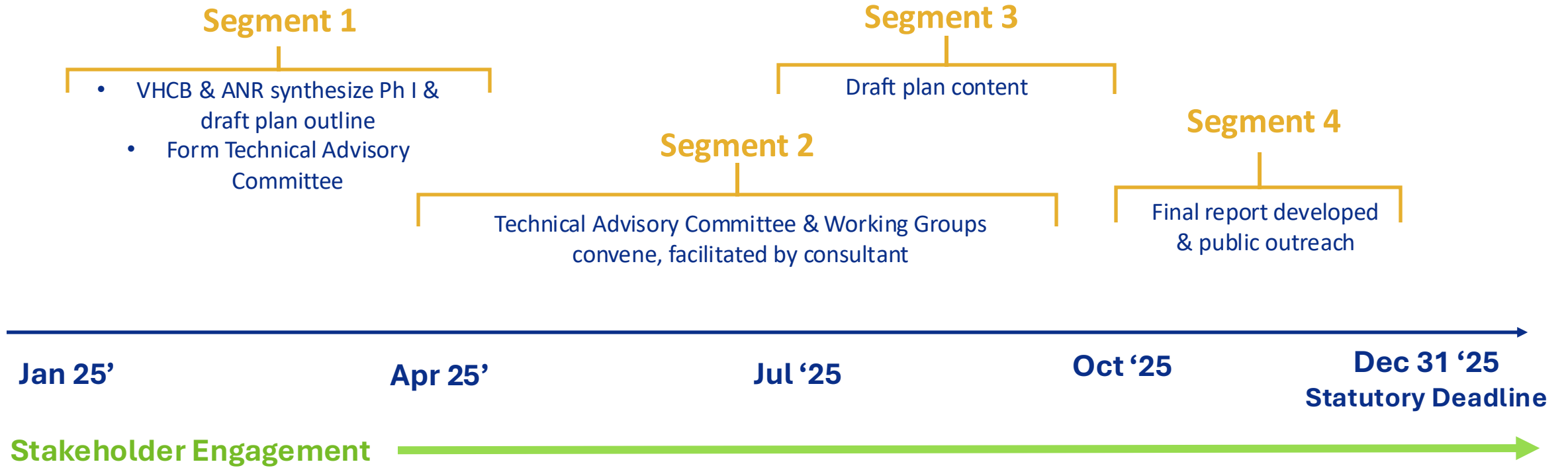
Final Inventory Results for 2024

Ecological Reserve Areas:	240,055 acres (4.08%)
Biodiversity Conservation Areas:	235,950 acres (4.01%)
Forestland and Natural Cover:	929,431 acres (15.78%)
Agricultural and Open Land:	171,347 acres (2.91%)
Total of Conserved Land:	1,576,783 acres (~27%)
Acres to Meet 2030 Goal:	189,953 acres



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Phase II Timeline



Project Lead Consultant: Future iQ



VERMONT FOREST FUTURE STRATEGIC ROADMAP

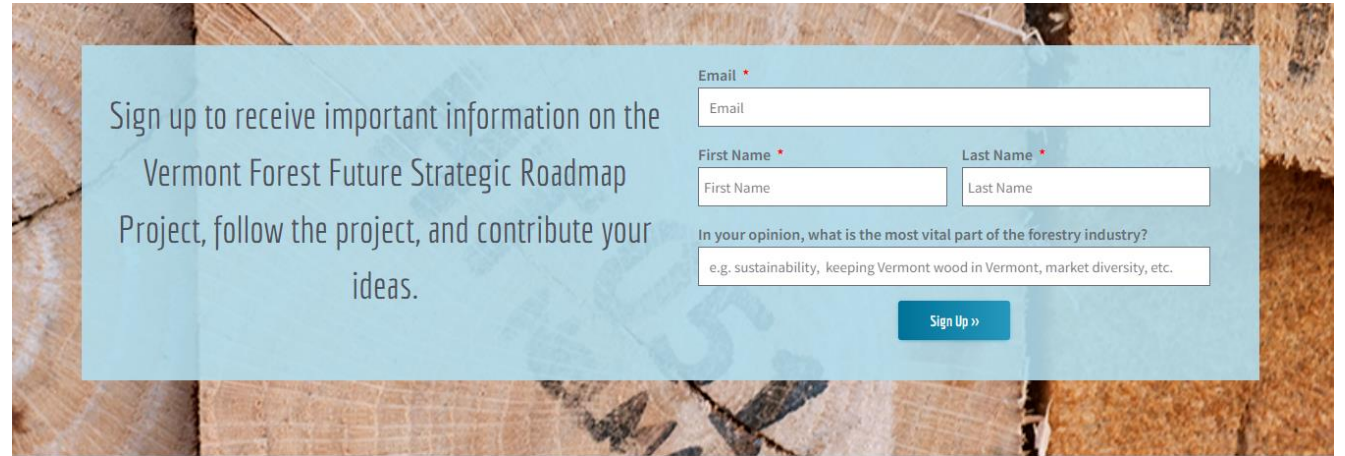
FINAL REPORT

STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

future*→*iQ

JANUARY 2024

VERMONT



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Funding: America the Beautiful Grant

National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Announces \$122.5 Million in Conservation Grants from the America the Beautiful Challenge

Third round of grants to high-priority conservation projects across the United States awarded via America's Ecosystem Restoration Initiative: America the Beautiful Challenge



**VHCB Applied for
& Awarded \$1,000,000**

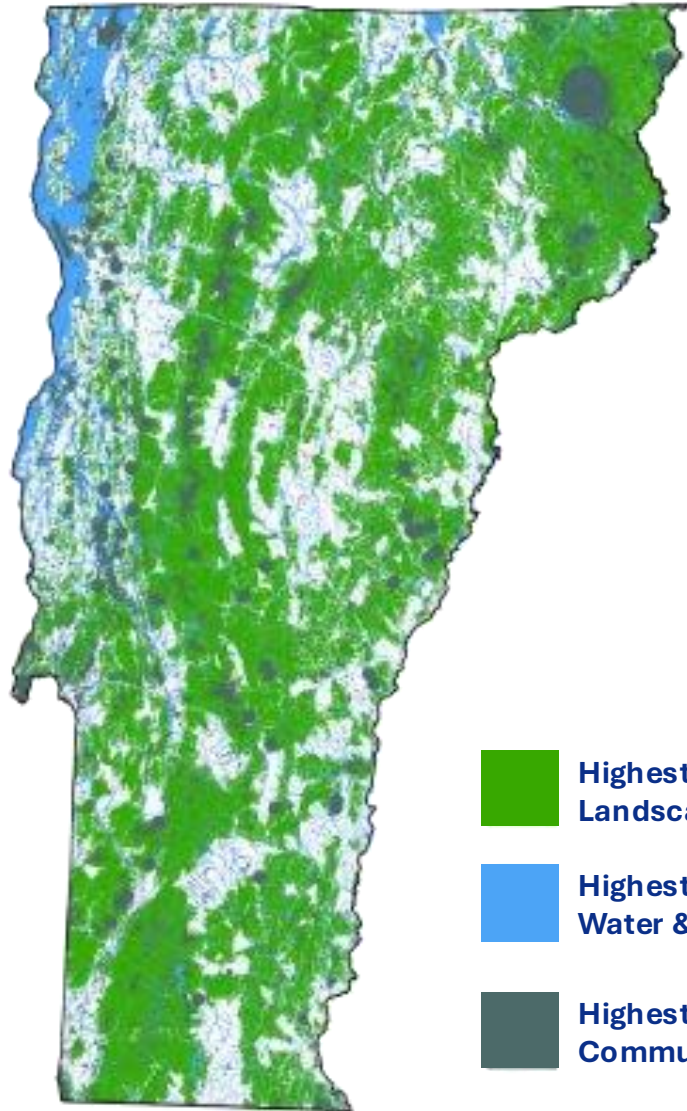
Award Budget Supports:

- VHCB and ANR Staff Time
- Consultant Time
- Stakeholder Engagement Costs

VHCB's Approach to Act 59: Building a Big Tent



Centering Vermont Conservation Design (VCD)



-  Highest Priority Landscape Blocks
-  Highest Priority Surface Water & Riparian Areas
-  Highest Priority Natural Community & Habitat Features

- Identifies conservation priorities to maintain a connected and functioning natural and working landscape
- Serves as a key framework to direct conservation work and investments

Conservation Planning Models

Reviewed Other States' Conservation Plans:

- California
- Maine
- Maryland
- New York
- New Mexico

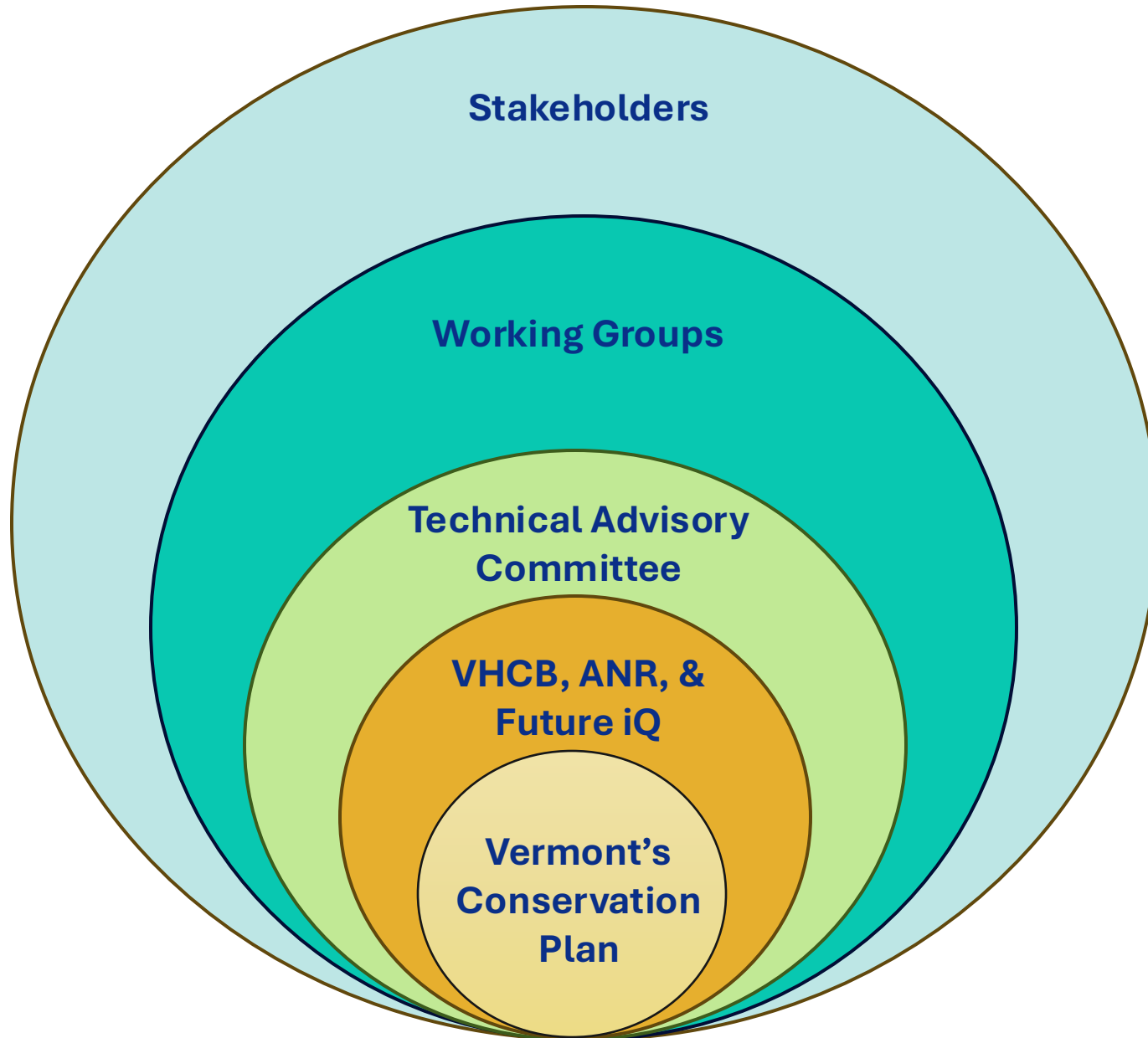
Adapting California's strategic pathways model to achieve Vermont's 30x30 Goal



30x30 New Mexico



Engaging Conservation Partners Across Vermont





Green River Reservoir, Hyde Park



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THANK YOU

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