

**ACT 59 OF 2023**  
**COMMUNITY RESILIENCY AND**  
**BIODIVERSITY PROTECTION**  

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**(AKA 30 X 30)**

Ellen Czajkowski, Office of Legislative Counsel, 15 January 2025

# 10 VSA chapter 89

- Establishes goals for the State to conserve 30% of the land by 2030 and 50% by 2050
- Requires the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board to work with the Agency of Natural Resources to first take inventory of what land is already conserved (Report submitted July 1, 2024) and then create a plan to achieve the goals

# § 2801. Definitions

(1) “Ecological reserve area” means an area having permanent protection from conversion and that is managed to maintain a natural state within which natural ecological processes and disturbance events are allowed to proceed with minimal interference.

(2) “Biodiversity conservation area” means an area having permanent protection from conversion for the majority of the area and that is managed for the primary goal of sustaining species or habitats. These areas may include regular, active interventions to address the needs of particular species or to maintain or restore habitats.

(3) “Natural resource management area” means an area having permanent protection from conversion for the majority of the area but that is subject to long-term, sustainable land management.

(4) “Conversion”

(5) “Sustainable land management”

(6) “Conserved”

# § 2802. Conservation vision and goals

(a) The vision of the State of Vermont is 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 and appreciation of the natural world, and supports the historic settlement pattern of compact villages surrounded by rural lands and natural areas.

(b) It is the goal of the State that 30% of Vermont's total land area shall be conserved by 2030, and 50 % of the State's total land area shall be conserved by 2050. The Secretary of Natural Resources shall lead the effort in achieving these goals. The land conserved shall include State, federal, municipal, and private land.

(c) Reaching 3 % by 2030 and 50% by 2050 shall include a mix of ecological reserve areas, biodiversity conservation areas, and natural resource management areas. In order to support an ecologically functional and connected landscape with sustainable production of natural resources and recreational opportunities, the approximate percentages of each type of conservation category shall be guided by the principles of conservation science and the conservation targets within Vermont Conservation Design, prioritizing ecological reserve areas to protect highest priority natural communities and maintain or restore old forests

# § 2803. Conserved land inventory

(a) On or before July 1, 2024, the VHCB with the ANR, shall create an inventory of Vermont's conserved land and conservation policies to serve as the basis of meeting the conservation goals of Vermont Conservation Design and to meet the goals of this chapter.

(b) The inventory shall include:

(1) A **review of the three conservation categories** and recommend any changes. As part of this review, criteria shall be developed to determine the types of **agricultural lands** that will qualify as supporting and restoring biodiversity and therefore count towards the natural resource management area category.

(2) The **amount of conserved land** in Vermont that fits into each of the three conservation categories, including public and private land. The inventory shall also include other lands permanently protected from development by fee ownership or subject to conservation easements.

(3) A summary of the totality of **conservation practices available** for reaching the goals

(4) An assessment of how State lands will be used to increase conserved ecological reserve areas.

(5) The implementation methods that could be utilized for achieving the goals of this chapter using Vermont Conservation Design as a guide.

(6) A review of how **aquatic systems** are currently conserved or otherwise protected in the State

(7) How **existing programs** will be used to meet the conservation goals of this chapter and **recommendations for new programs**, if any, that will be needed to meet the goals.

(8) An assessment of **existing funding** and **recommendations for new funding** sources that will be needed for acquisition of land, purchase or donation of conservation easements, staffing capacity, and long-term stewardship to meet the goals.

(9) An **equity assessment** of existing land protection and conservation strategies and programs.

(10) An evaluation of the opportunities related to **intergenerational land transfer trends** and how the State could proactively direct resources to achieve conservation at the time of transfer.

## § 2804. Conservation plan

(a) On or before December 31, 2025, the VHCB and the ANR, shall develop a plan to implement the conservation goals.

(b) The plan shall include:

(1) a comprehensive strategy for achieving the vision and goals while continuing to conserve and protect Vermont's agricultural land, working forests, historic properties, recreational lands, and surface waters;

(2) the implementation methods for achieving the vision and goals using Vermont Conservation Design as a guide;

(3) recommendations to provide and increase equitable access to protected and conserved lands and land-based enterprises, including recreational access to and use of conserved lands; and

(4) recommendations to implement the vision and goals while also enhancing Vermont's current investments and commitments to working lands enterprises, rural landowners, and the broad conservation mission implemented by the Secretary and VHCB, including conservation of agricultural land, working forests, historic properties, recreational lands, and surface waters.

(c) In developing the plan, the VHCB and the ANR, shall hold 12 or more public meetings on the plan between July 1, 2023 and December 31, 2025 to solicit input from stakeholders. Specific stakeholders listed.

(d) The conserved land inventory shall be updated biennially to track progress toward meeting the vision and goals, which shall be publicly available, and the Secretary shall submit a report to the relevant committees on or before January 15 following each update.