



# Wildlands in Vermont

*From Wildlands in New England  
Past, Present, and Future*

***Wildlands are lands that are permanently protected from development, in which management is explicitly intended to allow natural processes to prevail with “free will” and minimal human interference. Humans have been part of nature for millennia and can coexist within and with Wildlands without intentionally altering their structure, composition, or function.***

**W**ildlands covered most of Vermont and New England for thousands of years. Wildlands are essential for:

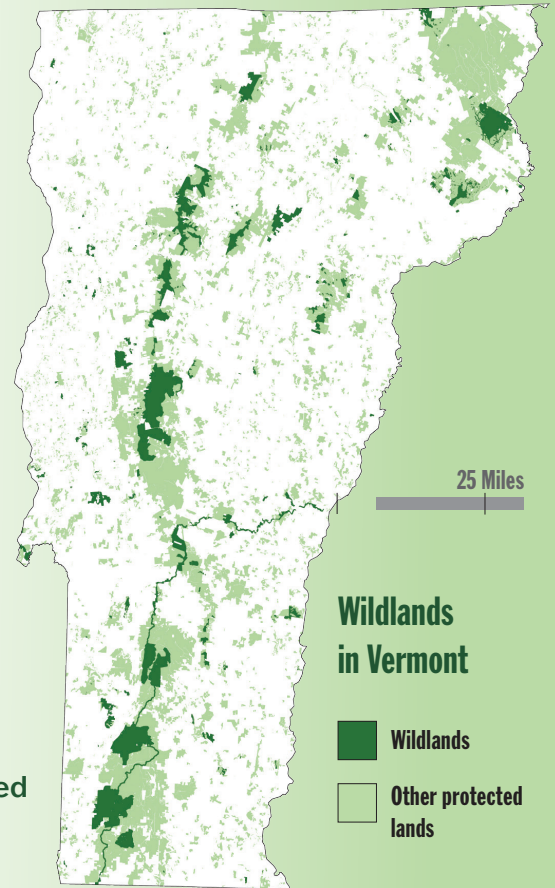
- *Supporting the intrinsic value of wild nature to exist*
- *Supporting wildlife habitat and biodiversity*
- *Mitigating climate change by storing carbon*
- *Enhancing landscape resilience through ecological complexity*
- *Offering quiet space for spiritual and physical renewal*
- *Serving as references for science, management, and conservation*
- *Supporting 30x30, the global effort to protect biodiversity*

*Wildlands in New England* is the first regional study in the U.S. to characterize all “forever wild lands” that are protected so that natural processes can prevail, with minimal to no active management. These lands—designated wilderness areas and diverse public and private natural areas and reserves—provide critical support to nature and society. In Vermont, Wildlands are an important part of the state’s land conservation strategy, which takes an integrated, sustainable, and equitable approach.

To reach the goals for Wildlands and improve the landscape resilience of the region, *Wildlands in New England 2023* makes the following recommendations:

- **Center Wildlands** in an integrated approach to land planning and conservation that includes actively managed forests and farms
- **Strengthen existing Wildlands** through permanent protection and landscape buffering
- **Create more Wildlands**, thoughtfully and strategically, with a diversity of partners, through private and public action

**Only 3.7%  
of Vermont  
is considered  
Wildlands  
today.**



## Three Vermont Wildlands

**Peacham Bog Natural Area** in Groton State Forest protects one of Vermont’s largest peatlands within a multi-use area in Vermont’s Northeast Kingdom. A boardwalk and interpretive sign offer easy access to visitors and researchers who can safely enjoy and study the bog without causing damage. The peatland, underlain by several feet of partially decomposed organic matter, has been the subject of ecological research



and has provided a living classroom for countless students of ecology.

**Woodbury Mountain Wilderness Preserve**, owned by Northeast Wilderness Trust, is one of Vermont’s newest Wildlands, and the largest non-governmental wilderness in Vermont at over 6,000 acres. It lies in a critical wildlife linkage and provides safe movement for bears, fishers, bobcat, and moose. A mere half hour’s drive from the state capital



of Montpelier, it provides opportunities for hiking, nature study, and hunting.

**Lye Brook Wilderness** is one of eight wilderness areas in the Green Mountain National Forest and comprises over 18,000 acres of forests, streams, and wetlands, mostly above 2,500 feet in elevation. It provides habitat for a diverse array of wildlife species, including those with large home ranges and solitary habitat needs. Many hiking trails, including the Long Trail and Appalachian Trail, enable access and enjoyment of this land.



# Global, Regional, and State Support for Wildlands

The following initiatives make strong cases for Wildlands and emphasize the need for increased permanent protection with measurable targets.

**Vermont Conservation Design** is a broad vision that calls for at least 9% of Vermont’s forest to be maintained as old forest, much of that Wildland, with the remaining forest managed to provide additional habitats and a continued source of forest products.

**Wildlands, Woodlands, Farmlands & Communities (WWF&C)** provides a regional vision and state-specific land protection goals that call for at least 70% of New England to be protected as forest—10% protected as Wildland and 60% protected as Woodland (managed forest)—and all existing farmland to be permanently conserved. This vision intentionally values wild and managed forests, farmlands, and communities and relies on the collaboration of conservation efforts across the region.

## 30x30

Wildlands form a central component of “30x30,” the national and international goal to protect 30% of earth’s land and waters by 2030, addressing the looming challenges of climate change, biodiversity loss, and threats to human health and welfare.

## What You Can Do:

- Visit [Wildlands in New England](#) to read the report and access related resources.
- Learn more about the Northeast Wilderness Trust’s Wildlands Partnership Program. Please visit: <https://newildernesstrust.org/wilderness-conservation/#wildlands>.
- Contact other Wildlands conservation partners, listed below, to learn about their efforts and available programs.
- Support local, statewide, and regional conservation efforts in implementing [Vermont Conservation Design](#) and WWF&C goals.

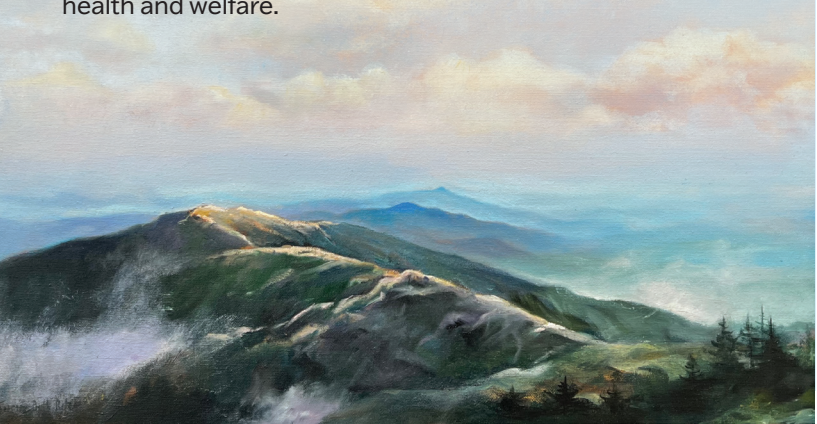
## Vermont’s Wildland Conservation Partners:

### Public

- **State:** Vermont Agency of Natural Resources, Vermont Housing and Conservation Board, Vermont Legislature
- **Federal:** U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- **Regional and Municipal:** Vermont Association of Conservation Districts, Association of Vermont Conservation Commissions, all municipalities

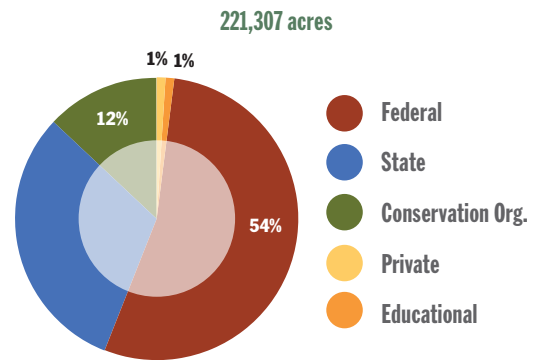
### Private

- Conservation organizations, including but not limited to Northeast Wilderness Trust and The Nature Conservancy
- Regional and local land trusts
- Colleges, universities, public and private schools

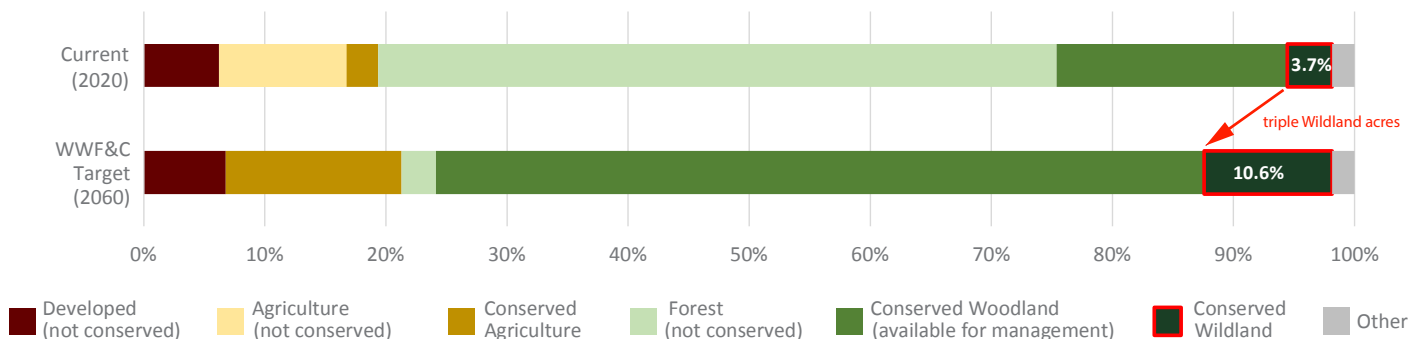


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## Wildland Ownership in Vermont



## Land Cover in Vermont: Current and WWF&C Target



Copies of the full report, the Wildlands webmap, and additional information are available on the website of Wildlands, Woodlands, Farmlands & Communities:

<https://wildlandsandwoodlands.org/wildlands-in-new-england-2023/>

To learn more about ways to directly support Wildlands conservation throughout New England, visit [www.newildernesstrust.org/](http://www.newildernesstrust.org/)

