

Senate Committee on Agriculture

February 4, 2025



Vermont
Housing &
Conservation
Board

Gus Seelig
Executive Director

Holly McClintock
Agricultural Program Coordinator

Liz Gleason
Vermont Farm & Forest Viability Program Director



Gray Farms, Morgan



Vermont
Housing &
Conservation
Board

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

Dual goals
in Newport





Vermont
Housing &
Conservation
Board

VHCB All-time Results*

State Investment: \$552M | Leverage: \$2.4B



Monument Farms, Weybridge



16,335 permanently affordable homes
(rental & homeownership)



822 farms conserved
across 175,755 acres



278,741 acres conserved
natural areas, forestland & recreational lands



87 historic preservation projects



1,300 working lands businesses served

*Since inception through June 30, 2024



Vermont
Housing &
Conservation
Board

Conservation Impact since 2020



Crow Hill Farm, Chester

22,674

acres conserved across
25 towns in 10 counties

NATURAL LANDS

56 projects
9,997 acres

WETLANDS

843 acres of special water quality
protection zones
53 miles of surface water

FARMLAND

78 farms
12,677 acres

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

14 projects
12 towns
8 counties

VHCB Housing Impacts since 2020*

4,964 households served (rental & homeownership)

Total VHCB investment: \$377.4M → Total leverage: \$680.6M

RENTAL

2,303 total units

1,925 new units

694 homes for unhoused Vermonters

SHELTER

24 shelters served total

10 new shelters

571 beds

269 new beds total

HOMEOWNERSHIP

389 households supported

169 new construction

single-family homeownership units

ACCESSIBILITY IMPROVEMENTS

384 households received accessibility improvements

MOBILE HOME COMMUNITIES

27 infill units

944 lots in 11 communities

FARMWORKER HOUSING

59 repair projects

6 replacement projects

237 farmworkers to be served

RECOVERY RESIDENCES

4 projects

59 residents benefitted

LEAD ABATEMENT

77 households served

58 apartments

19 single-family homes

*January 1, 2020 – December 31, 2024



Vermont
Housing &
Conservation
Board



Vermont
Housing &
Conservation
Board

Farmworker Housing



Farmworker Housing Repair Loan Program

A Champlain Housing Trust (CHT) loan fund program to finance the repair, improvement, and replacement of farmworker housing. UVM Extension Service and RuralEdge are acting as partners with CHT in helping with outreach to farmers about the program.

Repair Program Impacts

- 18 units complete | 67 workers & family members housed
- 50 units in progress to house 190 workers & family members
- Totals: 68 units for 257 workers and family members

Replacement Program Impacts

- 6 units completed or in process | 25 beneficiaries
- 4 possible units in pipeline | 17 beneficiaries



Vermont
Housing &
Conservation
Board

Farm Conservation Supports Rural Economy



Corse Dairy, Whitingham



Chaput Farm, Troy



Vermont
Housing &
Conservation
Board

Farm & Forest Viability Program



Sunday Bell Farm, Danville

- In-depth, individualized business assistance
- Succession planning, financial management, access to capital, land search and access, bookkeeping, improving profitability
- 108 farm & forest clients in 2024 generated **\$42 million** in economic activity and **over 300 jobs**
- 36% average increase in profitability



Sweetland Farm, Norwich

2024 Business Vitality Metrics



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

Farmland Access

- 100% of transfer planning clients in 2024 reported that the farm will continue after support from Farm Viability
- 10% of clients enroll to help access land – including land assessments, financing, and business plan development

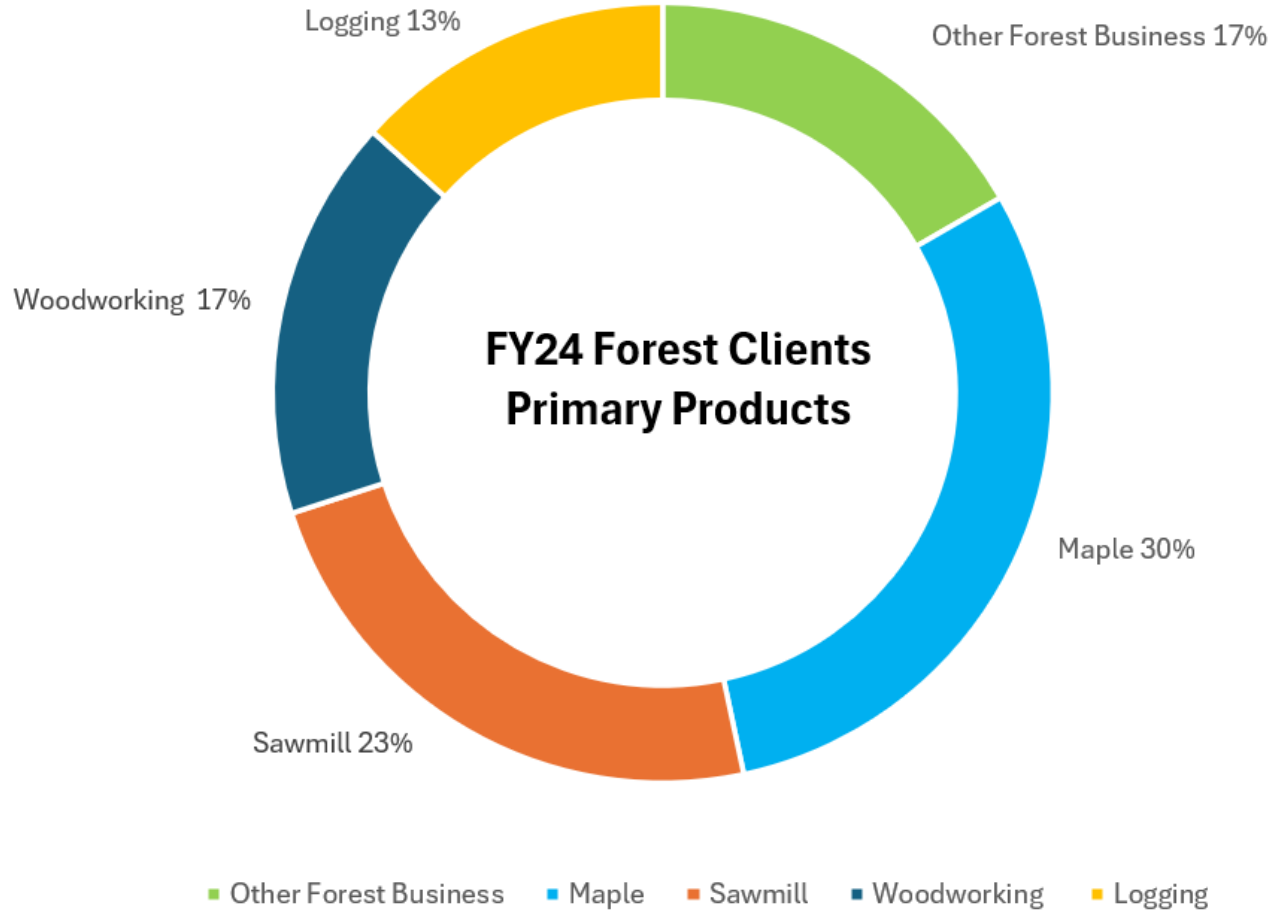


Mighty Food Farm, Shaftsbury



Old Road Farm, Monkton

Forest Economy



Implementation Grants

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

—Becca Knouss

- Catalyze key projects to bring business & transfer plans to fruition
- 16 grants in 2024 will increase climate resilience and grow local food and forest businesses
- 170 grants made over 15 years, totaling \$840,000



The Goat Project, Bennington



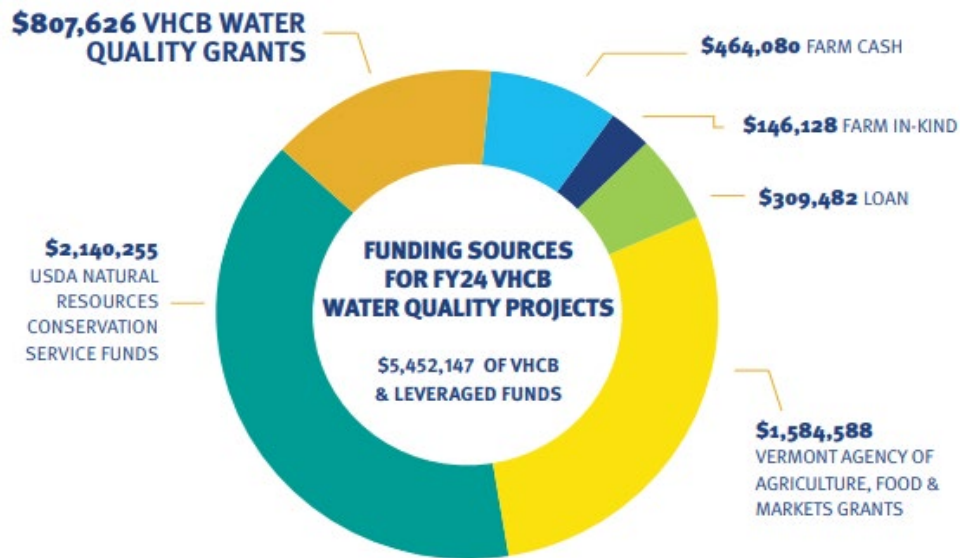
Levy Lamb, Dorset



La Montañuela, New Haven

Water Quality Grants

- 20 grants in 2024 will reduce runoff, boost soil health, improve manure management, and increase grazing infrastructure
- \$807K in 2024 leveraged an additional \$4.6 million
- \$4.9 million awarded since 2017
- Flexible addition to State's clean water programming



Severy Farm, Cornwall

Rural Economic Development Initiative (REDI)

\$1,086,681 ➔ **\$22,751,701**

REDI FUNDS SINCE 2017

GRANTS TO COMMUNITIES



Champlain Orchards, Shoreham

REDI impacts:

- Assists small towns and working lands businesses access capital for critically needed economic development projects
- **\$22.7 million** secured for small communities

Focus areas:

- Community-based economic development and downtown revitalization
- Working lands
- Outdoor recreation

Champlain Orchards, Shoreham:

- Secured a \$239,000 USDA Value-Added Producer Grant to expand markets for eco-certified apples



“The support that REDI provided with our feasibility study was completely invaluable. We wouldn’t have been able to successfully apply to the USDA MPPEP grant without this key component and it was a really smooth process to get the help we needed.” ~ Sarah Wilson, Bio-Logical Capital

Vermont Livestock & Slaughter, Ferrisburgh



*“In dairy, there’s never a budget for equipment improvements that are forward thinking vs putting out fires. We’ve never applied for a grant, and this would’ve been too daunting without a strong team to help us. This grant will get us to a stage in one year that would’ve taken 5+...the impact is hard to put into words.”
– Alex Englert, Maplebrook Farm*

Maplebrook Mozzarella, North Bennington

Supporting Small Towns to Access Big Funding



Bridgewater Community Center

- Wilmington: \$1.75 million in NBRC & CRRP funds for water/wastewater infrastructure
- Canaan: \$900,000 in US Dept of Treasury/ARPA to renovate historic library
- Bridgewater: \$430,000 from ACCD's Vermont Community Development Program (VCDP) for the Bridgewater Community & Childcare Center
- Bethel: \$331,809 Vermont Outdoor Recreation Economic Collaborative (VOREC) grant for multi-use trail development



Alice M. Ward Library, Canaan



Bethel Multi-Use Trail



Wilmington Water/Wastewater Infrastructure Project



Vermont
Housing &
Conservation
Board

Farmland Conservation



Wiley Side Farm, Shoreham

Photo Credit: <https://www.wileysidefarm.org/>



- 822 farms conserved
- 175,755 acres conserved
- 18-month pipeline: 64 projects, 11,859 acres, \$30M
- Strong partnership with NRCS – Agricultural Conservation Easement Program



Impact on Working Lands

- Help farmers retain their lands
- Protect land from development
- Secure land for ag use & ensure farmland stays in ag use
- Affordably transfer land to next generation
- Help new farmers affordably access land

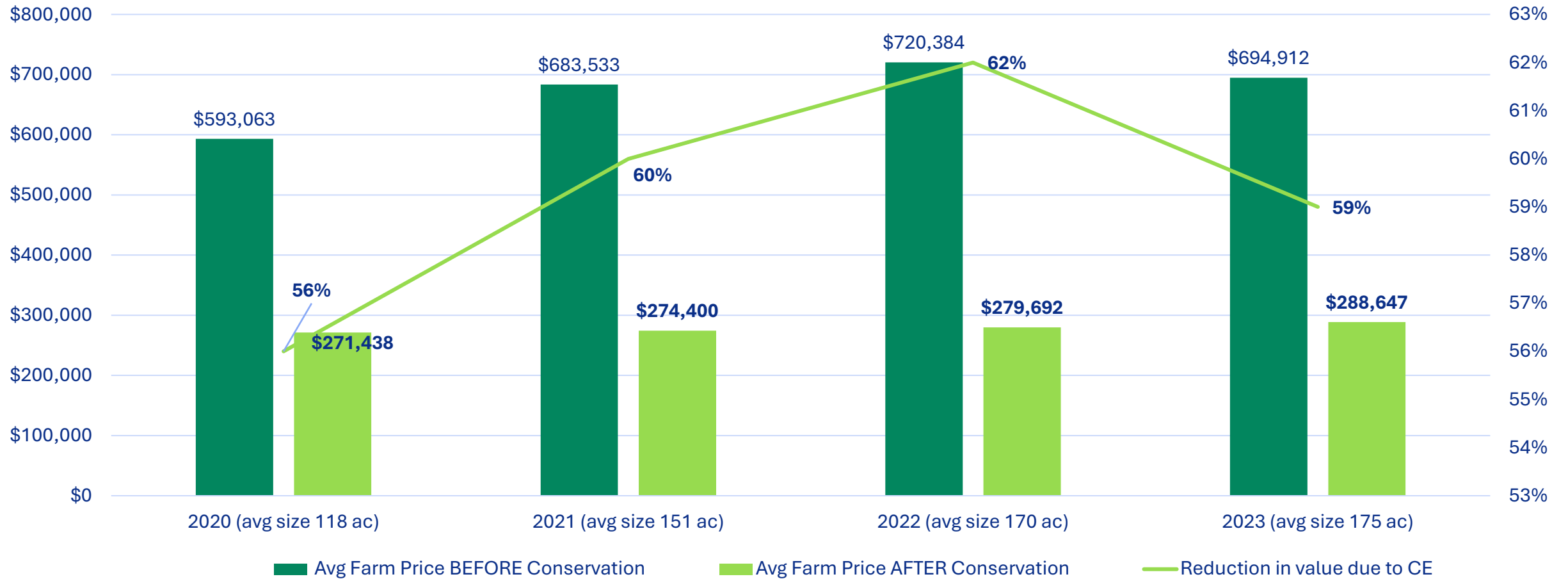
Development Rights & Farmland Affordability





Price of Conserved Land

VHCB Funded Farms - 2020 to 2023





Baird Farm, Chittenden



Hursch Farm, Morrystown



Wood's Market Garden, Brandon

Farmland Access & Succession

- Between 2018 and 2023, nearly 40% of projects were farm transfers
- Decreases cost of land
- Helps new and beginning farmers get on land and existing farmers to expand
- Technical assistance provided through VHCB's Farm and Forest Viability Program



Co-benefits of conserved farmland

Project Highlights:

- 63 acres of prime agricultural soil
- 10,000 feet of 50' buffers on the Mad River
- 38 acres of Mad River frontage within a River Corridor Easement funded by Vermont DEC
- 8 acres of riparian protections with support from the USDA's Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program
- 6 acres of permanently retired cropland
- Over a mile of public trails – extension of the Mad River Path



Defreest Farm, Waitsfield

Photo credit: Vermont Land Trust

- Conserved farms are 33% forested, 43% pasture/hay, 10% wetlands, 14% annual crops.
- Since 2019, 80 miles of buffers established on conserved farms and 1,400 acres of wetlands protected.
- 71% of all cultivated acres were managed for no-till or reduced till.

Thank you!

Gus Seelig

Executive Director
gus@vhcb.org

Holly McClintock

Agricultural Program Coordinator
hmclintock@vhcb.org

Liz Gleason

VT Farm & Forest Viability
Program Director
egleason@vhcb.org



Vermont
Housing &
Conservation
Board

