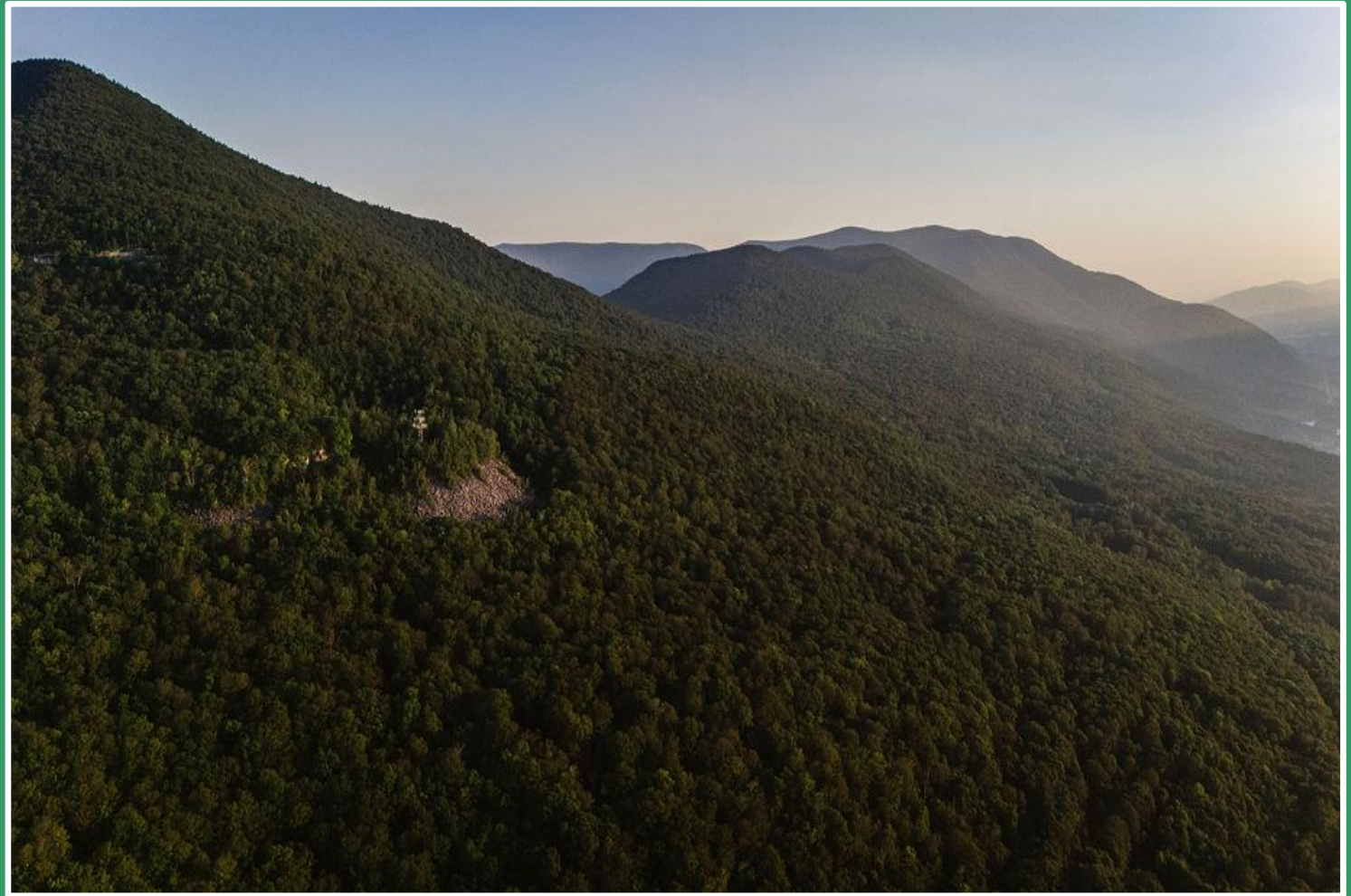

DORSET RIDGELINE PROJECT

IN DORSET, VT

WHERE THE TACONIC &
GREEN MOUNTAINS
MEET

ROB GAIOTTI,
DORSET TOWN MANAGER



ECOLOGY

HISTORY

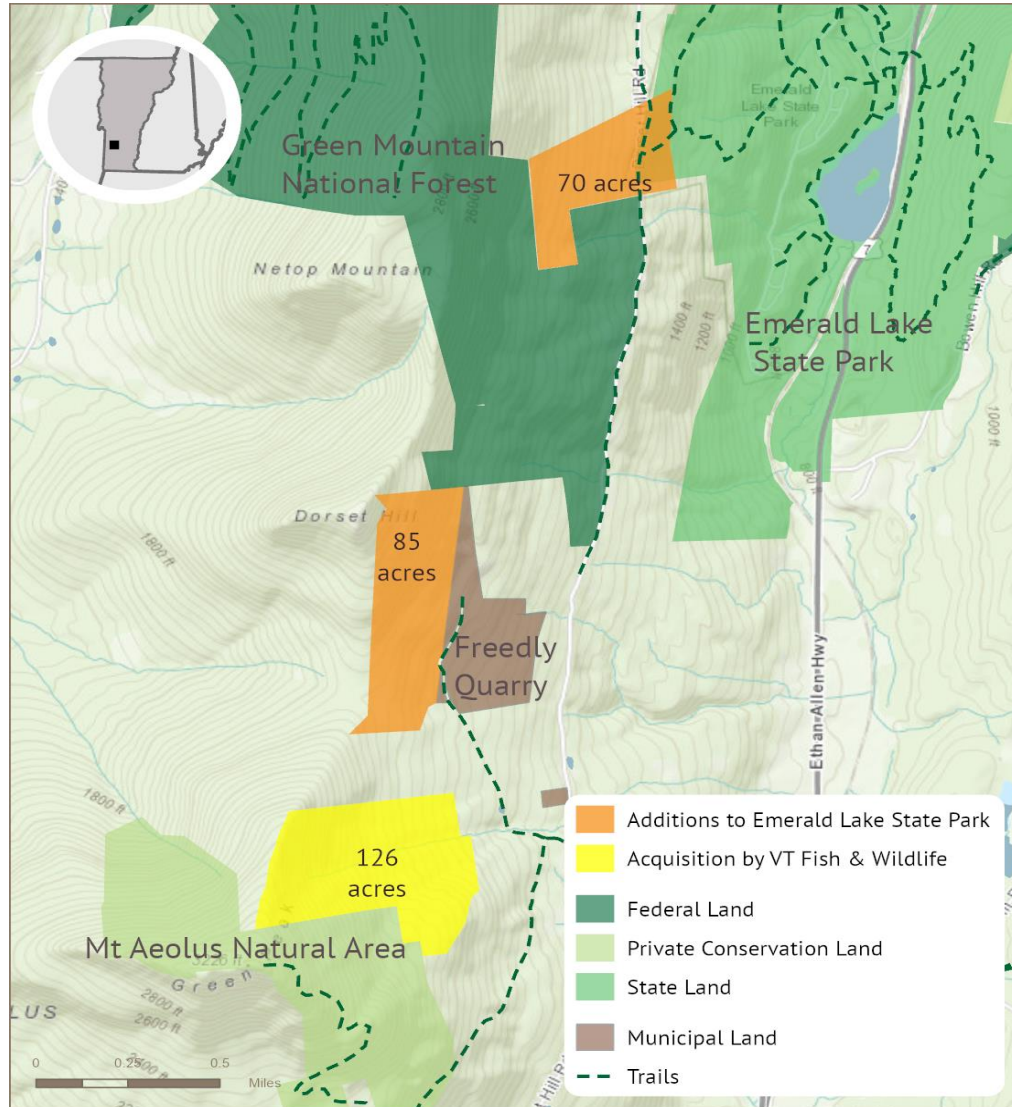
RECREATION

PARTNERS

PUBLIC ACCESS

- The Town of Dorset is pleased to offer our support for the Dorset Ridgeline Project.
- Conservation and Recreation are core values for our community.
- Trust for Public Land working tirelessly to coordinate a 3 parcel 281-acre conservation project that will result in the expansion of Emerald Lake State Park and a new WMA owned by VT F&W.
- Newly conserved land is adjacent to GMNF, private conserved lands, and our Town Forest. Creates the opportunity for trail connectivity.
- Dorset Select Board voted unanimously to support the project.
- VHCB has awarded \$322,000 for these State acquisitions.
- Dorset has a history of over 100 years of public use on these ridgeline trails.

Dorset Ridgeline Project



- Dorset ridgeline project will protect a highest priority landscape in the Taconic mountains, an underrepresented biophysical region with only 19% currently conserved.
- In 2023, Vermont's outdoor recreation economy generated \$2.1 billion in value added, 4.8% of the State's GDP, and supported over 16,000 jobs.
- Protects public access to a system of trails beloved by the public for almost 100 years.
- Creates stronger Local, State, Federal and Non-profit partnerships.
- Positions the Community and partners to enhance outdoor recreational opportunities – improving our community health and local economy.
- This project helps lay the groundwork for the Velomont Trail in our corner of the State. This legacy project represents a nexus between conservation, recreation and the economy.
- Mountain biking tourists can generate as much as \$416 per visit, through lodging, food and retail activities.
- Spending per visit varies by trail location and type, ranging from just over \$100 to over \$1,000 per visit.
- Studies also show that Trails enhance nearby property values, attract new residents, and promote improved physical and mental health



Dorset Ridgeline Project



- Mt. Aeolus is one of only seven locations in the state designated as “Critical Habitat” under Vermont’s Endangered and Threatened Species Rule.
 - Protects vital wildlife corridor between the Taconic and Green Mountain ranges.
 - All three parcels are less than 2.2 miles from Aeolus Bat Caves – home to 4 different species of State/Federally endangered bats. Estimated bat population of 70,000 to 90,000.
 - Aeolus Cave is the largest bat hibernacula in the Northeastern United States.
 - Protects lands adjacent to historic/culturally significant assets – First Marble Quarry in the United States nearby.
-

Dorset Ridgeline Project

- None of this is possible without the vital resources provided by VHCB and the State of Vermont.
- Total Project Costs: \$701,365
- VHCB Share: \$322,000
- Other Funding: \$375,365
- Fully funding VHCB for both conservation and housing creates a wealth of opportunities for our State.



Conserving North Pawlet Hills with VHCB, Pawlet, VT

February, 2026

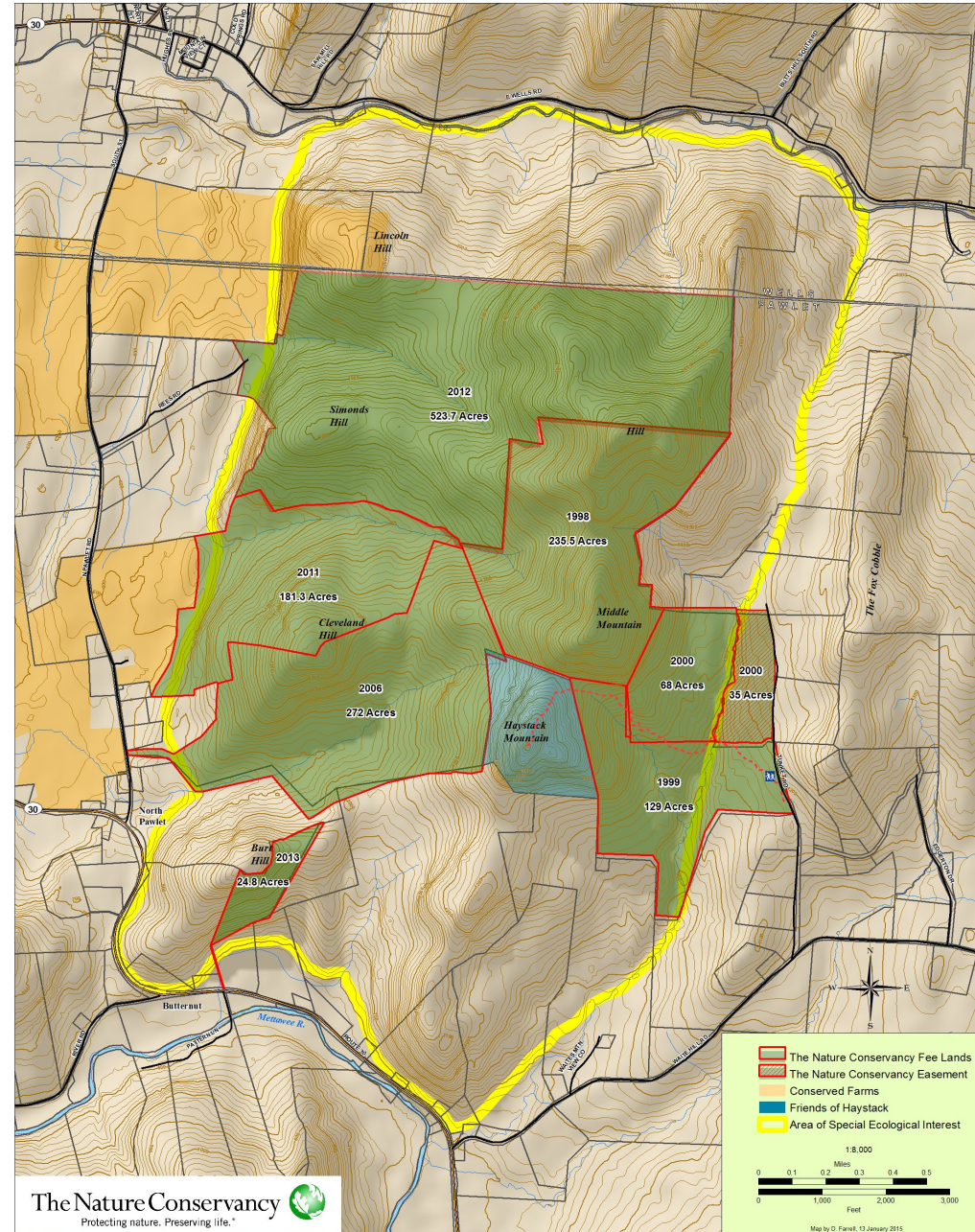


Photos: Jon Binhammer



Since 1998, The Nature Conservancy, together with funding from the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board, has conserved 1,666 acres in 8 projects at North Pawlet Hills

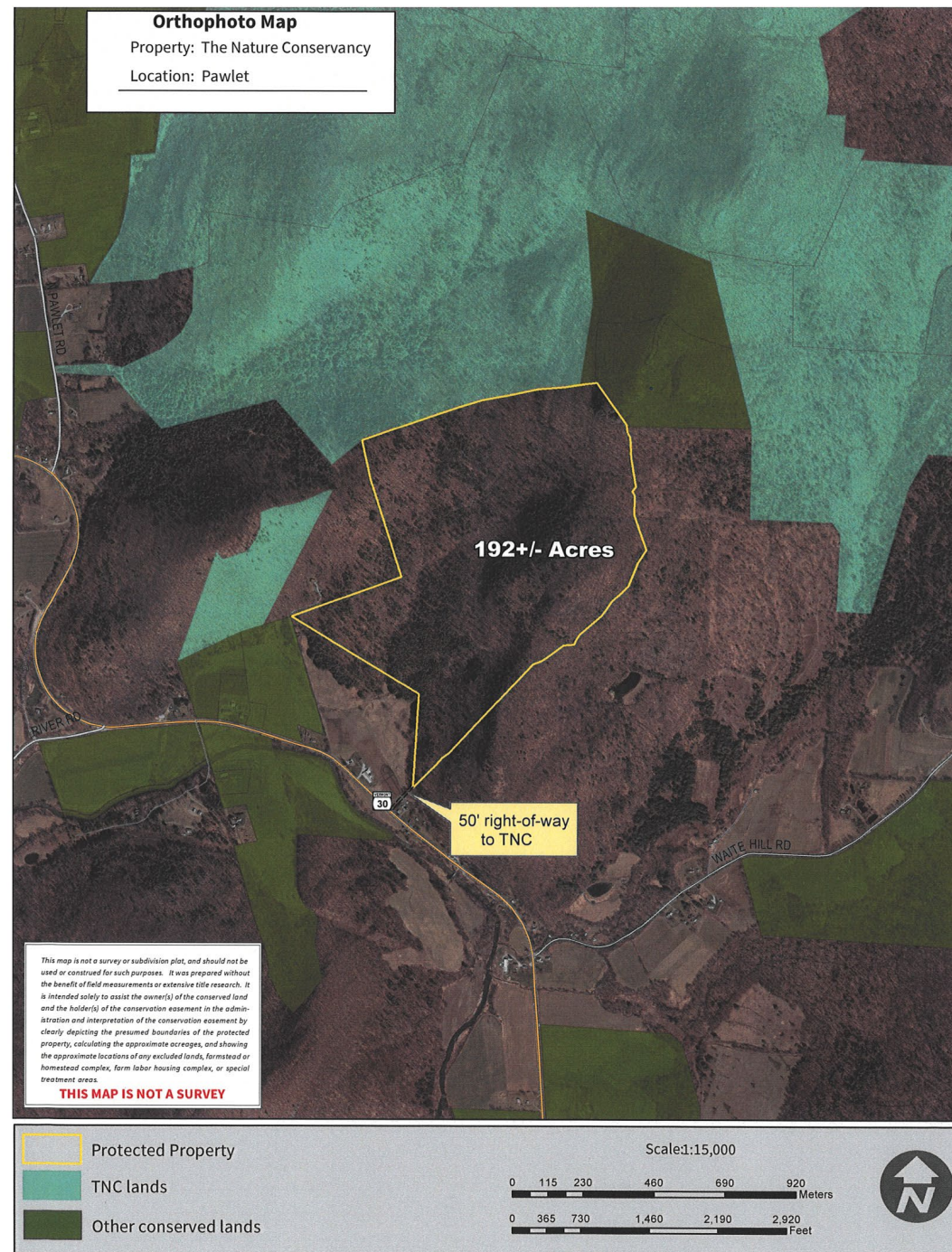
North Pawlet Hills Natural Area



Moore tract

192 acres

Partnership with Vermont Land Trust to conserve and add agricultural land to adjacent organic sweet potato farm



View of Moore tract from Haystack Mtn



Dry oak woodland

Dry oak-hickory hophornbeam forest



Total Project Cost \$373,000

VHCB grant.... \$206,000

Other funds.... \$167,000

Quarry Hill, Pownal





Habitat for Humanity home

TNC and VHCB partnered to conserve critical wildlife habitat at Quarry Hill in Pownal while also donating a house lot to Habitat for Humanity; the home is shown here.

We are currently working on another VHCB “dual-goal” project at Quarry Hill that will conserve 45 acres and convey a 2 acre lot to Habitat for Humanity for the development of another affordable home.