

# Mountain Views

News from Stowe Land Trust

Spring/Summer 2021

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New  
Project



*Introducing Stowe Land Trust's newest project: Conserving the Ricketson Farm! Over the coming year, we will be partnering with Ken Ricketson, Vermont Land Trust, and the Stowe community to complete this \$2.5 million project that will protect 210 acres of this landmark farm on Route 100. Photo: Rich Levine*

## WE ❤️ STOWE FARMS

By Kristen Sharpless

In the early 1900s, there were more than 200 farms in Stowe. Today, fewer than 10 remain. Despite their small number, Stowe farms give us a lot to be thankful for.

Along with our mountains and forests, farms and fields define the unique beauty of Stowe's landscape. They are part of what draws visitors to our area. And they shape the quality of life that makes people want to stay. Buying cheese straight from the farmer who made it. Biking by cows grazing in front of the backdrop of Mount Mansfield. Having a sugarmaker introduce your children to the delight of maple syrup fresh from the evaporator. These experiences are irreplaceable.

The families that have been farming in Stowe for generations exemplify legacies of hard work, resilience, and neighbor helping

neighbor. New farmers who are drawn to the Stowe area's amenities and access to markets seek to carry these traditions forward, incorporate values of sustainability and equity, and try new, diversified and value-added enterprises.

Together, they can continue to produce local, healthy food for our community and region; care for the land and water; and give us all opportunities to connect with where our food comes from.

However, the challenges facing Stowe farms and Vermont food systems are urgent and daunting. The cost of farmland and operations continue to rise while milk prices remain at a sustained low<sup>4</sup>. Farms - particularly small and mid-sized family businesses - are further strained by negative public perception, costs of implementing water quality protections, climate change-related

*continued on page 4*

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*Stowe Land Trust is dedicated to the conservation of scenic, recreational, and productive farm and forest lands for the benefit of the greater Stowe community.*

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STOWE LAND TRUST

## From the Board Chair



What a year it has been! Vermont was a standout when it came to the response to the pandemic. Our State's commitment to the health of our communities came as no surprise to me, as it points to the trust we place in and the respect we have for our neighbors. Vermont's performance certainly did not go unnoticed. Once our doors opened last summer, travelers flocked to our town and region – many for the first time - to soak in the open spaces, enjoy our trails, and discover what we all know: that our corner of the universe is a special place.

This was evidenced by the increased traffic on our hiking and biking trails which all saw a bump in usage last summer. If you happened to hike the Pinnacle, walk in Wiessner Woods, or ride in Cady Hill last summer and fall, I am sure you took notice of the additional wear on trails. While it might seem a concern that our local treasures have suffered from some overuse, it is undoubtedly positive to see that more people than ever are getting outside. We seek to encourage this newfound love of the outdoors because it brings new people into the fold and strengthens our collective commitment to conservation. Rest assured we have taken notice of the impacts of increased use and are coordinating with our partners to monitor and address concerns.

One of the things that makes Stowe different from other resort towns and part of what draws people here is that farming remains an integral part of its fabric. Personally, my family came to Stowe not only to be close to world class recreational opportunities, but also because it is an optimal location for our small farmstead cheese operation. But the future of farming in Stowe is in flux right now in part because of market trends that have been accelerated by the pandemic. It is in the strategic interests of the Town to ensure that productive farmland and the option to continue farming is conserved, especially on those lands with exceptional agricultural soils, great access, and existing farm infrastructure like the Ricketson Farm: Stowe Land Trust's newest conservation project.

As the pandemic moves into the rearview mirror, I look forward to more opportunities to get together, celebrate our local farms and food, and help protect the places that make Stowe special. In the meantime, I hope everyone is healthy and enjoying the early spring.

Sincerely,

Dave Wilkens  
Chair, Board of Directors



## Our Commitment to Learning and Action on Equity and Inclusion

The work of conserving land for our community in a way that is truly equitable is urgent and complicated. We know that we do it imperfectly. And we are committed to trying to do it better. Please visit our website to read *Our Commitment to Learning and Action on Equity and Inclusion*.

# Stowe Land Trust Earns National Recognition

We have successfully renewed our land trust accreditation for the second time – proving once again that, as part of a network of over 400 accredited land trusts across the nation, we are committed to professional excellence and to maintaining the public’s trust in our conservation work.



“Renewing our accreditation shows our ongoing commitment to permanent land conservation for the benefit of the Stowe community, said David Wilkens, board chair. “We are a stronger organization than ever for having again gone through the rigorous accreditation renewal process. Our strength and commitment mean special places – such as Cady Hill, Brownsville-Story Ridge Forest and Sunset Rock – will be protected forever, helping to make Stowe a beautiful and healthy place for all of us and the next generation.”

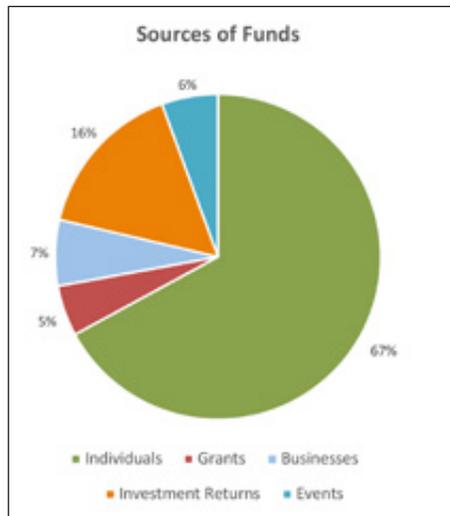
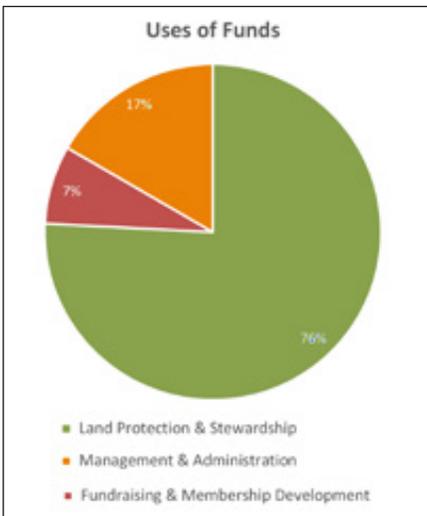
After an extensive documentation review and comprehensive third-party evaluation, the Land Trust Accreditation Commission awarded the renewed accreditation, signifying its confidence that Stowe Land Trust’s lands will be protected forever. More information about the process and benefits of accreditation can be found at [www.landtrustaccreditation.org](http://www.landtrustaccreditation.org).

# We Miss Our Canadian Friends!

We hope that we can welcome you back to the Stowe community soon. Thank you for your support!



# Annual Report FY‘20



## Statement of Financial Position

For the year ended September 30, 2020

<u>Assets</u>	
Cash & Other Assets	\$698,143
Investments	\$1,568,507
Building & Land Improvements	\$95,358
Land	\$2,125,040
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$4,487,048</b>
<u>Liabilities</u>	
Accounts payable	\$3,709
Accrued expenses	\$55,238
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>\$58,947</b>
<u>Net Assets</u>	
Without Donor Restrictions	
Undesignated & Board-designated	\$1,248,572
With Donor Restrictions	\$3,179,529
<b>Total Net Assets</b>	<b>\$4,428,101</b>
<b>Total Liabilities and Net Assets</b>	<b>\$4,487,048</b>

Stowe Land Trust has conserved over 4,300 acres of land since 1987--protecting spectacular viewsheds, extensive trail networks, and the working farms and forests that are important to the Stowe area community. We have also collaborated with partners to conserve an additional 2,200 acres in the Shutesville Hill Wildlife Corridor and along the Worcester Range. This important work has been sustained primarily by generous contributions from individuals. Thank you for your support!

Stowe Land Trust is a 501(c)(3) organization. Our financial records are reviewed annually by Grippin Donlan Pinkham, CPA. A complete copy of the annual financial review may be obtained by request at (802) 253-7221 or [info@stowelandtrust.org](mailto:info@stowelandtrust.org).

## Stowe Farms – *continued*

stresses, barriers to accessing regional markets, and changing consumer demands.

As a result, farms and productive farmland are increasingly at risk of being lost forever. In Lamoille County, there was a 39% decrease in the number of farms between 2009 and 2019<sup>1</sup>. With only 20% of Stowe’s farmed agricultural soils permanently protected, the risk of further loss of local farmland and farms is worryingly high.

As more and more Vermont farmers are retiring, they are transferring their farms to the next generation or selling them. All four of Stowe’s remaining commercial dairy farms are in or approaching a generational transition and as many as 300 farms statewide could change ownership between 2020 and 2025<sup>1</sup>. Although there are many young people who want to farm, lack of equitable access to affordable farmland is one of the biggest barriers for many who are starting out<sup>2</sup>. Black, indigenous, and other people of color who have historically and systematically been denied opportunities for land ownership are especially disadvantaged.

Efforts that protect farmland for farmers; support farm viability and transition; facilitate equitable, affordable, and secure land tenure are all needed to build a strong future for farming and access to healthy, local food for everyone<sup>2</sup>.

### Want to show your ♥ for Stowe farms?

1. **Thank a farmer.** Tell them how much you appreciate their hard work to produce food, care for their land and animals, and keep farming a part of Stowe.
2. **Eat local.** See our website for a guide to local farms, farmers markets and community gardens. We’ll be sharing additional tips and resources soon on selecting, growing, hunting, foraging, and preparing fresh, healthy food. Because everyone should be able to eat local.
3. **Help protect local farmland and provide affordable access for the next generation of farmers.** Donate to help protect the Ricketson Farm (our newest conservation project) and become a member of Stowe Land Trust today!
4. **Learn more about the state and future of farming in Vermont.** Suggested resources include: Vermont Farm to Plate Network and National Coalition of Young Farmers.
5. **Support BIPOC-led efforts working to return land and power to those who have been deprived of their connection to the land for generations.** These include the New England Farmers of Color Land Trust, ShiftMeals and Abenaki Helping Abenaki.



<sup>1</sup> Vermont Agriculture and Food System Plan 2021-2030, Farm to Plate Network.

<sup>2</sup> Land Policy Report, 2020, National Coalition of Young Farmers

# Celebrate Stowe's Conserved Farms

Find details about Stowe Land Trust's current and past farm conservation projects and information on eating local online at [www.stowelandtrust.org](http://www.stowelandtrust.org)

1. **Ricketson Farm** – Stowe Land Trust's newest conservation project! See cover page.
2. **Valcour-Hursh Farm** – Just conserved and transferred to the next generation of farmers with help from Vermont Land Trust and local support from Stowe Land Trust in April 2021.
3. **Long Winter Farm** – Stowe's first farm conservation project that included the affordable transfer to new farmers in 2016. Now celebrating 5 years of growing nourishing food for the Stowe community in Nebraska Valley.
4. **Mayo Farm** – Where Stowe Land Trust got its start more than 30 years ago. This town-owned conserved property in the heart of Stowe Village provides 235 acres for farming, public recreation, and events. Home to Stowe Community Gardens.
5. **Nichols Field** – This southern scenic gateway to Stowe along Route 100 was protected in 2004, keeping it open for farming and an annual commercial event.
6. **Bouchard Farm** – Part of the Percy family's commercial dairy operation located along the Rec Path was conserved in 1998. The Percys own four farmsteads in Stowe totaling about 400 acres of farmland, and they partner with 34 local landowners to keep another 675 acres in production.
7. **Burnham Farm** – Located in Stowe Hollow, this 107-acre hill farm is privately-owned with public access off Dewey Hill Road. Iconic meadows are currently summer pasture for some of the Percy farm's heifers.
8. **Grandview Farm** – Stowe's most iconic and photographed barn located in Stowe Hollow and conserved in 1996.

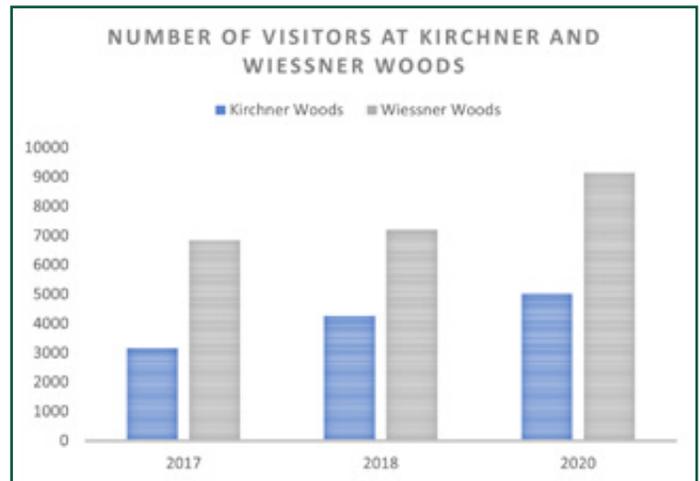


# Outdoor Recreation Trail Ethics

Over the past year Vermonters and visitors alike have found comfort and escape in the outdoors. Local green spaces have become even more important, and Stowe Land Trust (SLT) has seen visitor use increase at our most popular trail networks (see chart). On Stowe Trails Partnership-maintained networks including Cady Hill Forest and Adams Camp, the number of trail visitors increased 31% from 2019. According to the Green Mountain Club, average daily use count on the Long Trail was up 35%. At Vermont State Parks, out-of-state day-use was up almost 20%. Getting outside is so important to our mental and physical wellbeing and we want everyone to feel like they have a place on our trails. Anticipating that trails and parking lots will be busy this summer, we hope you'll help make the experience of visiting an SLT conserved property fun for everyone.

- Park close together to maximize the number of cars that will fit in a small lot. Visit properties at off-peak times – mornings, evenings, and weekdays tend to be less busy. Pick a different hike for the day if you arrive to a full parking lot.
- Be considerate of neighbors. Most SLT conserved lands are adjacent to private property. Please do not block driveways or allow dogs to run through neighboring fields. Be thoughtful about how much noise your music or voices make when entering or exiting a property.
- Be friendly! Say hello to those you meet on the trail.

- Respect other visitors' space. Dogs should be leashed or under voice control on SLT owned properties. This means they stay in your sight and come back when called.
- Keep our special places clean! Check for trash that may have fallen out of your car or pocket in the parking lot. Pick up and dispose of dog waste off site.



## Make a Lasting Gift: Join the Legacy Society

*"Five generations of my family are intrinsically connected to Stowe. My dad, Merton Pike, was a founding member of Stowe Land Trust and my mom, Ora, was there for him so he could participate. I decided to include Stowe Land Trust in my estate plan as a way to show gratitude for my parents' contributions and as a salute to everyone who has played any role in Stowe Land Trust's development, progress, and perpetuation. I hope this gift will encourage continuing support for Stowe Land Trust's valuable conservation efforts." – Lucene M. Pike*

To learn more about the Legacy Society, please visit our website or contact Kristen Sharpless at (802) 253-7221.



## Save the Date!

You're Invited to Stowe Land Trust's 22nd Annual Golf Tournament. Play the private West Hill Golf Course – a stunning 9-hole course with sweeping views of the Little River valley – hosted by Lee and Alice Spencer.

Please save the date and reserve your place in the tournament today at [www.stowelandtrust.org/events/](http://www.stowelandtrust.org/events/) or contact Brooke Mitchell at 802-696-2251 or [info@stowelandtrust.org](mailto:info@stowelandtrust.org).

**Thursday,  
August 5, 2021  
22nd Annual Golf  
Tournament  
West Hill Golf  
Course**



# Kids Corner!

## SLT Word Scramble

T Z C O M M U N I T Y T  
 R F O R E S T M K K I G  
 A Z L B E A R B T S S R  
 B Q A W H I K E F T T O  
 B C N R V B I R D X O W  
 I F D R M I F A R M W E  
 T M Z L K F B I K E E X  
 S C H I P M U N K Y Z S

Find the following words in the puzzle.  
 Words are hidden → and ↓ .

- |           |        |        |
|-----------|--------|--------|
| BEAR      | FARM   | RABBIT |
| BIKE      | FOREST | STOWE  |
| BIRD      | GROW   |        |
| CHIPMUNK  | HIKE   |        |
| COMMUNITY | LAND   |        |



# Welcome, Ryan!

Ryan joined SLT as the VHCB AmeriCorps Summer Naturalist for the summer of 2021.



Ryan has lived in Vermont most of his life and graduated with a BA in Natural Resources Management from the University of Vermont. This is his second term with VHCB AmeriCorps and is excited to share his knowledge and experiences with the Stowe community.

Ryan has always enjoyed being outdoors. From exploring the meadows and forests of Williston to hiking the Vermont Long Trail. His appreciation for the natural world has led him to serve as a member of VHCB AmeriCorps to conserve the beauty of the Green Mountain State for future generations to enjoy as he has. Ryan always enjoys learning new things and meeting new people. Feel free to stop him to chat if you see him walking the trails around Stowe. He will be wearing the big AmeriCorps A!

As the Summer Naturalist this year, Ryan will serve with school partners, corporate and youth volunteers, as well as hold special events throughout the summer to highlight the important bonds we share with nature. You can contact Ryan at [naturalist@stowelandtrust.org](mailto:naturalist@stowelandtrust.org).

# Jokes!

- 1: What did the big flower say to the small flower?
- 2: Why is grass dangerous?
- 3: How many trees can you plant in an empty forest?
- 4: Where do you see a forest without trees?
- 5: Why didn't the bear hibernate?



Answer 1: What's up Bud?  
 Answer 2: Because it's full of blades  
 Answer 3: One. It is not empty anymore after that.  
 Answer 4: On a map  
 Answer 5: It was bearly sleepy

## 2020 Fall/Winter Newsletter Corrections

### Our Donors

#### Sustaining

Sean and Amy Fernandez  
 Barry Lyman

#### Valcour Farm

Chess Brownell  
 Sean and Amy Fernandez  
 Adam and Rachel Putnam  
 Carol Simoneau  
 Dave Wilkens & Molly Pindell



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## What's Going On? SLT Outings and Events

### Register Now!

#### Upcoming In-Person Events

We hope you'll join us as we explore the land together this summer. Your safety is important, and appropriate COVID protocols will be followed at all events.

Register today at  
[stowelandtrust.org/events](http://stowelandtrust.org/events)

#### Mill Trail Farming History & Butter Making

May 29

#### Local Lunch with the Gnomes

June 12

#### Seed Bombs - a DIY Pollinator Garden

June 26

#### Paints from Nature

July 31

#### Big Boulder Hike

July 17

#### Checking on the Heifers

August 8

#### How do Animals Eat Locally?

August 28

#### Stowe Land Trust Annual Celebration

September 12

*Keep in touch!*

Sign up for our emails at [stowelandtrust.org/enews](http://stowelandtrust.org/enews)