



Green Mountain Conservancy, Inc.

2019 Annual Report



<https://greenmountainconservancy.org>

Mission

The mission of the Green Mountain Conservancy is to acquire and protect forest lands in southern Vermont:

- To insure their natural character and continued biodiversity;
- To conserve wildlife corridors and watersheds;
- To promote carbon sequestration;
- To undertake related initiatives that educate people in the understanding, appreciation and stewardship of these lands;
- To protect their aesthetic and inspirational values; and
- To improve the quality of life for residents and visitors to southern Vermont.

In 2018, the Green Mountain Conservancy began to work aggressively to purchase and conserve a 287-acre forested parcel in the northwest corner of Dummerston that includes 40 acres in Brookline, a parcel that was threatened with intensive commercial logging. To assess community interest in this project, the Conservancy held several neighborhood meetings, and a public informational meeting that was attended by over 60 people. Support for the project, known as the Deer Run Nature Preserve, was overwhelmingly positive. Before the end of 2018, the Conservancy had a Purchase and Sale agreement with the current owners at a price that was ten percent less than the appraised value.



Green Mountain Conservancy 2019 Achievements

- Activation of a strong neighborhood and community coalition in support of the Deer Run Nature Preserve and the purchase of the 287 acres Wilson parcel (see description).
- Developed working partnerships with the Vermont Land Trust and the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board
- Improved organizational capacity by adding several new board members.
- Unanimous approval for Deer Run Nature Preserve at Dummerston town meeting (over 200 people in attendance)
- Received support from the Fields Pond Foundation, Davis Foundation, Windham Foundation and the Lintilhac Foundation.
- Held two successful large donor fundraising events
- Received \$150,000 grant from the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board
- Received funds from 65 major donors
- Held a hiking event that was attended by 35 people
- Held an Informational meeting on Phase II that was attended by over 60 people
- Built a 2.2-mile low gradient trail to the “Monument” on the Wilson Parcel.
- Developed an Interim Forest Management Plan.
- Developed a new website and set up a Deer Run Nature Preserve Facebook page.
- In October signed a Purchase and Sale Agreement with the owners of the contiguous 626-acre Mercede Phase II parcel that is contiguous to the Wilson parcel at 10% less than the appraised value. (See Description)
- Worked with and supported two adjacent landowners who are in the process of conserving their properties with the Vermont Land Trust.
- **December 2019-Purchase of the 287-acre Wilson parcel (Phase I) , the anchor for the Deer Run Nature Preserve with Vermont Land Trust and Vermont Housing and Conservation Board easements.**
- Applied to Vermont Housing and Conservation Board for funding for Phase II, purchase of the contiguous 626-acre Mercede highest priority forest block parcel.

Description of Deer Run Nature Preserve Phase I

At the southern end of the Putney Mt. ridge, this 287-acre parcel includes a great diversity of terrain, natural communities, flora and fauna, streams and wetlands, and the now much less common early successional habitat. This parcel, a portion of the southern terminus of Putney Mountain, provides a key linkage between the conserved Putney Mountain ridgeline and large wild areas to the west. It drains into the West River which is designated as a Priority Aquatic Feature by the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation.

This forested land is in the West River Watershed, a bowl surrounded by ridges with several streams, and is the water source for neighbors. As multiple streams make their way to the West River, they meet and combine to form a significant stream that has carved a deep ravine and ecologically significant ravine as it traverses the adjacent Farwell property and empties into the West River. There are at least six active vernal pools on the property.

This area is identified as a critical wildlife corridor with several state-identified deer wintering yards, at least 5 vernal pools, state-significant wetland areas and several state listed plants. Neighbors have enjoyed hiking and hunting on this property for generations. Much of the sloping hillside provides the view seen driving north on Rt 30 from the Dummerston Covered Bridge.

The early successional habitat on parts of the parcel is attracting birds that have been identified as being “in need of conservation in Vermont” including the brown thrasher, wood thrush, field sparrow, prairie warbler, mourning warbler, red shouldered hawk, American woodcock and bald eagle. The parcel is also providing habitat for the Jefferson salamander, DeKay's brown snake and the smooth green snake. Bobcat and bear sign abound. *Three-bird orchid* (Vermont Rank S1) and *Perplexed Tick-trefoil* (Vermont Rank S2) are also found on this land.

Neighbors and community members have already invested hundreds of hours of volunteer time in this project and are committed to providing on-going stewardship. One volunteer has put in over 300 hours establishing a 2.2-mile footpath that he says goes from “beauty spot” to “beauty spot”.



Description of Deer Run Nature Preserve Phase II

This 626-acre highest priority forest block parcel in the towns of Newfane and Brookline is contiguous to the 287-acre property purchased and conserved by the GMC in 2019. It has 2,000 feet of frontage on the West River, a State Priority Aquatic Feature.

This parcel contains state-significant terrestrial and wetland natural communities, and forests of all ages and many species, providing a complex habitat for many species that is resilient to climate change and extreme weather events. As a drainage basin, it supports water storage capacity, water quality, and habitat for a wide range of species including those associated with vernal pools, wetland areas and both year-round and seasonal streams. It includes unfragmented interior forest blocks which provide important habitat for all species and will be able to accommodate species range shifts in a changing climate, and connectivity blocks which provide critical pathways for species movement between core habitat areas, such as riparian forests, wetlands, and forest blocks, featuring a variety of microhabitats and climatic gradients which provide refuge for plants and animals in a changing climate.

The significant features include: 2.5 miles of undeveloped frontage on the West River; glorious views from the route 30 corridor and from the highest elevations; topographic benches left by glaciation and flooding events; cliffs created by uplift and continental collisions eons ago; a dramatic and active landslide area; numerous rich forest sites, including a cove with incredibly tall trees containing shagbark hickories (the crevices formed by shagbark hickory's thick, peeling bark provide summer shelter for the endangered Northern Long-eared bat); 185 acres of deer wintering yard; 47 acres of pristine agricultural fields; and corridors for wildlife and species movement, adaptability and resiliency.

Conservation of this parcel will provide approximately 1,600 tons of carbon sequestration annually. It is projected that, as ocean levels rise, more and more people from coastal cities will be moving to this specific area. This project will preserve agricultural and forest land and encourage the development of denser housing in areas that are closer to jobs and services.

The acquisition and protection of this property will protect and, over time improve, the quality of the West River, a Highest Priority Riparian Corridor, by managing the fields and forest lands that have frontage on the river, to insure that the water is kept free of pollutants, to prevent erosion, to reduce the effects of flooding, to protect wildlife, aquatic and botanical species that are native to this riverine area, and to inhibit invasive species that threaten riverbanks and the quality of the water. To do this, the Conservancy will follow the management guidelines described in the Vermont Conservation Design, and take action as directed by the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources.

As it has on the Phase I parcel, The Green Mountain Conservancy will build a series of public low gradient footpaths that connect the outstanding features and “beauty spots” of the parcel.

The Conservancy encourages and supports the use of the Preserve for environmental education programs, for non-motorized and low impact recreation, and for hunting. Vermont, and particularly this area, is dependent on the vitality of the tourist industry. People come to this area to enjoy the natural beauty and recreational opportunities that will only continue to be available by preserving large contiguous areas of forest land and ridges like this one.



Financials

In 2019, Green Mountain Conservancy had a total operating budget of \$238,409.21 received from donations, grants. Cost of Goods Sold and Project Direct Expenses totaled \$25,609.72, bringing our Net Income to \$212,799.49. We gratefully received \$45,799.39 in individual donations and endowments as well as \$192,500 in grants.

Our total expenditures in 2019 were \$2,636.90. The majority of our expenditures were for fund raising, administrative, advertising and insurance.

We are pleased that the majority of our income has gone towards the purchase and conservation of the Deer Run Nature Preserve. We are grateful for the generosity of the individuals and organizations who have contributed to this project.

Our detailed financial review is available upon request at info@greenmountainconservancy.org.



Board Members

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