

# Green Mountain Conservancy, Inc. 2021 Annual Report



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# Board of Directors

Mary Ellen Copeland, President  
Sam Farwell, Vice President  
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Dan Dubie, Roger Haydock, Melissa Lee, Cindy Levine  
Jennifer Ramstetter, Patti Smith, Alex Wilson



## Mission

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

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

## 2021 Achievements

The activities of the organization were heavily impacted by the pandemic. However, in spite of that, in 2021 Green Mountain Conservancy:

- Purchased the 626 acre Phase II parcel;
- Enrolled Deer Run Nature Preserve into the Old Growth Forest Network;
- Maintained the 2 mile low gradient trail to the “Monument”, which saw heavy use all year;
- Opened the Shoulder Trail, a .4 mile spur trail off of the Monument Trail to a vast overlook up the West River and Grassy Brook valleys;
- Held a successful trail opening event in September that was attended by over 30 hikers;
- Improved the parking area and added new signage to the trail head;
- Completed an intensive biodiversity inventory by Daniel Dubie, Forestry Consultant, and Michael Duffy, Biologist. This inventory will be used as a guide to management, protection and conservation of the Preserve;
- Implemented the Youth Empowerment Project - 19 teens, including young people from Brattleboro Youth Services and Leland and Grey High School, under the supervision of Melissa Lee and Dan Dubie of the GMC Board of Directors, Natasha Cahout-Diamondstone of the Vermont Wilderness School and several adult volunteers, worked for 9 days removing buckthorn and other invasives that were compromising a wetland that is home to a beaver and numerous aquatic species, and planted native willow and alder;



- Improved organizational capacity by adding a new board member and developing more efficient and effective organizational systems;
- Fulfilled a publicity campaign on the purchase of the Phase II parcel that included articles in the Commons and the Brattleboro Reformer;
- Received support for the purchase of Phase II from the Conservation Alliance, the Fields Pond Foundation, the William Wharton Foundation, the Windham Foundation, the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board, the Vermont Land Trust, the Vermont Nature Conservancy and from over 300 individual donors;
- Developed a working relationship with Global Giving to open new funding options;
- Provided on-going stewardship to the Preserve, including work on a new trail that goes from the ridgeline to the West River, that is expected to be completed in 2022, and

planning other new trails that access other natural communities in the Preserve, including an Old-Growth Forest located in a talus slope;

- Began the process of planning and raising money to build foot bridges across 4 streams on the trail to the monument which will improve accessibility. These bridges are planned for completion in 2023;
- Continued to expand our outreach to the community through newsletters, our website and enhanced social media presence on Facebook and Instagram.

## Financial Information

In 2021, Green Mountain Conservancy had total income of \$283,033. We gratefully received \$65,692 in individual donations and endowments as well as \$215,000 in foundation grants. Investment income contributed \$1,850. Other Income was \$491.

Expenses totaled \$83,503, bringing our Net Income to \$199,530. The major expenditures were for the purchase of the Phase II lands, the Youth Empowerment Invasives Removal Project, property taxes on Deer Run Nature Preserve, the Biodiversity Inventory, printing and postage. Combined with income from 2020, the income from 2021 purchased the Deer Run Nature Preserve Phase II lands and contributed to GMC's Endowment Fund for future acquisitions, maintenance and property taxes.

Our detailed financial review is available upon request at [info@greenmountainconservancy.org](mailto:info@greenmountainconservancy.org).

## Deer Run Nature Preserve



In 2019, the GMC purchased and conserved a 287 acre parcel with the Vermont Land Trust and the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board. In 2021 the Conservancy purchased an additional 626 acres at the southern end of the Putney Mt. ridge, a highest priority forest block in the towns of Newfane and Brookline. The Deer Run Nature Preserve now encompasses 913 acres. It includes a great diversity of terrain, natural communities, flora and fauna, streams and wetlands, and the now much-less-common early successional habitat, as well as 47 acres of pristine fields



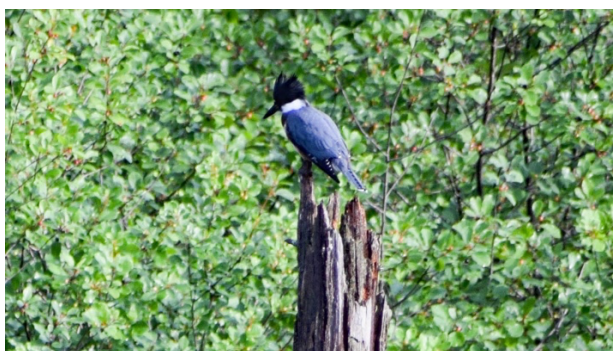


along the West River. The Preserve provides a key linkage between the conserved Putney Mountain ridgeline and large wild areas to the west. It has 2 ½ miles of frontage on the West River, a State Priority Aquatic Feature.

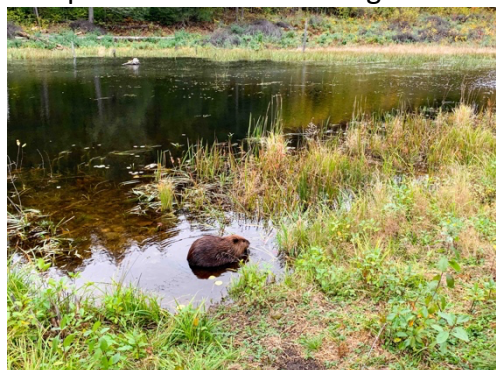
The forested land on the east side of the Putney Mt. ridge in the West River Watershed forms a bowl with several streams. As these streams make their way to the West River, they meet and combine to form a significant stream that has carved a deep and ecologically significant ravine as it traverses the adjacent Farwell property and empties into the West River.

This area is identified as a critical wildlife corridor, with 185 acres of state-identified deer wintering yards, at least three active vernal pools, and several state-significant wetland areas. Neighbors have enjoyed hiking and hunting here for generations. Much of the sloping hillside provides the view seen driving north on Rt 30 from the Dummerston Covered Bridge and to the right as you travel into Newfane (behind the elementary school).

Over 70 species of birds have been sighted in the Preserve. The early successional habitat attracts birds that have been identified as being “in greatest 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. Bob-O-Links and the Savannah Sparrow nest in the fields that is also a pollinator’s “heaven”. The Preserve is also providing habitat for the Jefferson salamander, DeKay's brown snake and the smooth green snake. Bobcat and bear signs abound. *Three-bird orchid* (Vermont Rank S1), *Perplexed Tick-trefoil* (S2) and *Broad Beech-fern* (S2S3) are also found on this land.

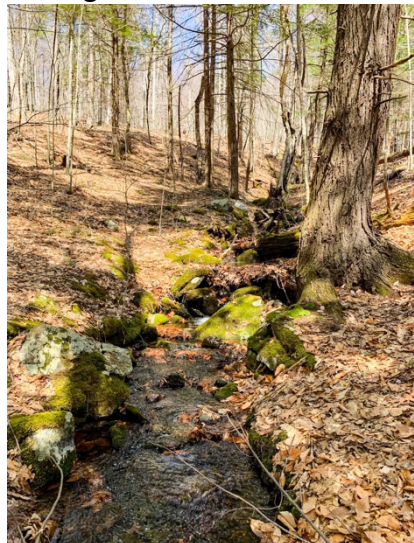


This parcel contains state-significant terrestrial and wetland natural communities, and forests of all ages and species, providing a complex habitat that is resilient to climate change and extreme weather events. As a drainage basin, it supports water storage capacity, water quality, and habitat for 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 and will be able to accommodate species range shifts in a changing



climate; connectivity blocks, which provide critical pathways for species movement between core habitat areas, such as riparian forests; wetlands, featuring a variety of microhabitats; and climatic gradients, which provide refuge for plants and animals.

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.

A series of narrow bands of remnant Sugar Maple Floodplain Forest, a rare community type in Vermont, occurs intermittently along portions of the eastern and western field edges.

The Deer Run Nature Preserve Phase II property has documented habitat for Tubercled Orchid (S2), Broad Beech-fern (S2S3), Canada burnet (S2), Hitchcock's sedge (S3), and Sharp-fruited rush (S1). In the West River nearby, three species of rare freshwater mussels have been documented: Brook Floater (*Alismadonta varicosa*), Triangle Floater (*Alismadonta undulata*), and Freshwater Pearl Mussel (*Margaritifera margaritifera*).

Conservation of this parcel provides 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 protection of this property will 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 ensure 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 and the Vermont Land Trust.

The Green Mountain Conservancy is continuing to design and build a series of public, low gradient footpaths that connect the outstanding features and "beauty spots" of the parcel.

Community members have invested thousands of hours of volunteer time in the Preserve and are committed to providing on-going stewardship. One volunteer put in over 700 hours in designing and building footpaths that introduce hikers to the richness of this forest land that lies where the southern and northern forest communities meet.

The Conservancy encourages and supports the use of the Preserve for environmental education programs, for non-motorized and low impact recreation, and for hunting (with permission). 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.

## History

The Green Mountain Conservancy was founded in 2008 to protect and conserve large forest blocks in southeastern Vermont. Until 2018, GMC purchased and conserved properties and then sold them to buyers who continued to protect them. The Conservancy also studied wildlife corridors and road crossings and implemented a program to protect large bodies of water from invasive species.

In 2018, GMC reorganized to begin to work aggressively to purchase and conserve a 287-acre forested parcel in the northwest corner of Dummerston that includes 49 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. By the end of 2019, the Conservancy raised the funds and purchased the parcel (Phase I). It was also during that year that the Conservancy decided to expand the Preserve and signed a Purchase and Sale Agreement with land owners for the purchase of a contiguous 626 acre parcel (Phase II). The Conservancy expected to purchase that parcel in the spring of 2021. However, due to delays caused by the pandemic, the sale was not completed until June, 2021.

For more information:

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