

2026-2030
Strategic Plan Update



COLD HOLLOW TO CANADA

A PATHWAY TO ECOSYSTEM INTEGRITY AND FOREST RESILIENCY
IN VERMONT'S COLD HOLLOW MOUNTAINS



LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We acknowledge that the land encompassing the CHC region has served as a gathering place for Indigenous people for thousands of years and is home to the Western Abenaki People. We honor, recognize, and respect the Abenaki as traditional inhabitants of these lands and waters. In that spirit, we acknowledge that we are here as guests on this land, with a rich history pre-dating European settlement. We have much to learn from Indigenous traditions as we carry forward our work implementing this strategic plan as members of this shared community.



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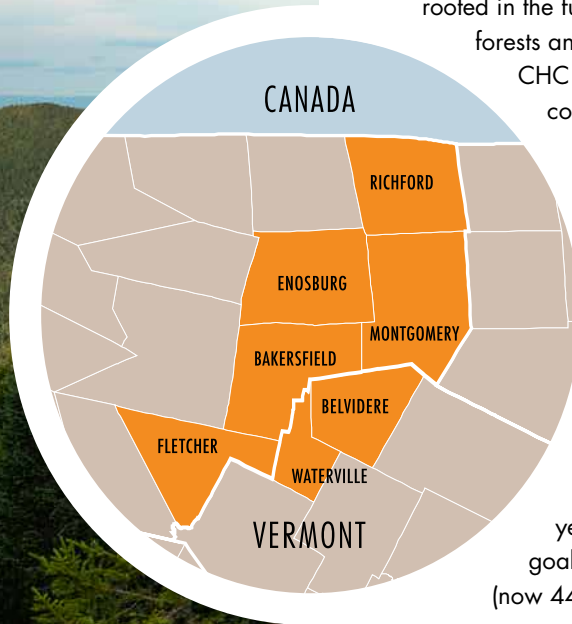


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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2021 Cold Hollow to Canada (CHC) released our first comprehensive strategic plan, intended to serve as a guide to ecosystem integrity and forest resiliency in Vermont's Cold Hollow Mountains. The plan focused on three pillars of work—Sustainable Stewardship, Forestland Conservation, and Community Empowerment—outlining foundational goals, key elements, and critical metrics rooted in the fundamental importance of our region's forests and our mission to protect them. Since then, CHC has grown to become a leading grassroots conservation nonprofit in northern New England, known for programs that are highly regarded, impactful, and innovative. Working in the seven towns that define our shared corner of the Northern Forest, as well as with partners from across the region, the organization has continued to combine stewardship and conservation to create real and lasting impact at both the parcel and landscape scale.

Today, we look ahead to the next five years of work before us. With an ambitious goal of conserving 23,000 acres by 2030 (now 44% complete) and increased demand for our programs, CHC is uniquely positioned to sustain and grow the capacity and impact of the organization. Through partnerships formed and innovative models developed, CHC is set to advance an additional 5,400 acres in conservation easement projects in the coming year, getting us to 67% of our goal, while also building a pipeline of prospective conservation projects in our region. This provides the potential to not only meet but exceed our



goal by 2030. This work is driven by deep relationships with local landowners from all seven CHC communities developed through the Woodlots Program, now in its twelfth year. With over 25,000 acres in participating ownerships through the years, Woodlots continues to be a key driver of exemplary stewardship and conservation.

Back in 2008 when CHC declared its 2030 goal, the organization was one of the first to put down a marker, not just speaking in broad terms about forest conservation but clearly defining exactly what the target was. Since then, entities across the Northern Forest have developed similar goals within the '30 x 30' framework. CHC helped to develop one such effort here in Vermont which resulted in the passage of the Community Resilience and Biodiversity Protection Act of 2023. These galvanizing efforts provide a common alignment, amplify the impact of our shared work, and position Cold Hollow to Canada as a leader in an effort that touches the lives of every being which calls this shared landscape home.

Today, we continue to find ourselves in a period of rapid and accelerating change. Global climate change, demographic shifts, and market disruptions in what were once cornerstones of rural economies have left us, the stewards of this immense and critical resource, at a crossroads. The base of support for our work has also shifted, with support for conservation at the federal level declining at an unprecedented scale. How we respond to these changes will define our communities for generations to come and will decide whether the shared identity around this place we call home will persist.

This updated strategic plan outlines our five-year approach to land protection and stewardship, grounded in a clear vision for conservation to guide our activities. We hope that all who turn to the pages herein see themselves in this effort and feel the deep commitment that drives our work forward as we collectively see what we know, love what we see, and protect what we love.



Charlie Hancock
Board Chair



The image features a serene landscape at sunset. In the foreground, the dark, silhouetted branches of evergreen trees frame the view. The middle ground shows a vast, hazy expanse of a forest or mountain range, with the sun's glow creating a soft, golden light across the scene. The sky is a mix of pale yellow and light blue, with wispy clouds. The overall mood is peaceful and natural.

VISION

A resilient and connected ecosystem across the entire Northern Forest that is supported through permanent protection, sustainable stewardship, and engaged local communities.



MISSION

To maintain ecosystem integrity, biological diversity, and forest resiliency throughout the Cold Hollow to Canada region, with a focus on community-led stewardship and the conservation of our working landscape in the face of a changing climate.

PILLARS

These pillars exemplify our core priorities — they are the primary ways we achieve our mission.

SUSTAINABLE STEWARDSHIP

Stewarding forests at a landscape-scale based on ecosystem integrity, biological diversity, and climate resiliency, while supporting a strong and sustainable rural economy

FORESTLAND CONSERVATION

Permanently protecting contiguous forests to mitigate the climate crisis and maintain connectivity for wildlife habitat and movement

COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

Equipping local communities with tools to advance forest resiliency and community well-being, in partnership with local and regional conservation organizations



OUR FORESTS



THE FORESTS OF HOME: A REGIONAL LINK WITH GLOBAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Northern Appalachian-Acadian-Wabanaki ecoregion encompasses nearly 83 million acres of eastern North America on either side of the U.S.-Canada border, stretching from New York to Nova Scotia. This includes all or portions of northern New York, Vermont, New Hampshire, Maine, western Massachusetts and the provinces of southern Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island. This diverse ecoregion, referred to as the *Northern Forest* in the U.S., is regarded as the largest, most intact broadleaf temperate forest remaining in the world, representing an important transition zone and ecological corridor between the boreal forests to the north and temperate forests to the south. This is home to an estimated 3,844 species of plants and animals, including 148 species only found here, as well as home to

over 5 million people. It is a forest of global significance that is vital for sustaining life and maintaining climate resilience.

Within this vast forested ecoregion are geographically defined areas critical for maintaining an ecologically connected landscape, known as key wildlife linkages. If the relatively intact forests within these linkages are degraded or lost, the entire surrounding landscape is diminished. The Staying Connected Initiative, an umbrella group for partners and collaborators, currently defines eleven such linkages within and around the Northern Forest. The CHC seven-town region, straddling the spine of the Green Mountains in northern Vermont, is at a key intersection within one linkage that connects the Northern Green Mountains of Vermont to the Sutton Range in Southern Quebec. **This places CHC at a crucial nexus of ecological connectivity and wildlife movement within the Northern**



JENNY GOYNE



Wildlife Linkages of the Northern Appalachian-Acadian-Wabanaki Ecoregion:

Shown here are key wildlife linkages provided by the Staying Connected Initiative. These geographically defined areas are vital for maintaining landscape connectivity and the ability for wildlife to move between core habitats. The Cold Hollow Mountains are an integral part of the Northern Green Mountains linkage.

Forest, providing significant core and connecting habitat for wide-ranging mammals like moose, deer, black bear, bobcat, lynx, and fisher; as well as a hotspot for some of the greatest diversity of breeding neotropical songbird species on the continent. The functional integrity of the entire Northern Forest can be maintained by conserving blocks of forests and connectivity within these linkages. The decisions we make here have an impact far greater than in our seven-town region.

The health and integrity of our forests are also crucial for the well-being of people and their livelihoods, with the forest-based economy generating an estimated \$33 billion dollars per year in the states that encompass the Northern Forest. Here in Vermont, where forests define our cultural heritage and act as an economic engine, the wood products sector supplies an estimated \$2.1 billion in annual revenue and supports nearly 14,000 jobs, the

forest-based recreation economy adds another \$1.9 billion and over 10,000 jobs, and the maple sugar industry contributes another \$95 million and over 4,000 jobs. With the majority of Vermont’s forestland privately owned and managed, including in the CHC region, working forests are essential for both the people and wildlife that depend on them.

However, with only 27% of the land in Vermont protected through permanent conservation, our shared landscape is imperiled by the risk of fragmentation that results from poorly planned development in conjunction with the increasing impacts of climate change. In light of this, CHC remains committed and ready to meet the moment, together with our communities and network of partners.

WE ARE LOSING FORESTS NOW

Today, Vermont is losing forest cover each year for the first time since the mid-1800s, reversing a 150-year trend of forest recovery and expansion since an era of large scale clearing by European settlers for timber, livestock, and crops. Now, forest loss is caused by increased rates of parcelization and development pressure, with a recent estimate of over 12,000 acres being lost or degraded per year. Given this alarming trend, we are at risk of losing the important contributions forests make to the economy, ecology, and culture.

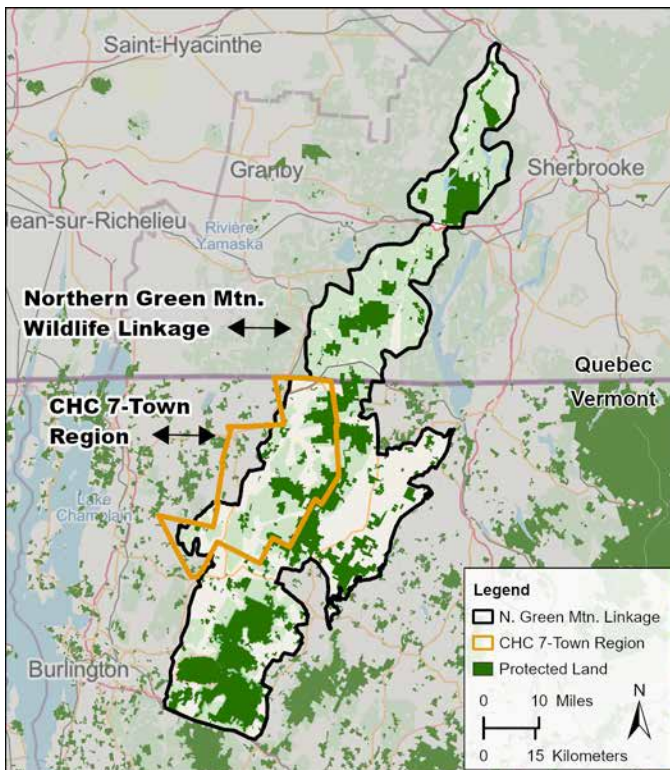
With CHC at a critical intersection for connectivity, degradation and loss of forests here could sever

connections and isolate other forests both near and far. Thus, we have a serious responsibility and narrow opportunity to protect the integrity of the CHC region. Increasing the pace of conservation is vital to maintain our working landscape and the health of our forests at a scale large enough to sustain ecological function. With the majority of forestland in the CHC region privately owned, it is more important than ever to reach out to individual and family forest owners to recognize their contributions and maintain healthy forests across our region. Keeping forests as forests through conservation, stewardship, and economic viability is central to CHC's vision and mission.

CLIMATE CHANGE: THE LENS THROUGH WHICH WE FOCUS OUR WORK

The impacts of climate change are creating unprecedented stressors and challenges for maintaining the health and integrity of our forests. In response, we need to change how we manage forests, so they are better equipped to remain resilient and viable for the numerous values and services they provide. CHC has been a leader in Vermont in deploying climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies developed by the U.S. Forest Service and partners at the Northern Institute of Applied Climate Science. CHC helps landowners manage forests to withstand and adapt to the effects of climate change while protecting the economic and ecological values of a resilient forest. This results in landowners learning and implementing on-the-ground strategies that address the impacts of climate change, including ways to increase carbon capture and storage through improved stewardship practices.

Northern Green Mountains Linkage: The CHC region is part of the Northern Green Mountains wildlife linkage, one of the wildest yet least protected. CHC works to steward and conserve forestland here, in our backyard, to advance a vision of resilient and connected ecosystems across the entire ecoregion.





JENNY GOVET

GUIDING FRAMEWORK: IMPLEMENTING CONSERVATION PRIORITIES

Vermont is one of the first states to have a science-based framework, *Vermont Conservation Design*, in place for guiding on-the-ground conservation action. This framework provides a map-based prioritization of lands and waters to protect, maintain, and enhance ecological function and values across the state. Integral to this plan is conserving core interior forest habitat – large blocks of contiguous forest buffered from the effects of human development – as well as smaller yet essential blocks of forest that serve as key steppingstones, stitching the landscape together and allowing plants and animals to move between core blocks of forest.

CHC uses this framework, along with local knowledge, to guide and strategically focus our work, contributing to global, national, and statewide goals of protecting 30% of land and waters by 2030 and 50% by 2050 to address the looming crisis of biodiversity loss and climate change. Through its grassroots approach, CHC has been a leader in implementing this ambitious goal before it became widely adopted and is now encapsulated in Vermont’s Community Resilience and Biodiversity Protection Act (59). This act aims to protect the state’s biodiversity, promote healthy forests, and ensure communities are thriving and climate resilient. CHC continues to support and contribute to these big picture goals, using a science-based framework to achieve long-lasting success.



ECOLOGICAL FORESTRY DEFINITION:

“Management approach that applies an understanding of the structure, function and dynamics of natural forest ecosystems, including old forest characteristics, to achieve integrated environmental, economic and social outcomes.”

SUSTAINABLE STEWARDSHIP: LANDSCAPE-LEVEL FOREST MANAGEMENT IN THE FACE OF CLIMATE CHANGE



OUR GOAL Through the replication of CHC's Woodlots Program across the Northern Forest, individual landowners manage their forestland for the benefit of the broader forest community and with a focus on climate resiliency.

OVERVIEW

Cold Hollow to Canada promotes exemplary forest management practices and the principles of ecological forestry to help landowners achieve financial, societal, and ecological goals. These holistic approaches to management prioritize forest health, biodiversity, connectivity, and climate resiliency by sustainably managing timber and maple sugar production, wildlife habitat, recreation, and scenic beauty. While respecting the goals of individual landowners, successful landscape-level stewardship encourages consistent implementation of practices that operate across property boundaries and foster healthy ecosystems.

CHC believes landowners can enhance the well-being of the region by managing their forests using climate change adaptation strategies. This includes managing for a diversity of plant and animal species by increasing the structural diversity of the forest. This is done by promoting a variety of tree species with different age and size classes, retaining snags and downed woody material important for wildlife habitat and soil health, while simultaneously growing larger and longer-lived trees. This keeps the forest connected and healthy, capturing and storing carbon,

and better positioned to adapt and remain resilient to the impacts of climate change. Implementing these strategies can also result in higher value forest products and create opportunities to introduce carbon as a monetized product. As landowners become more connected to their land through learning and applying these practices and strategies, incentives for permanent conservation expand.

WOODLOTS PROGRAM

The **Woodlots Program** is a peer-to-peer model for engaging a growing number of individual and family forest owners about the principles and practice of sustainable forest management. By gathering a group of landowners with contiguous or nearly contiguous forested properties, management activities can be focused and applied at a landscape scale. This neighbor-to-neighbor collaboration results in a cumulative impact far greater than what one landowner can accomplish on their own.

Cold Hollow to Canada hosts five woodlot groups within our seven-town region, currently representing 60 plus ownerships and approximately 15,000 acres. Landowners invited to be part of these groups attend informal gatherings each season to share their experiences and knowledge, receiving technical assistance from CHC and partners. This includes a bird habitat assessment and a climate change analysis of each participant's forest management plan where they learn the climate benefit of current actions as well as what else can be done to keep forests healthy in the face of climate change.



SHIRLEY DONALD/AUDUBON PHOTOGRAPHY AWARDS

The following are some of the key practices advanced by members of the Woodlots Program:

- Climate change mitigation and adaptation
- Interior forest songbird habitat assessment
- Wildlife habitat management
- Ecological forest management
- Water quality protection
- Invasive species control
- Legacy and land transfer planning
- Place based learning (nature): soils, botany, mycology, ecology
- Place based learning (community): land ethic, forest products industry

Woodlots started as a pilot demonstration project, and the first aggregation project focused on private forestland in the U.S., in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service and The Northern Institute of Applied Climate Science. Now, as one of CHC's signature programs, Woodlots continues to gain acclaim across New England and elsewhere as a model for advancing collaboration in forest stewardship and conservation. This is highlighted by adoption of a toolkit CHC developed to assist others in launching similar efforts on their landscape. This toolkit is available through CHC's website and is being adapted to design and start similar efforts across the Northern Forest and beyond.

SUCCESS STORY: COLLABORATING TO HELP BIRDS AND TRAIN THE NEXT GENERATION OF FOREST STEWARDS

In 2023, CHC, VT Audubon, and the VT Youth Conservation Corps began a partnership under the Woodlots Program to improve breeding habitat for migratory songbirds. Between 2023 and 2024, they completed five projects, enhancing critical forest habitat and creating demonstration sites for other landowners. This ongoing initiative benefits both birds and young conservation professionals by supporting wildlife and providing hands-on training, assisting in workforce development.



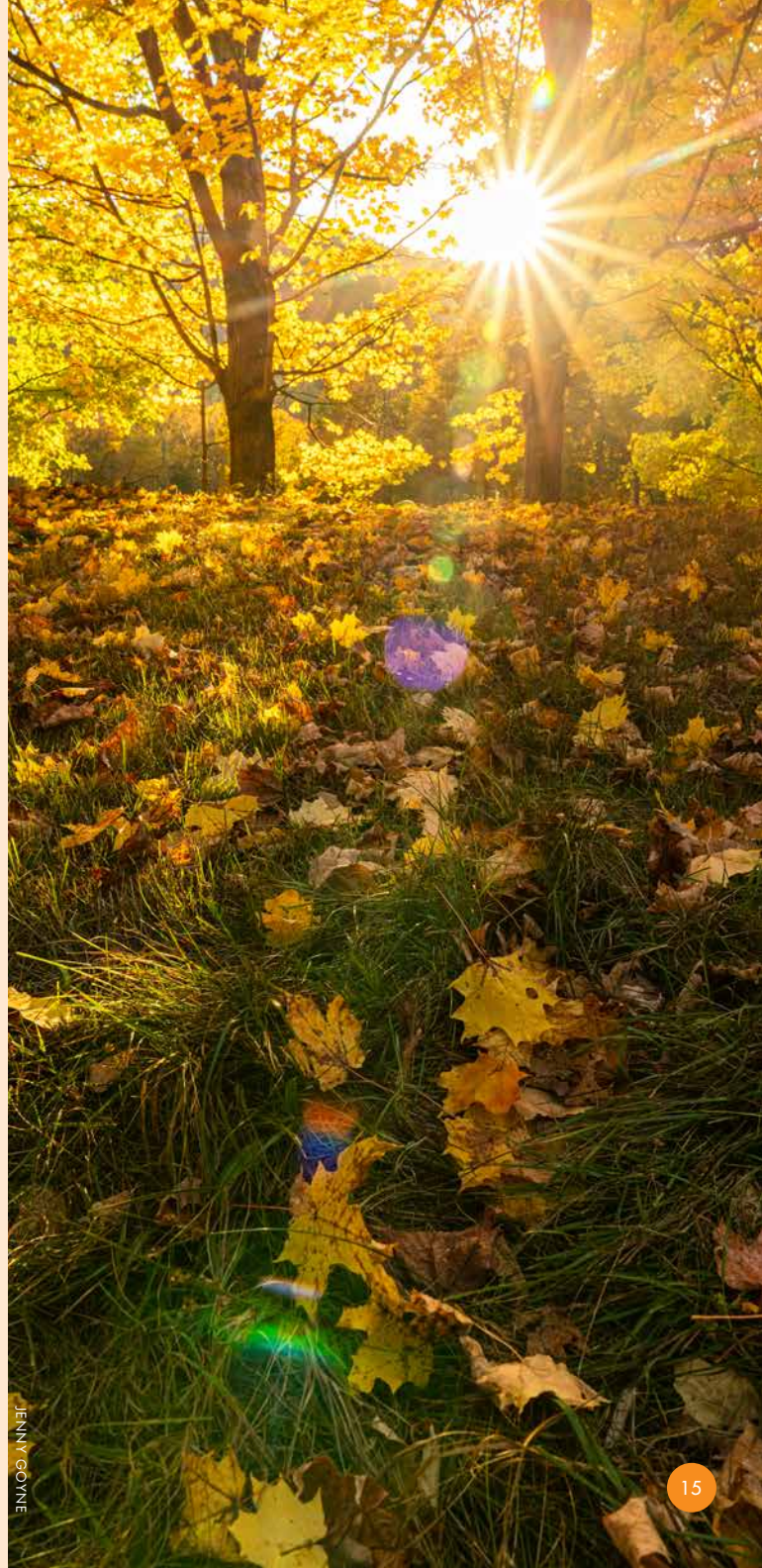
JENNY GOVINE

2026-2030 ACTION PLAN: SUSTAINABLE STEWARDSHIP

Stewarding forests at a landscape-scale based on ecosystem integrity, biological diversity, and climate resiliency, while supporting a strong and sustainable rural economy.

OUR PLANS

- Having developed the toolkit, actively share out and serve as a resource throughout the Northern Forest and beyond to accelerate the impact of peer-to-peer stewardship networks
- With Woodlots now established in all towns, CHC will maintain and expand membership within the seven-town region
- Continue to organize Woodlot gatherings each season on relevant topics of sustainable stewardship, natural history, climate resilience, cultural resources, and the role each parcel plays in the larger landscape
- Connect forest owners to technical and financial assistance to implement practices that enhance wildlife habitat, forest health, and climate resilience
- Coordinate visits to sites that demonstrate exemplary forestry practices to our community and partners
- Collaborate with conservation organizations and Woodlot members to implement best stewardship practices
- Utilize new ways to engage and communicate with Woodlot members such as informational webinars and virtual trainings
- Explore and promote partnerships that provide workforce development opportunities to emerging professionals in the forestry sector



FORESTLAND CONSERVATION: CORE BLOCKS CONSERVED AND CONNECTIVITY PRESERVED FOR WILDLIFE MOVEMENT AND CLIMATE RESILIENCE



OUR GOAL A connected landscape that allows for species movement between core habitat blocks, with an additional 23,000 acres of forestland conserved from the time CHC started in 2008 through the end of 2030.

OVERVIEW

Connectivity across the landscape allows for movement of plants and animals, whether for migration or as ranges shift in response to climate change. By allowing species to move, unimpeded by human development, a connected landscape supports both genetic diversity and species resilience in the face of mounting environmental stressors. Cold Hollow to Canada works to promote connectivity through town planning and zoning, landscape level stewardship, and helping secure permanent protection of core blocks of forest and connecting corridors.

Keeping forests as forests is one of the best ways to mitigate against the impacts of climate change, as healthy forests capture and store carbon from the air and provide a natural buffer to the effects of more severe and frequent weather events such as floods and periods of prolonged drought. Additionally, safeguarding forests from conversion and fragmentation protects biodiversity and maintains ecological function across the landscape. An ecologically functioning landscape not only supports wildlife, but is critical for providing clean air and water, space for solace, connection to nature, and supporting livelihoods through a sustainable forest-based economy.

When CHC started in 2008, approximately 23,000 acres of highest priority forest in the region were permanently protected. At that time, CHC set an ambitious goal to help double that amount by 2030. This goal includes the forests, associated habitats, and connecting corridors within and around the edge of the seven-town region. This approach captures the need to protect blocks of forest that define the region and the connectivity among them to support ecological function and maintain the integrity of the broader landscape. **As of February 2026, we are 44% of the way toward achieving this goal, and this plan aims to accelerate our progress and complete this benchmark of success by the end of 2030.**

FOSTERING TRUST AND PARTNERSHIPS VIA PRIVATE LAND CONSERVATION

The primary way CHC works to protect forestland is through permanent conservation easements. Through this legal tool, a landowner agrees to voluntarily donate or sell certain rights associated with their property – most often the right to subdivide or develop – while retaining other rights such as forest management and recreational use. A non-profit land trust or public agency agrees to hold these rights, thereby protecting the land and its intrinsic values such as wildlife habitat, even as ownership changes through time.

CHC actively facilitates conservation easements by matching a growing network of interested and willing landowners, located in forest blocks and connecting

CHC Region Conserved Lands Map: Shown here are conserved lands (as of February 2026) and significant forest habitat blocks mapped through Vermont Conservation Design (VCD). CHC works with a network of partners to permanently conserve forest blocks and connections between. This contributes to CHC's goal of conserving an additional 23,000 acres by 2030, now 44% complete.

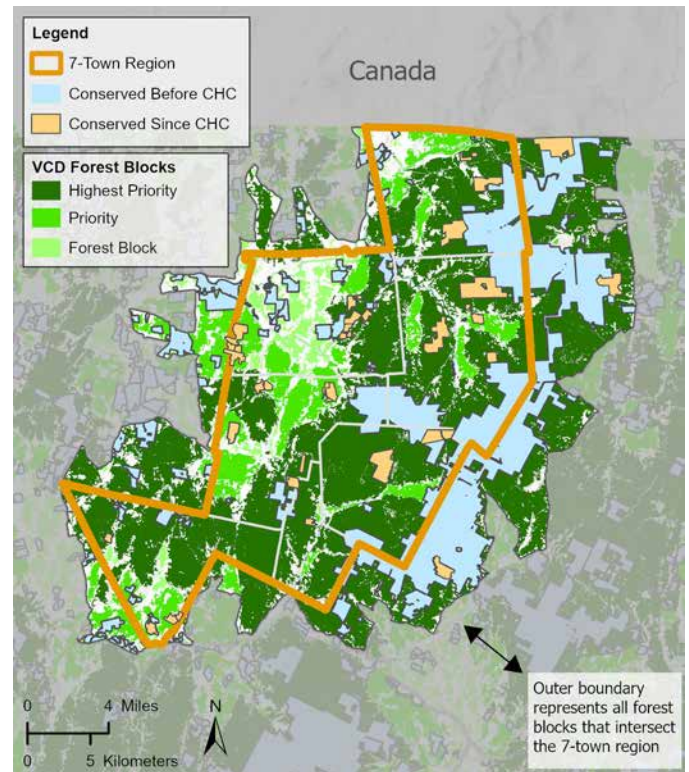
corridors, to a conservation partner that holds and stewards easements, and to the funding resources necessary to complete projects. This strategy is grounded in establishing a relationship of trust and respect for the goals and priorities of both the landowner and partner, with CHC continuing to provide support throughout the process.

COMMUNITY FOCUSED CONSERVATION: CONNECTING PEOPLE TO PLACE

CHC recognizes the importance of conserving land so all people can connect with their place and one another, and to address specific needs of a community through conservation. This is often accomplished by establishing community forests, or land owned and stewarded by a municipality and/or non-profit partner to provide access for recreational, educational, and cultural purposes, as well as safeguarding important natural resources like clean air, water, wildlife habitat, and other essential values. As CHC continues to grow capacity, we seek to collaborate with individuals, communities and partners on projects that equitably meet the needs of people through community focused conservation.

COLD HOLLOW CONSERVATION FUND

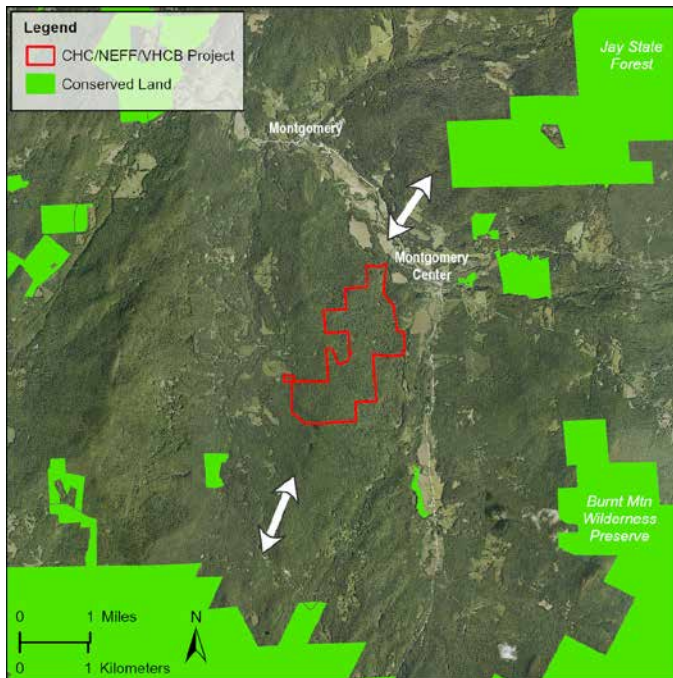
CHC's Cold Hollow Conservation Fund has played a crucial role in achieving the 2030 goal by offering financial support and grant leverage for strategic projects. Protecting land with easements comes with high and rising costs that pose insurmountable barriers to many wishing to conserve land. The conservation fund helps overcome this barrier by covering upfront costs such as surveys, title exams, appraisals, stewardship endowments, and more.



Since 2018, the conservation fund invested \$142,000 in 14 successful projects, conserving over 3,800 acres. In other words, **every \$37 spent has resulted in the protection of one acre.** Additionally, while many easements are donated, in some cases CHC works with partners to secure grant funds to purchase easements at full or bargain sale value. This is an important way to further incentivize conservation and assist landowners with making ends meet. The conservation fund plays a key role in matching these grants, helping secure the funding required to finish projects. Between 2023 and 2025, the conservation fund provided nearly \$50,000 in grant match, which helped secure over \$3.4 million in additional funding—**each CHC dollar helped leverage \$68 in outside support.**

SUCCESS STORY: EXPANDING PARTNERSHIPS AND CONSERVATION CAPACITY

Since 2022, CHC began partnering with the New England Forestry Foundation (NEFF) to increase the pace of forestland conservation in the region. Together, NEFF and CHC have already conserved over 1,000 acres across five projects – supporting wildlife, climate resilience, and rural livelihoods – with more currently underway. Collaboration with the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board and their conservation programs has been key to this collective success.



Conservation Success: CHC's recent partnership with NEFF and VHCB led to the permanent conservation of nearly 700 acres of private forestland outside of Montgomery Center in 2025. This not only helps secure forest connectivity for wildlife and climate resilience but also protects a productive and sustainably managed working forest, essential components of the local economy and community fabric.

2026-2030 ACTION PLAN: FORESTLAND CONSERVATION

Permanently protecting contiguous forests to mitigate the climate crisis and maintain connectivity for wildlife habitat and movement.

OUR PLANS

- Launch a focused capital campaign to replenish and expand the conservation fund by engaging with funders around the urgent need for strategic conservation and CHC's unique position to effectively facilitate projects
- Engage with landowners interested in conservation through multiple avenues each year including direct outreach, events, partners, and media to share current opportunities and options
- Partner with local and regional conservation groups to accelerate forestland protection by diversifying options and increasing the capacity for permanent conservation in the CHC region
- Effectively leverage grants with partners to complete conservation projects
- Establish new partnerships with organizations focused on community resilience and equitable access to land, nature, and the benefits of conservation
- Expand CHC's role and capacity to assist and lead community conservation projects
- Maintain up-to-date maps of conservation priorities at the landscape scale
- Complete our land protection goal, now 44% complete, of conserving an additional 23,000 acres of forestland from the time CHC started in 2008 through the end of 2030



JENNY GOVINE

COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT: CONNECTION, EXCHANGE, AND INVESTMENT IN SHARED CONSERVATION GOALS



OUR GOAL Community members work together through a self-directed, grassroots approach to collectively protect the forests of the Cold Hollow to Canada region.

OVERVIEW

The foundation of Cold Hollow to Canada's work is built on trust and connections within the communities of our region. Sustainable stewardship and permanent conservation of forestland is not possible without community investment. We work with communities to equip them with tools, knowledge, and resources to advance forest resiliency. This happens collectively (through land use planning) and individually on land managed as part of our shared landscape (through the Woodlots Program).

CHC began by assisting each community to envision common conservation goals. Through subsequent convenings and community-focused outreach, CHC helped build a shared understanding of forest resiliency, at the landscape-level, framed by a set of shared priorities. Additionally, our community science program helps people learn about wildlife and their habitat needs. Through all these efforts, we work to support and strengthen community commitment and capacity to steward the ecologically rich and resilient forests that define the region. This fosters a greater appreciation for our corner of the Northern Forest and is foundational to securing the grassroots support and collective action needed for achieving CHC's mission.

COLLABORATING WITH TOWNS AND PEOPLE ON COMMUNITY-LED STEWARDSHIP AND CONSERVATION

Cold Hollow to Canada partners with communities in our seven-town region to promote peer-to-peer collaboration around shared conservation and stewardship goals. We have assisted in establishing local conservation commissions, have helped towns set up dedicated funds to support conservation projects, and continue to serve as a conduit of information for land use planning. CHC also hosts or co-hosts events to reach people and connect them to our shared landscape and mission. Through our quarterly newsletter and social media, we stay connected and share relevant information. Looking ahead, and as capacity grows, CHC plans to reach more people and different types of forest users to align priorities and help implement projects that support both community well-being and forest resilience.

COMMUNITY SCIENCE PROGRAM - WILD PATHS

Wildlife in the CHC region is a natural indicator for the health of our forests. Understanding where they live, how they use different habitats, and how they move across the

landscape is essential. This knowledge helps us to better plan and protect the habitats and resources wildlife need to flourish alongside people.

To inspire community participation in the stewardship of wildlife and their habitats, CHC partnered with the Keeping Track© program from 2010 to 2023 to establish teams of volunteers that seasonally monitor key locations on the landscape to help inform conservation and stewardship efforts. Building upon the success and excitement of that initial work, CHC is now training volunteers and continuing to evolve our wildlife monitoring program to address current needs at various scales. This includes the design and implementation of a new project intended to assess wildlife movement and connectivity between forest blocks, as well as continuing to assist individual landowners by monitoring wildlife use on their property to increase their knowledge, inform management decisions, and support conservation action. One of the primary tools used to accomplish this is through remote trail cameras, with over 50 now deployed throughout the region monitoring and documenting wildlife activity. This volunteer-driven effort generates stories and inspiring imagery of wildlife that can



be used to communicate the value and beauty of wildlife in our region to the broader public.

INDIGENOUS ENGAGEMENT AND INCLUSION

In 2023, CHC collaborated with local basket makers who generously shared their traditional cultural knowledge and perspectives with Woodlot members. This included a hands-on ash pounding workshop that combined the cultural significance of black ash trees for traditional Abenaki basket making with current ash protection science and silvicultural approaches. One of the goals was also to build an inventory of splints to be preserved for future basket making, as black ash continues to decline and disappear from this landscape. Moving forward, CHC aspires to build on this type of hands-on, place-based effort and foster respectful, trust based, and reciprocal relationship with Indigenous communities throughout the Northern Forest. CHC understands this aspirational goal will take time, thoughtful effort, and deep listening to make meaningful progress, but are committed to building genuine connections and relationships as we move forward.

SUCCESS STORY: TRAINING AMBASSADORS FOR WILDLIFE AND CONSERVATION

Between 2023 and 2025, CHC initiated a new field training program with *Tracking Connection* and hosted two track & sign certification programs with *Tracker Certification North America*, based on the international standard for wildlife tracker assessment. This directly impacted 33 individuals on their way to honing tracking skills and becoming more informed ambassadors for wildlife and their habitat needs in our backyard. This also strengthened the team of dedicated volunteers who seasonally monitor over 2000 acres of high priority forest and laid the foundation for the next chapter of CHC's wildlife monitoring program.

2026-2030 ACTION PLAN: COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

Equipping local communities with tools to advance forest resiliency and community well-being, in partnership with local and regional conservation organizations

OUR PLANS

- Grow and sustain relationships based on trust, respect, and reciprocity with Indigenous communities throughout the Northern Forest
- Conduct annual outreach to conservation commissions and other relevant town boards and staff to provide support with land use planning and conservation activities
- Having established conservation commissions in Bakersfield, Enosburgh, Montgomery, and Richford, assist with establishing conservation commissions in the towns of Belvidere, Fletcher, and Waterville
- Host or co-host free events each year focused on conservation topics that build community and foster support for our mission
- Expand and implement an updated design of CHC's wildlife monitoring program to engage community members and address specific information needs and knowledge gaps at various scales (parcel & landscape)
- Recruit, train, and retain volunteers to support wildlife monitoring data collection and to further empower local ambassadors for wildlife
- Offer free or low-cost workshops that focus on wildlife tracking, sign identification, and effective use of remote trail cameras to anyone interested

WHO WE WORK WITH

Cold Hollow to Canada is considered a Regional Conservation Partnership and acts as a nexus between our grassroots members – such as individual landowners and community members, conservation commissions, and local sport and recreation groups – with larger conservation organizations and government agencies across our state and region. To accomplish our vision for our region’s future, we must build connections within our community and reach out beyond.

OUR COMMUNITIES

Bakersfield, Belvidere, Enosburgh, Fletcher, Montgomery, Richford, Waterville

EXISTING CONSERVATION COMMISSIONS

- Bakersfield Conservation Commission
- Enosburgh Conservation Commission
- Montgomery Conservation Commission
- Richford Conservation Commission

OUR TOP FUNDERS

- You!
- Canaday Family Charitable Trust
- Catalyst Fund: Network for Landscape Conservation
- Daybreak Fund: Vermont Community Foundation
- Farnsworth Fund: Essex County Community Foundation
- Jessie B. Cox Charitable Trust Fund
- Linthilac Foundation
- Peregrine Accelerator: Salazar Center for North American Conservation
- Vermont Housing and Conservation Board

CONSERVATION PARTNERS

- New England Forestry Foundation
- The Nature Conservancy
- Northeast Wilderness Trust
- Trust for Public Land
- U.S. Forest Service
- USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Vermont Agency of Natural Resources
- Vermont Housing and Conservation Board
- Vermont Land Trust
- Vermont River Conservancy

ADDITIONAL PARTNERS & COLLABORATORS

- Audubon Vermont
- Franklin County Natural Resource Conservation District
- Franklin County Regional Planning Commission
- Friends of Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge
- Friends of Northern Lake Champlain
- Hazen’s Notch Land Conservancy
- Highstead
- Northwoods Stewardship Center
- Merck Forest & Farmland Center
- Missisquoi River Basin Association
- Staying Connected Initiative
- Two Countries, One Forest
- Upper Missisquoi and Trout Rivers Basin Association
- Vermont Association of Conservation Districts
- Vermont Coverts
- Vermont Natural Resource Council
- Vermont Woodlands Association
- Vermont Youth Conservation Corps
- Women & Our Woods

FURTHER READING & RESOURCES

A supplemental list of information and sources relevant to this plan is located here:
coldhollowtocanada.org/about/furtherreading

WRITING THE LAND: POETRY INSPIRED BY THE CHC REGION

In 2025, CHC was invited to participate in Writing the Land, a literary initiative that pairs poets and writers with conservation organizations and the landscapes they work to protect. Below are two pieces inspired by land conserved by CHC woodlot members composed by Vermont poets with deep connections to CHC and the region. Enjoy!

Tending

by Amy Suzanne Heneveld

What does tending mean
on land that has been
taken, torn, forgotten,
loved, cut, tamed,
rewilded, burned?

Tending means
not forgetting
to listen in.

Lean in,
listen for
how the land likes
to be seen to,
to be heard,
not ignored
or subdued
like a child,
not patronized
but allowed
to expand
and breathe.

Tend to me like you tend a friend
said the land.

An Almost Clearing in the Roses' Woods

by Geof Hewitt

You don't know what to do with a place like this, Lew sighs.
It's a gentle hill beyond stone walls.
Leaves and needles (though I can't see a pine),
Twigs and a few fallen branches "litter" the forest floor.

A place where maples and trees I don't know
Have found space to develop, maybe half an acre of young trees.
It's a kind of perfect place, an amphitheater,
Invites the eye to invention, development: What could go here?

Oh, not a swimming pool or gaudy motel,
Maybe just a dedicated stump for reflection.
Or not even that. Simply hand-sweep a spot on the ground,
Flomp down and breathe the sweet September air.

The sun hits patches of the forest floor
After wedging itself at the speed of light
Through the trees' green overstory.
Leaves shift in the breeze above.

Everything's calm down here
And man it is quiet!
But shadows of the dancing leaves
Give motion to the forest floor.





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