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## **The Lake Champlain Regional Conservation Partnership Program:**

Accelerated Implementation of Agricultural & Forestry

Conservation Practices in the Lake Champlain

Watershed of Vermont and New York



Semi-Annual Report for the USDA NRCS

Reporting Timeframe: November 30, 2016 – May 30, 2017

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## **November 30, 2016 – May 30, 2017 Report**

The Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) is pleased to submit this semi-annual report to USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. Progress for the reporting period November 30, 2016 to May 30, 2017 is documented below in the format requested by NRCS. DEC thanks the partners of the Lake Champlain RCPP for their match efforts, including the invaluable narrative reports that are utilized in the compilation of this document. Please see attachments for additional information where indicated.

### HIGHLIGHTS OF THE REPORT PERIOD

#### **WETLANDS RESTORATION**

The Vermont DEC Clean Water Initiative Program (CWIP) has a contract with Arrowwood Environmental to update potential wetland restoration data; create project packets of wetland project opportunities for landowners, including NRCS payment rates and incentive payments using the DEC Wetlands Incentive Calculator; input prior and new outreach data into the Agricultural BMP Database; and conduct outreach visits for project sites. The contractor will coordinate closely with Vermont NRCS.

The contractor has completed refining the existing 2007 wetland restoration ranking data layer to account for changes in conserved land status, land cover, and wetlands land use. The data was made available to the State via an online platform (<http://arrowwoodvt.com/rcpp/>) and shapefiles. The contractor has also developed 100 project profile packets within the Missisquoi Bay Watershed and an additional 25 within the greater Lake Champlain Basin. The contractor is currently in the process of developing project profile packets for St. Albans Bay and South Lake watersheds, as well as an additional 25 in the rest of the Lake Champlain Basin. Please see the attached project profile template.

DEC has facilitated a wetlands committee including partners that meet on a quarterly basis to discuss RCPP WRE projects, the efforts of the contractor and to develop improved processes for the program. Recently, the wetlands committee gathered to attend the annual presentation hosted by the contractor and discuss efforts to increase partner engagement in WRE project planning.

This aspect of the Lake Champlain RCPP is funded with cash match from DEC, as well as the time commitment of the DEC wetlands program. DEC sees this effort, along with the recently developed “wetlands calculator” as critical to increasing the amount of wetland restoration in the Lake Champlain Basin. Wetland protection and restoration are essential to meeting the goals of the Lake Champlain TMDL, especially as climate change influences nutrient loading to the lake.

DEC developed a wetlands project ranking criteria form that is based on the traditional NRCS ACEP-WRE ranking criteria. These criteria are being used to evaluate the RCPP WRE projects and determine which projects will be funded with Lake Champlain RCPP funds. See the attached form.

The RCPP Project Coordinator and the DEC Wetlands Ecologist (a wetlands committee member) presented about RCPP wetlands efforts and the data analysis available from the contractor at the May NRCS State Technical Committee Meeting.

## **APPROVAL OF NEW STATE REGULATIONS**

The Required Agricultural Practices (RAPs) were passed in December 2016, and partners have been working diligently to assist the agricultural community in understanding and implementing these updated regulations. VAAFM hosted over eighty public meetings to discuss the RAPs and accept public comment; additionally, they have hosting many meetings with agriculturally-affiliated groups throughout the state to train the public and partners. Below is a list of a selection of initiatives surrounding the RAPs:

- RAP Public Comment Meetings
- Training of Partners and Farmer Groups of the RAPs
- Training of Custom Manure Applicators
- AgriView mailing to all farmers: [http://agriculture.vermont.gov/news\\_media/agriview](http://agriculture.vermont.gov/news_media/agriview)
- Train the Trainer Events (for recipients of VAAFM Education & Outreach Grants), Including a Presentation of RCPP by the DEC RCPP Project Coordinator
- Restructuring of BMP Program: <http://agriculture.vermont.gov/BMP>
- RAP Information on Webpage, Including Frequently Flooded Soils Map: <http://agriculture.vermont.gov/rap#Floodplain>
- Formation of Tile Drain Advisory Committee
- Formation of Agricultural Best Management Practices Expert Panel

## **ENGINEERING CONTRACTS**

Last year, as the foresters became more engaged in RCPP efforts, workload challenges have increased due to the high surveying and planning needs associated with stream crossings. Additionally, there is a large agricultural engineering workload that has the potential to impact the timely implementation of practices. As a result, DEC coordinated with NRCS to use technical assistance dollars to fund engineering assistance that addresses both areas of concern. An RFP was released, proposals were reviewed and four contractors were selected to be on retainer for engineering assistance.

This new process for providing engineering services will increase the implementation of critical practices, but is a high increase in workload for the RCPP program. Due to State rules, each individual contract must be open for bid to the four contractors on retainer. Each project will require a project packet and site visit, then an individual contract and ongoing coordination, all of which are now the responsibility of the RCPP Program Coordinator.

Since the last semi-annual report, there have been approximately one dozen projects in need of engineering assistance that have been moving through the new process. The need to offer project notification, hold site visits, collect and review bids, notify of bid selection and move a project through approval with the DEC business office

prior to engineering planning can begin has added considerable time to the project implementation timeline, however completion this year is unlikely without this process. NRCS and DEC have been working to amend the RCPP contract to address the budget changes necessary to cover this TA cost.

### **INCREASED COORDINATION WITH PARTNERS**

One of the challenges of implementing the Lake Champlain RCPP has been the complexity of a new program on an already committed group of partners. In addition to the many outreach documents created by the RCPP Project Coordinator and previous outreach, the following has been added during this program period to assist in ensuring that RCPP technical information is shared in an accurate and timely manner with landowners.

- The RCPP Project Coordinator, Project Manager, VACD Technical Programs Manager and RCPP Conservation Planners now collaborate monthly via conference call to discuss contracts, conservation planning, and outreach, ensuring efficient workload planning and regular program updates. These conference calls have also served as a platform to offer supplemental trainings for the planners by bringing in Lake Champlain RCPP partners to provide updates regarding opportunities for agricultural producers.
- The RCPP Project Coordinator attends VAAFM bi-weekly Water Quality Meetings to share information about DEC efforts and provide updates about the Lake Champlain RCPP.
- The RCPP Project Coordinator has periodically attended each of the NRCS staff zone meetings in the Lake Champlain Basin to share information, provide updates and answer questions about the Lake Champlain RCPP.
- The ECO AmeriCorps member serving in the CWIP program has developed an RCPP Introductory Video and a RCPP Forestry Video. The forestry video was shown at the Vermont Woodlands Association Meeting along with a short presentation from the RCPP Project Coordinator. Additionally, the two NRCS/FPR Foresters and the RCPP Project Coordinator arranged an informational display about NRCS and RCPP forestry practice opportunities at the meeting.
- The RCPP Project Coordinator provided training for new VAAFM employees regarding the RCPP programs in Vermont, NRCS, Farm Viability resources, and more.
- The RCPP Project Coordinator presented on the RCPP programs in Vermont at the VAAFM Train the Trainer events held for recipients of their grant funds.
- The RCPP Project Coordinator and RCPP Project Manager provided support to and served on the Agricultural BMP Expert Panel. This panel is providing DEC with expert input regarding agricultural tracking efforts to verify phosphorus reduction efforts to meet TMDL requirements.
- The RCPP Project Manager attended the South Lake Agricultural Meetings where partners gathered to identify the needs of the region and increase collaboration.
- The RCPP Project Coordinator has continued monthly meetings with Vermont Forest, Parks & Recreation (FPR) to discuss project and engineering needs, informational video development, budgets and best management practices.

- The RCPP Project Coordinator has attended meetings in the Northern, Northeast Kingdom and Southern NRCS office zones to discuss RCPP challenges, answer questions, and develop improved processes for the program such as a new Lake Champlain RCPP Application Checklist, see attached.
- The RCPP Project Coordinator participated in the interview process for replacing an RCPP Conservation Planner for the Northwest zone.
- The RCPP Project Coordinator attended an online training provided by UVM Extension regarding their NMP program, “goCrop.”
- The RCPP Conservation Planners developed a significant number of the Land Treatment Plans necessary for conserved farmers to develop their own Nutrient Management Plans in the VACD RCPP NMP class. This required significant cross-coordination between the two RCPP programs to ensure appropriate financial accountability.
- Many RCPP partners came together to organize a significant event called A Partnership Approach to Clean Water. This event gathered partners involved in clean water efforts and conservation in the State of Vermont to have open discussions and consistent information regarding TMDL-required reductions, new regulations, partner efforts, and resources available.
- The RCPP Project Coordinator presented at the Franklin Sugarmakers Association Annual Meeting.
- The RCPP Project Coordinator attended an NRCS-hosted training for the new RUSLE2 tool.
- The RCPP Project Coordinator led a Lean event with DEC Wetlands and Enforcement staff to improve their processes of coordination. Lean is a term that describes a management philosophy and set of practices used to develop the highest quality products or services, at the lowest cost, with the shortest lead time.
- The RCPP Project Coordinator collaborated with the FPR Watershed Forester to develop a training for County Foresters and other FPR staff serving in the Lake Champlain Basin regarding the RCPP program and to attend a site showcasing a completed forestry project.
- New opportunities have presented themselves for match reporting with partners, such as capturing the efforts of districts who are doing tree plantings on RCPP project sites, or for increased match with the ECO AmeriCorps program.
- The RCPP Project Coordinator attended the NRCS-hosted Quarterly 2017 Easement Kick-off Meeting & both the Project Coordinator and Manager have continued to attend VHCB-hosted quarterly easement project selection meetings.

#### **NEW AMERICORPS MEMBER**

ECO AmeriCorps member Rachel Ross has continued with her efforts in providing RCPP assistance, and the development of informational videos. She has completed two videos for RCPP; an overview of the program, and one specific to RCPP forestry. She is also working on videos related to grazing plans and pasture management, riparian buffers, algae blooms, and water quality monitoring. Since she began her service in August, she has been visiting Lake Champlain RCPP project sites and other events filming clean water efforts. Follow the link to view the Lake Champlain RCPP Introduction video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Ld9IIQikiQ&t=26s>. Follow the link to view the Lake Champlain RCPP Forestry video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZnFQn9maFyU>.

The CWIP program was provided the opportunity to host an additional ECO AmeriCorps member for the last four months of the service year. In April, RCPP welcomed Andrew Nyugen, who is provided support to Vermont's clean water efforts through assisting the MAPP program with stream and acid precipitation sampling including organization partner volunteers and analyzing data, providing support to the Non-Point Source Coordinator in her efforts to track phosphorus reduction projects and efforts, and developing a blog series about water quality and climate resiliency. Andrew's support to MAPP and CWIP in water sampling continue to help inform the priorities of RCPP. Additionally, partners are working closely to best use RCPP match water quality sampling funds by choosing monitoring sites that can be supplemented with other ongoing sampling conducted through MAPP.

For an update about the clean water efforts of all of the ECO AmeriCorps members, please see the attached report.

### PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION ACTIVITIES

The New York NRCS has issued a bulletin, press release and timeline detailing sign-ups for Lake Champlain RCPP funding through September 15, 2017. This funding will be used to implement practices to address priority resource concerns. The SWCDs and NRCS offices will work together to provide assistance to landowners through this program.

To capture the great accomplishments occurring through the Lake Champlain RCPP, DEC requires participating partners to provide quarterly financial and narrative match reports. MOUs have been developed with partners to identify deliverables and reporting requirements. Details from these reports are included throughout this document.

Vermont Association of Conservation Districts (VACD), through its contract with DEC, continues to provide conservation and nutrient management planning assistance to farms that have or are in the process of committing to land conservation easements on their farms, conducting resource inventories on farms using NRCS tools and evaluation materials, and to work as a case manager with producers. Three RCPP conservation planners located in the South Lake region, the North-East Kingdom and North Western region of the Lake Champlain Basin are currently providing technical assistance. A new RCPP Conservation Planner joined the team in January and is serving the Northwestern and central region of the Lake Champlain Basin. The RCPP Project Planner in the South Lake region transitioned to a position with a partner organization in April. VACD is actively recruiting for this position and managing workload in the interim and it has been another demonstration of the strength and dedication among RCPP partners to get the job done despite the staffing challenges.

DEC continues to host monthly ACEP-ALE meetings with key partners including NRCS, VHCB, VLT, and VACD to discuss projects moving through the conservation easement process, as well as continually striving to communicate and improve our process.

The DEC RCPP Project Coordinator collaborates with the DEC Business Office staff and NRCS staff to complete financial quarterly reporting and accruals. Continued collaboration regarding reporting involves in-person meetings and conference calls. Please see the attached Financial Status Report for more detailed information.

The RCPP Project Coordinator continues to participate in statewide activities where opportunities to share RCPP information exist.

The RCPP Advisory Board met on February 7th and May 2nd with the following partners: NRCS, VAAFM, VHCB, VLT, FPR, and VACD. These meetings include discussions of current ACEP-ALE projects, review and approval of future RCPP ACEP-ALE projects, outreach, review of WRE projects and incentive payments, prioritization of workload, adjustment of terms, and beyond. Please see the attached agendas for more detailed information.

The RCPP Project Manager attended the winter NRCS State Technical Committee meeting to provide an update about the program and overview of wetland efforts. The State Conservationist invited DEC staff to attend the spring meeting and provide a more in-depth overview of wetlands efforts.

## EDUCATION/OUTREACH

### **OUTREACH EVENTS AND MATERIALS**

DEC has updated the RCPP webpage available here: <http://dec.vermont.gov/watershed/cwi/rcpp>

The Northern forester for the Lake Champlain Basin, Emily Potter, was interviewed for a short video that was designed to highlight the benefits of the RCPP program (see Increased Coordination with Partners).

DEC and FPR collaborated in the coordination of an informational workshop about the Lake Champlain RCPP for FPR County Foresters serving in the Lake Champlain Basin. On May 22, 2017, the RCPP Project Coordinator presented to DEC, NRCS and FPR and the group attended a site showing of a completed Lake Champlain RCPP forestry project on a 10,000 tap sugaring operation in Richmond, Vermont. This project included nearly 3500 feet of improved forest trails and two timber bridge stream crossings over tributaries to Lake Champlain.

Lake Champlain RCPP Partner, AgriMark, discussed water quality during individual farm visits between AgriMark representatives and cooperative members, including what to expect with the new Required Agricultural Practices and what measures to take to be in good standing.

DEC continues to work with NRCS to share information with all the NRCS field offices via weekly emails (leadership emails) and on the NRCS RCPP website (<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/vt/programs/farmbill/rcpp/>). Additionally, the RCPP Project Coordinator worked with the NRCS field offices to establish and populate a file on the internal NRCS SharePoint site to house Lake Champlain RCPP materials.

### **NUMBER OF MEDIA OUTLETS REACHED**

The RCPP Project Coordinator updated the RCPP materials available on the Vermont NRCS RCPP website, (<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/vt/programs/farmbill/rcpp/>).

## **NUMBER OF PEOPLE REACHED AND UNIQUE OUTREACH**

Through their ongoing efforts in outreach, communication, water quality improvement efforts and training, VAAFM staff provided 3,421.75 hours of support. VAAFM developed an RFP to distribute Clean Water Funds for projects relating to outreach, education, implementation, organizational development, and innovative phosphorus reduction. It was a very competitive grant round with approximately sixty applications received. The Required Agricultural Practices (RAPs) were adopted December 6, 2016. VAAFM staff have been providing technical assistance to agricultural producers through the planning process of bringing their farms into compliance with the updated regulations. Particular emphasis has been placed on farms with conservation easements that are eligible for Lake Champlain RCPP funds. VAAFM staff provided outreach and education at the Vermont Farm Show, UVM No-Till and Cover Cropping Conference, and at the Dairy Producers Conference. VAAFM has made their monthly publication of AgriView available for mail distribution, free of charge, to all agricultural producers in the State of Vermont. Additionally, the publication is available electronically to anyone interested. It is a key resource for sharing important information about agriculture in Vermont.

The majority of Lake Champlain RCPP work will focus on farms that are conserved and therefore are not new to NRCS. However, Lake Champlain RCPP partners are providing outreach through match that reaches additional farmers and forest landowners and the RCPP Project Coordinator and Program Manager have expanded coordination efforts with VLT to increase coordination with the VACD planners. Following several trainings provided by the RCPP Project Coordinator, VLT technical staff have been communicating the resources available under the RCPP when conducting farm visits. Annually, VLT visits approximately 500 conserved agricultural properties statewide, a significant contribution of which are in the Lake Champlain Basin. VLT's Stewardship staff spend considerable time working with conserved landowners on water quality improvement efforts by reviewing proposed activities, educating and directing landowners to technical assistance and cost-share programs.

DEC has been supporting the VAAFM in the development of the Vermont Environmental Stewardship Program (VESP). The program began accepting applications for the pilot program in the fall of 2016. So far, five applications have been received from small, medium and large dairy operation. VAAFM is encouraging applications from other types of agricultural operations such as vegetable farm to improve the diversity of farms in the pilot program. There will be an official press event announcing the launch of the program in July 2017. The program is utilizing the new NRCS R-SET tool and the pilot program will help VAAFM to fine-tune the tool to VESP for future official program roll-out. Additional innovative aspects of the VESP program include the pilot approach of high-resolution drone imaging to determine if using these technologies can allow of reduced in-field work for staff.

## **RELATIONSHIP BUILDING WITH PARTNERS**

Almost all the Lake Champlain RCPP partner organizations that have committed match are actively working on RCPP efforts (though not all are currently reflected in the match documentation report). These include Vermont

Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets (VAAF), Vermont Department of Forest Parks and Recreation (FPR), Vermont Housing & Conservation Board (VHCB), Vermont Land Trust (VLT), Vermont Association of Conservation Districts (VACD), DEC, NY Washington and Essex Natural Resource Conservation Districts, St. Albans Dairy Cooperative, AgriMark Cooperative and Dairy Marketing Services, Lake Champlain Basin Program (LCBP), Friends of Northern Lake Champlain (FNLC), Farm to Plate (F2P), Farm & Forest Viability Program (FFV), Dairy Farmers of America (DFA), St. Albans Cooperative Creamery (St. Albans Coop), AgriMark Cooperative (AgriMark) and Commonwealth Dairy. Other partner efforts are under development. These outreach efforts include:

- Extensive outreach regarding the RAPs to ensure farmers are aware of the water quality needs, concerns and resource opportunities through RCPP, other NRCS and state programs.
- One-on-one farm visits addressing specific farm issues.

The RCPP Project Coordinator supports the Vermont DEC Environmental Careers & Opportunities (ECO) AmeriCorps Program in the form of assistance in event planning, organizing speakers, providing mentor support to a member, and attending service events. The RCPP Project Coordinator provides support to Rachel Ross in the development of RCPP-related videos, she is supervisor to new member Andrew Nyugen, and she is mentor to a member serving with the Orleans County Natural Resources Conservation District.

The Lake Champlain RCPP provides opportunities for building relationships between partners through the RCPP Advisory Board, subcommittees on ACEP-ALE and WRE projects, monthly meetings with VACD, as well as the development of the Vermont Environmental Stewardship Program. At these meetings partners are actively describing priorities and goals, identifying and overcoming challenges to improve water quality, to protect and restore natural resources. The success of that relationship building is evident as partners work together to make the Lake Champlain RCPP a cohesive and effective program while gaining a better understanding of partner's program.

An example of the intensity and high need for cohesive coordination and understanding has been one RCPP ACEP-ALE project in St. Albans that has involved significant partnerships among VLT, VHCB, DEC, VAAF, VACD, TNC-VT, and Friends of Northern Lake Champlain to address long-standing water quality issues associated with the farm. These efforts are ongoing and this project is not only utilizing the resources of the ACEP-ALE program but also the engineering consultants on retainer for RCPP, TNC-VT & Keurig Green Mountain funding, partner technical and administrative support, as well as fundraising efforts. The immense time and resource commitment to this project demonstrates the critical need for careful project coordination, but also highlights the value of multiple partners in water quality improvement. Currently, the site is being evaluated by an engineering contractor to determine an appropriate approach to mitigating runoff of the site, then partners will develop an Ecosystem Restoration Grant Program proposal for funding. This system, and other stipulations of the project contract, must be completed for the project to successfully close in the coming autumn.

## SUCCESS STORIES

## **PLANNERS**

The RCPP Conservation Planner in the northwestern zone has provided ongoing technical assistance to a producer who does not meet the criteria to apply for agricultural best management practices through RCPP, but has the potential to develop wetlands restoration projects on the site. The RCPP Conservation Planner facilitated connecting the landowner with NRCS staff overseeing Wetlands Restoration Easement (WRE) efforts within the state.

Additionally, this planner has been assisting a landowner with accessing available technical and financial assistance opportunities to meet the goals for the diversified farming operation including agricultural best management practices such as Nutrient Management Plan development, Grazing Plan development, cover cropping and energy efficiency initiatives.

## **PARTNERS**

VHCB has made significant progress in implementation of our LEAN plan developed in February, 2016. On November 9th, VHCB held their first joint meeting of VHCB Conservation Issues Committee and the Viability Board, with guests (former Ag Advisory Committee members FSA State Director, and NRCS State Conservationist). The purpose of this meeting that has been proposed to be held annually to receive broad feedback on VHCB's farmland conservation program. This meeting focused on rural enterprises on farms including appropriate scale on conserved lands, challenges with local zoning possible tension between ag viability and conservation easements.

VHCB submitted an application for certification to NRCS in November; if approved, NRCS would no longer be involved in the easement closing process, VHCB would assume responsibility for all closing reviews, appraisal tech reviews, etc. NRCS would evaluate 15% of the projects post-closing. This would speed up the closing process, while giving more responsibility to VHCB. In early April, VHCB received approval from NRCS for a template easement. They have amended their regular ALE and RCPP-ALE Cooperative Agreements to attach this template, and will use this for most projects moving forward. This would remove the need to be reviewed by a national deed reviewer and the review will take place entirely at the state NRCS office. This will eliminate one step in the closing process.

VHCB is engaging with the ECHO-sponsored Clean Water Network Solutions/Innovation Workgroup.

RCPP has been a pilot for and integral part of VT DEC's development of tracking tools for clean water efforts and TMDL implementation. DEC and Lake Champlain RCPP Partners have been involved in discussions and planning for tracking statewide implementation of best management practices to improve water quality, including RCPP efforts on agricultural, forestry, and wetland land uses.

## **INTEGRATION OF RCPP INTO OTHER PROGRAM ACTIVITIES**

RCPP is a key part of DEC's agricultural efforts in meeting the State's commitments to Act 64 and the Lake Champlain TMDL. Therefore, it is important that RCPP efforts coordinate and integrate with other parts of DEC and VAAFM. Some examples include:

The RCPP Project Coordinator provides input to the Agricultural BMP Tracking & Coordination meetings hosted by DEC. These meetings serve to develop procedures for tracking clean water efforts per the requirements of the Lake Champlain TMDL and include partners such as DEC, VAAF, NRCS and EPA.

DEC and VAAF are actively working with scientists, partners and farmers to develop methods for addressing the potential water quality impacts of tile drains. DEC and VAAF coordinated a working group to provide input on methods to remediate tile drain impacts and a report was sent to the Vermont Legislature in January 2017. All RCPP partners and staff are continually involved in the technical aspects of tile drain discussions and potential for remediation to ensure accurate communication when working with landowners in the field.

## IMPLEMENTATION

### **PROJECTS FUNDED OUTSIDE TRADITIONAL NRCS PROGRAMS**

Projects funded outside traditional NRCS programs as match to the RCPP grant included \$52,282.99 for farm agronomic practices and \$521,631.52 for best management practices from VAAF. Additionally, VHCB/Commonwealth Dairy provided \$194,830 in Dairy Improvement Grants for water quality projects on seven farms in the Lake Champlain Basin. This program, a partnership with the St. Albans Cooperative Creamery, Dairy Farmers of America, Housing Vermont and the Massachusetts Housing Investment Corporation, the Vermont Farm & Forest Viability Program provides grants of up to \$40,000 to Vermont dairy farmer members of the St. Albans Co-op and Dairy Farmers of America to make on-farm improvements.

There is approximately \$200,000 remaining in Commonwealth Dairy Funds for awards in 2017, so VHCB held a late-spring round for grant applications. Commonwealth Dairy has focused its annual allocations on water quality as part of its commitment to RCPP. The VT Legislature has also committed an additional \$1million to VHCB to provide funds in a grant program similar to the Commonwealth Dairy Funds, that will be solely for water quality improvement, and have statewide availability.

### **CONTRACTS AND PRACTICES IMPLEMENTED**

The Vermont NRCS/FPR Foresters worked on existing and new contacts and scheduled site visits for spring snowmelt. This pre-planning work included making maps and reviewing Forest Management Plans for landowners. They continue to move projects forward for engineering contracting, currently three projects will be contracted through DEC and two additional will be done by NRCS and the foresters. Both NRCS & the FPR Foresters continue to improve on their communication and collaborative approach to shepherding projects through the Lake Champlain RCPP program.

### **AGRICULTURAL CONSERVATION EASEMENT PROGRAM – AGRICULTURAL LAND EASEMENTS**

The 172.5 acre former Bryant Farm is located in the northeast corner of Pawlet, an active farming community. It is close to both Manchester and Rutland. The farm was an active dairy until last spring – as a result of conservation and VLT's Farmland Access Program, the farm is now under a lease-purchase agreement with the Balzano family, who moved their farming operation from Wells. The property will now support a pasture-based pork, no-till grain

operation. During the conservation process, a 20-acre area that had been used as a gravel pit was reclaimed as cropland and a 20-acre area formerly used for corn production was reseeded to grass production. The conservation easement includes a 50-foot-no-cut buffer around two wooded wetland areas and a 50-foot riparian protection zone along Beaver Brook, enhancing Mettowee River water quality. Please see photos on page 15.

Working with the Vermont Land Trust, Scott and Tracy Cleveland conserved their Pawlet home farm in 2007 with VHCB, federal funds through NRCS, and private foundation assistance, and purchased and conserved another 259 acres with similar funding in 2010. In 2017, they purchased an additional 99.8 surveyed acres that adjoins their home farm. Acquiring this parcel secured the land base that supports their 120-cow dairy. This farmland is located in a RCPP priority watershed (the South Lake) area. In May of 2017, the Clevelands sold a conservation easement on the property, with funding from VHCB and the John Merck Fund matching federal RCPP-ALE dollars. The easement includes increased buffer protections on the 4800 feet of streams (and associated wetlands) that traverse the property. The property adjoins the North Pawlet Hills Natural Area owned by the Nature Conservancy (TNC). Please see photos on page 16.

There are five agricultural land easement projects in the Lake Champlain Basin that have been funded and are moving toward closing. Additionally, there are four projects that have been selected to move forward for funding. VHCB submitted their third application to NRCS for RCPP-ALE projects on February 3rd, are seeking funding for 4 additional RCPP projects in Hinesburg, Highgate, Middlebury, and West Haven.

VLТ closed on five additional conservation projects and one DEC River Corridor Easement overlay on a farm elsewhere in the Lake Champlain Basin, permanently protecting 873 acres.

A total of 18 farmland conservation projects within the three challenged/priority watersheds have been developed and are eligible for RCPP ALE funding. Additionally, over 40 farmland and forestland conservation projects under development are located in other portions of the Basin.

VLТ staff are developing a number of River Corridor Management Area (RCMA) projects within the LCB that include significant river corridor protection in addition to buffer implementation. These projects are primarily overlays on existing conserved farms to add restrictions to strengthen water quality protection. Currently there are three projects funded with an additional four in application phase.

## **FARM & FOREST VIABILITY**

The RCPP Program Manager has been working closely with Farm Viability to directly connect RCPP farms to the Farm & Forest Viability program and increase the use of this critical program throughout the Lake Champlain Basin. The RCPP Project Coordinator worked with Vermont Farm Viability partners to develop an information email about farm viability resources, which was distributed widely to conservation partners. Please see attached.

VHCB dispersed previously awarded dairy improvement grants and announced a 2017 dairy improvement grant round, held two informational sessions on the grant program for dairy farmers in Addison and Franklin Counties,



Bryant Farm, photo courtesy of VLT.



Bryant Farm, photo courtesy of VLT.



Oct 24, 2016

Pond at the Bryant Farm, photo courtesy of VLT.



Above: Riparian Forest Buffer Planting & Invasives removal, photo courtesy of PMNRCD.

Top Right: A wetland inhabitant defends its territory, photo courtesy of PMNRCD.

Right: Riparian Forest Buffer Planting funded by Trees for Streams, photo courtesy of PMNRCD.





Cleveland Farm, photo courtesy of VLT.



Cleveland Farm, photo courtesy of VLT.



Cleveland Farm wetlands, photo courtesy of VLT.



Cleveland Farm Family, photo courtesy of VLT.



Cleveland Farm Family, photo courtesy of VLT.

and received 11 applications for funding by the deadline in mid-December. VHCB disperse \$28,795 for 2 dairy improvement grants related to water quality, both in Addison County, from October to December 2016.

### **TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FOR IMPLEMENTATION**

The RCPP Conservation Planners continue to work closely with NRCS staff, the RCPP Project Coordinator and VACD Technical Programs Manager to prioritize workload. The three RCPP Conservation Planners have been working with 38 farms and have provided over 100 technical assistance visits to those farms in addition to technical assistance provided by NRCS staff. Their efforts include conducting hazardous waste assessments and interviews, developing Agricultural Land Easement (ALE) plans, developing Land Treatment Plans (LTPs), assisting with signups for Nutrient Management Plan (NMP) development, and acting as the “case manager” to producers navigating programs to implement clean water activities and comply with state and federal regulations. Please see the attached VACD quarterly report for January and April for detailed information about deliverables met.

The Lake Champlain RCPP foresters are providing technical assistance in project development utilizing stream crossing practice standard 578, stream crossing stabilization practice standard 655, and forest trails and landings practice standard 655. This planning work involves field visits, communication with the landowners, stream crossing survey work, and processing stream crossing data. The FPR/NRCS foresters provided technical assistance to 26 landowners in Jay, Stowe, Bolton, Richmond, Wolcott, Eden, Huntington, Richford, Fairfield, Bakersfield, Holland, Worchester, Hinesburg, Westford, Johnson, Starksboro, Lincoln, Leicester, Whiting, Tinmouth, Brandon and Monkton.

The foresters have experienced workload challenges due to the high surveying and planning needs associated with stream crossings. Additionally, there is a large agricultural engineering workload that is affecting implementation. VT DEC is coordinating with NRCS and FPR to target Lake Champlain RCPP technical assistance dollars for fund engineering assistance that addresses both areas of concern.

### **ADJUSTMENT OF TERMS**

In September, NRCS offered the opportunity to have rolling sign-ups with no batching if the RCPP Conservation Planners would be responsible for moving those applications forward through the ranking process. DEC agreed, and was awarded an Adjustment of Terms to allow for threshold ranking. DEC had planned to pilot this approach with only the agricultural applications in the first round (DEC chose to maintain the same program schedule as regular EQIP to avoid confusion for the planning staff and the RCPP Conservation Planners could always “beat” the deadlines within the program schedule when working on an application); however, due to administrative challenges in setting this system up for NRCS, DEC decided to post-pone the pilot of Lake Champlain RCPP threshold ranking to the second round. Not only will this provide an expedited process for applicants, it will be a good case study for NRCS to observe if they wish to try it in any of their traditional pools. Both the RCPP Conservation Planners and NRCS staff have provided feedback that they really like the threshold ranking as it allows projects to move forward with less “waiting” and they would be in support of it being available to all programs.

## USE OF FUNDS

EQIP dollars for agricultural practices are available to conserved farms in the three target watersheds of Missisquoi Bay, St. Albans Bay, and South Lake. ACEP (WRE and ALE) and Forestry EQIP dollars are available to any landowners in the Lake Champlain Basin. Technical assistance funding supports three RCPP Conservation Planners and the two RCPP Foresters, who are assisting landowners in the Lake Champlain Basin. Additionally, partner technical assistance funding is supporting contractual engineering work for Lake Champlain RCPP contracts, as NRCS engineering staff's workload is not able to balance the increased workload the Lake Champlain RCPP brings.

Allocation of Financial Assistance Funds:

EQIP: \$3,167,017

ALE: \$2,544,500

WRE: \$365,000

Please reference the attached FSR for technical assistance and match document. Additionally, please reference the attached reporting Table "449-DEC".

## MEASUREMENT OF RESULTS

A key component of the Lake Champlain RCPP contract is the assessment and evaluation of the results of practice implementation as an indicator of progress. There are several methods that the State of Vermont is using collectively.

### **METRIC QUANTIFICATION**

Each practice is being tracked by appropriate metrics, such as number of acres or linear feet and are documented in regular reporting to NRCS.

### **PRACTICE EFFICIENCY**

On an annual basis, practice tracking will also include estimated phosphorus reduction using the efficiencies being used in accountability for the Lake Champlain TMDL. This methodology was developed with the EPA in conjunction with DEC and VAAF and with the assistance of NRCS.

### **WATER QUALITY MONITORING**

DEC has an extensive State and lay monitoring program for surface water quality. While site specific monitoring should not be used solely as a method for evaluating practice success, since there are many other factors in the sub-watershed that can impact data, there are instances and locations where this type of monitoring can be informative and supplemental to other methods. DEC is conducting bracketed water quality monitoring at practice

sites where the situation indicates that results will be valuable, and will be reporting on the 2017 summer monitoring in the next semi-annual report.

### RANKING & TARGETING

EQIP dollars for agricultural practices are available to conserved farms in the Lake Champlain Basin with priority given to the three targeted watersheds of Missisquoi Bay, St. Albans Bay, and South Lake. ACEP-WRE & ALE and Forestry EQIP dollars are available to all landowners in the Lake Champlain Basin.

### TRAININGS

The RCPP Project Coordinator and VAAFM Water Quality Outreach Coordinator hosted a webinar for RCPP partners in May 2017 to provide updates to partners about accomplishments of the Lake Champlain RCPP, information regarding the RAPs and VAAFM technical and financial resources, and to answer questions.

The RCPP Project Coordinator will be presenting in June 2017 about the Lake Champlain RCPP to DEC partners, and a recording of the webinar will be available on the CWIP YouTube page and the CWIP RCPP webpage.

The RCPP Project Coordinator presented about RCPP programs and farm viability resources at the VAAFM Train the Trainer events.

VACD & VLT are collaborating to host a meeting between RCPP Conservation Planners and VLT Stewardship staff to provide an annual follow up and opportunity for project and outreach coordination.

### PARTNERS WHO CONTRIBUTED TO THIS REPORT

USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service  
Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation  
Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets  
Vermont Association of Conservation Districts  
Vermont Department of Forest, Parks & Recreation  
Vermont Housing & Conservation Board  
Vermont Land Trust  
St. Albans Cooperative  
Dairy Farmers of America  
AgriMark Cooperative Creamery



United States Department of Agriculture



# 2017 VERMONT LAKE CHAMPLAIN (DEC) RCPP ACEP WETLAND RESERVE EASEMENT RANKING CRITERIA

**TOTAL RANKING SCORE (from page 3) \_\_\_\_\_**

Landowner Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Town: \_\_\_\_\_ County: \_\_\_\_\_

Reference Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Evaluators: \_\_\_\_\_

Total Acres: \_\_\_\_\_ Wetland Acres: \_\_\_\_\_ Upland Acres: \_\_\_\_\_

Cropland/Hay Acres: \_\_\_\_\_ DCP Acres: \_\_\_\_\_

## I. ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

**A. Percent of Wetland Hydrology Altered, multiplied by the Percent of Altered Hydrology that can be Restored (example: 50% of wetland hydrology has been removed from hydric soil area, 90% of it can be restored to pre-existing conditions, so:  $0.5 \times 0.9 = 0.45$ ):**

- 1. 0.75 - 1.0 ..... 25 points \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. 0.5 - 0.74 ..... 15 points
- 3. 0.25 - 0.49 ..... 10 points
- 4. 0.1 - 0.24 ..... 5 points
- 5. 0.0 ..... 0 points

Note: The hydrologic effects due to restoration on adjacent sites, or the impact to planned restoration practices on adjacent sites, can be included in this analysis. Hydrologic restoration is required for a site to be eligible for WRP.

**B. Size of the Hydrologically Restored Wetland Area (do not include non-wetland buffers or upland areas):**

- 1. Greater than 50 acres ..... 25 points
- 2. 25 - 50 acres ..... 15 points \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. 10 - 25 acres ..... 10 points
- 4. 1 - 10 acres ..... 5 points
- 5. Less than 1 acre ..... 0 points

**C. Dominant Type of Land to be Restored:**

- 1. PC/FW (land in crop production) ..... 10 points \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. FWP (herbaceous wetland) ..... 8 points
- 3. Abandoned agricultural land ..... 6 points

- 4. Other, currently used lands with degraded wetlands ..... 3 points
- 5. Woodland (hydrology altered) ..... 0 points

**D. Proximity to Permanently Protected Land Resources** such as Federal or State Forest and Wildlife Lands or Permanently Protected Lands in Conservation Easements. Or, Located Within or Adjacent to an EPA Priority Wetland, Vermont Class I Wetland, or a Targeted Lake Champlain Basin Acquisition Wetland, Or, part of a Multi-landowner WRE project Or Targeted wetlands restoration project area.

- 1. Adjacent ..... 10 points
- 2. Within 1/2 mile ..... 7 points
- 3. Within 1 mile ..... 3 points
- 4. Greater than 1 mile ..... 0 points

**E. Restored Wetland Buffer and Project Type Easements:** Percent of Easement Area That Will Be Restored Wetland or Eligible Riparian Areas: \_\_\_\_\_

- 1. 91 to 100% ..... 5 points
  - 2. 61 to 90% ..... 3 points
  - 3. 50 to 60% ..... 1 point
- Note: 50% of the easement area must be restored wetland, the other half can be upland buffer or natural wetland buffer.

**F. Location in Relation to Surface Waters** including a River, Perennial Stream, or Lake/Pond Greater Than 10 Ac. in Size. \_\_\_\_\_

- Includes Contiguous Riparian Area - 10 points
- Within 300 ft. - 6 points
- Within active floodplain - 3 points
- Greater than 300 ft. - 0 points

**G. Sources of Sediment, Animal Wastes or other Contaminants** to Surface or Ground Waters will be Eliminated. \_\_\_\_\_

- 1. Significant sources of contaminants eliminated - assign 10 points  
(examples: excluding livestock from streams, permanent cover established on former cropland, eliminating stored animal wastes with direct hydrologic connection to surface waters)
- 2. Notable of sources of contaminants eliminated - assign 5 points  
(examples: eliminating manure stacks, permanent cover established on small eroding areas, manure applications to hayland eliminated)
- 3. No sources of contaminants eliminated - assign 0 points

**ENVIRONMENTAL RANKING** \_\_\_\_\_

**II. PROJECT TYPE, MANAGEMENT AND ECONOMIC RANKING CRITERIA**

**A. Type of Project**

- 1. Permanent easement ..... 10 points
- 2. 30 year easement ..... 5 points

**B. Level of Maintenance and Operation Required for the Restored Wetland and Upland Buffer:** \_\_\_\_\_

- 1. Minimal or no management of the restored site and upland buffer. (such as a simple ditch plug or drain block) - assign 10 points
  
- 2. Infrequent maintenance required (such as infrequent repair or replacement of pipes or water control structures) - assign 5 points
  
- 3. Long-term Intensive O&M (such as seasonal manipulation of a water control structure or long-term vegetative management) - assign 0 points

**III. LAKE CHAMPLAIN RCPP PRIORITY WATERSHEDS & LOCATION**

**A. Watershed**

- 1. Missisquoi Watershed ..... 25 points \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. St. Albans Bay Watershed ..... 25 points
- 3. South Lake A & B Watersheds..... 25 points
- 4. Rest of the Lake Champlain Basin ....10 points

**B. Has this project been identified through the Arrowwood/Fitzgerald Environmental/Stone Environmental wetland restoration site evaluation as a priority site within the Lake Champlain Basin (red, orange or blue colors in the model)?**

- 1. Yes..... 25 points \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. No..... 0 points

**PROJECT TYPE AND LOCATION RANKING** \_\_\_\_\_

**TOTAL RANKING SCORE** \_\_\_\_\_

Note: total possible points = **165**, if a project scores **below 60 it is ineligible for RCPP ACEP WRE** unless unusual circumstances dictate otherwise. Projects may also have to be approved on a competitive basis if funds are limited.

**Notes and Comments:**



Project ID

Total Acres, LAT/LONG

Project Name

Town, Watershed, Project address

**Landowner Contact Information**– table format (multiple landowners):

Acres in Project	% of Project	Parcel ID	SPAN	LO Name (s)	LO Phone	LO Mailing	Farm ID
Xx	Xx	x	Xxx	Xxx	Xxxxxx	Xxxxx	xx
Xx	Xx	x	Xxx	Xxx	Xxxxxx	Xxxxx	xx
Xx	Xx	x	Xxx	Xxx	Xxxxxx	Xxxxx	xx

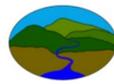
**Project Narrative:** Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Maecenas porttitor congue massa. Fusce posuere, magna sed pulvinar ultricies, purus lectus malesuada libero, sit amet commodo magna eros quis urna.

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Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Maecenas porttitor congue massa. Fusce posuere, magna sed pulvinar ultricies, purus lectus malesuada libero, sit amet commodo magna eros quis urna.

PROJECT MAP (site location)

1:12000-1:24000 usgs topo or similar basemap



### Project Name

Town, Watershed, Project address

**Watershed Site prioritization info:** Priority Site ID, Priority score, watershed ranking

**Existing Condition Narrative:** Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Maecenas porttitor congue massa. Fusce posuere, magna sed pulvinar ultricies, purus lectus malesuada libero, sit amet commodo magna eros quis urna.

Nunc viverra imperdiet enim. Fusce est. Vivamus a tellus. ellentesque habitant morbi tristique senectus et netus et malesuada

**Natural Community types:**  Shallow Emergent Marsh  Floodplain Forest  Shrub Swamp

**Natural community Comments...**

**Restoration opportunities:**  Tile, Berm Rem.  Fill Ditch  Plug Ditch  Exc. Depression  Floodplain Resto  Channel Resto  Plantings

**Hydrologic Alteration Comments...**

**Restoration Narrative:** Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Maecenas porttitor congue massa. Fusce posuere, magna sed pulvinar ultricies, purus lectus malesuada libero, sit amet commodo magna eros quis urna.

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Maecenas porttitor congue massa. Fusce posuere, magna sed pulvinar ultricies, purus lectus malesuada libero, sit amet commodo magna eros quis urna.

Nunc viverra imperdiet enim. Fusce est. Vivamus a tellus. ellentesque habitant morbi tristique senectus et netus et malesuada

**Existing Easements:**

- FRPP
- GRP
- WRP
- VLT
- VLT-O
- CONSPUB

**Prior Visits** (AG BMP DB info): Date, type, Status, Name & Contact info

ADD RCPP VISITS later

**Payment Calculator Results:**

Landowner/parcel	Calc output 1	Calc output 2	Calc output 3	etc	



Project ID

Total Acres, LAT/LONG

Project Name

Town, Watershed, Project address

Map: Project details/ex conditions–

- VT CIR ortho
- Roads/railroads
- Project boundary
- Lidar topo where avail.
- Streams
- Wetlands
- hydric soils
- Waterbodies
- river corridor
- Existing easement boundaries (?)



Project ID

Total Acres, LAT/LONG

Project Name

Town, Watershed, Project address

Map: Site Notes Map

- NAIP or leaf-on summer aerial
- Road labels
- Project boundary
- Formatted/light enough for field notes

## Inside this issue:

Page 1: National Public Lands Day service project

Page 2: AmeriCorps launch and SerVermont conference

Page 3: Regional Gatherings

Page 4: Vermont Monitoring Cooperative conference

Page 5: Member Highlights

Page 10: Host Site Highlights

Page 12: Members in Action

Page 14: ECO Bulletin Board

## [ECO AmeriCorps](#)

1 National Life Drive,  
Montpelier, VT 05602



# ECO AmeriCorps starts year with service project



Fresh from their orientation, ECO AmeriCorps members celebrated the 23rd National Public Lands Day by helping the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks, & Recreation in its ongoing efforts to remove

invasive plants from Lake St. Catherine State Park in Poultney.

With loppers and hand saws in hand, ECO members and program staffed helped remove thick infestations of buckthorn, honeysuckle, and amur maple.

National Public Lands Day is the nation's largest, single-day volunteer event for public lands, bringing together hundreds, if not thousands, of individual and organizational volunteers to help restore the nation's public lands. This is a call that ECO members were happy to answer and come together in order to get things done.



## AmeriCorps welcomes one millionth member



On Friday, October 7<sup>th</sup>, AmeriCorps members from around the country gathered for the 2016 Corporation for National & Community Service's (CNCS) AmeriCorps swearing-in ceremony.

This is an annual event where serving AmeriCorps members are officially sworn in. The launch was an historic day for AmeriCorps as it welcomed its one millionth member since its inception in 1993.

To mark this special occasion, CNCS collaborated with NASA for the launch ceremony and to administer the first AmeriCorps pledge from space.

ECO AmeriCorps members met at the Statehouse in Montpelier with other AmeriCorps members serving in Vermont to watch a live streaming of the national launch being held at NASA's headquarters in Washington D.C.

The national launch consisted of former and current AmeriCorps members sharing emotional stories from their service as well as speeches from prominent figures in government and the non-profit world.

The live feed concluded by transferring up to the International Space Station where Dr. Kathleen Rubins administered the AmeriCorps pledge while floating in air.

## *SerVermont Hosts Annual Fall Conference*

In November, SerVermont hosted its annual AmeriCorps Fall Professional Development Conference at the [Stoweflake Resort](#) in Stowe, Vermont. This annual two-day conference serves as a gathering point for members serving with various AmeriCorps programs throughout the State of Vermont.

The conference included opportunities for AmeriCorps members to network, attend workshops, receive American Red Cross Training in emergency shelter management, and attend sessions with guest speakers. This year's conference had over ninety AmeriCorps members in attendance.

ECO Members all reported that through attending the conference they felt better connected with their fellow members and that they had acquired additional tools to make the remainder of their service successful.

## ECO AmeriCorps Holds Fall Regional Gatherings

In late October, the ECO AmeriCorps Program held its first regional gatherings. These gatherings are an opportunity to bring members together to reflect on their year of service thus far.

The Central/Southern Region brought together members serving in Brattleboro, Ascutney, Middlebury, Waitsfield, and Montpelier. Members gathered in the City of Montpelier's picturesque [Hubbard Park](#) for a challenging team building exercise to and compete in a friendly pumpkin carving contest.

The winners of the carving contest were Marissa Ng and Emily Markstein, who were awarded AmeriCorps styled buffs for their creativity.

The following week, the ECO Members serving in the Northern Region gathered at the [Lake Champlain Basin Program's](#) office in Grand Isle. Members in the Northern Region came from East Charleston, Newport, Morristown, Franklin, St. Albans and Burlington.

These members also spent their day putting their teamwork to the test. Members were then taken on a tour around Isle LaMotte and South Hero to learn about Vermont's exciting geological past firsthand.

Members from both regions were excited to reconnect with one another and share stories of their initial months of service.



*ECO Members in the Central Region work together to overcome a challenging teambuilding exercise.*



*Program Director, Carey Hengstenberg, explains the geology of Lessor's Quarry to ECO Members Shannon Choquette, Lindsay Cotnoir and ECO Program Coordinator, Reuben Allen.*

## ECO members attend Vermont Monitoring Cooperative conference

Friday, December 2<sup>nd</sup>, marked the 26<sup>th</sup> annual [Vermont Monitoring Cooperative](#) (VMC) Conference. The theme for this year's conference was Healthy Forests, Healthy Watersheds.

Held at the University of Vermont's Davis Center, the conference is to facilitate opportunities to exchange ideas, and to expand collaboration with regards to forest ecosystem management and monitoring throughout New England.

Thanks to UVM's VMC Program Coordinator, Jim Duncan, ECO members were given the opportunity to attend this year's conference at no charge. Sixteen of our members eagerly took advantage of this opportunity.

While attending the conference, members sat in on informative panel discussions, listened to stimulating presentations, and contributed in a variety of working group

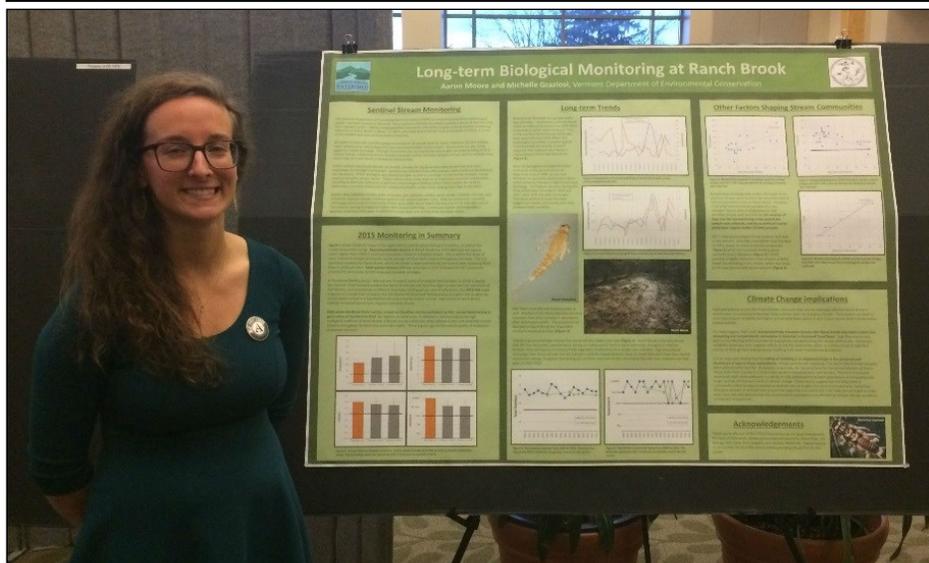
sessions. At the end of the day, members gathered to attend the closing poster session and social hour.

During this time ECO Member, Michelle Graziosi, presented her findings on "long-term biological monitoring of Ranch Brook, Stowe, Vermont" that she has conducted in her service with the [DEC Biomonitoring & Aquatic Studies Lab](#).



**Left:** ECO Members gather for the Vermont Monitoring Cooperative Conference. Pictured left-right: Andrew Nguyen, James Young, Andrew Donahue, Stephi Drago, Lindsay Cotnoir, Michelle Graziosi, Bonnie Woodford, Marissa Ng, Joe Bondi, Zack Simpson, Emily Markstein, Joshua Klavens, Annie Schatz, Trevor Banister, Brodie Haenke.

**Below:** Michelle Graziosi presents on her service with the Vermont Biomonitoring & Aquatic Studies Lab.



### *Did you know...*

The State of Vermont is ranked 4<sup>th</sup> in the nation for producing AmeriCorps members per capita.

# Member Highlight: Thomas Bryce



*Thomas Bryce  
Outreach & Project Coordinator  
Friends of Northern Lake  
Champlain*

I knew I wanted to stay in -state after graduating from the University of Vermont, falling in love with the pristine Vermont landscape after spending countless hours in rivers and streams for my thesis work.

Eventually, I chose to serve a year with ECO AmeriCorps, as I thought it would be an incredible opportunity to meet people in the environmental sector, and more importantly with an end goal to acquire extensive knowledge in watershed protection and ecosystem restoration.

Through my service site in St. Albans, The Friends of Northern Lake Champlain (a nonprofit watershed management organization working towards cleaner water in the northern lake region), I've been fortunate from

the start to take a big role in some of the major projects ongoing in the organization, ranging from water sampling to tree plantings and river cleanups, education and outreach to the community, and green infrastructure projects.

First, I was acquainted with our water-sampling program, which is in collaboration with the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation, Watershed Mgt. Division (Lakes & Ponds Program). Much of my time sampling is along the Rock River in Highgate Center, adjacent to much of the farmland in the area.

This watershed is impaired with excess sediment and nutrients, and my role is to be out in the field to conduct bi-weekly sampling as well as to sample during high-flow storm events (which stir up pollutants and sediment on a higher scale). With these samples we test for Total Phosphorous, Total Filtered/Digested Phosphorous, and Total Suspended Solids, which all contribute to pollution and algal blooms in Lake Champlain.

This fieldwork has been incredibly fun and rewarding, and with all the rain we have received in the region this Fall, it has kept me busy.

Second, I've been spending much of my time trying to implement a rain garden project in St. Albans City. With

the Friends of Northern Lake Champlain, we are proposing to install rain gardens within the city limits to mitigate nonpoint source pollution from stormwater.

The project will cover the siting, design, and installation of up to 4 rain gardens and will include a qualitative analysis of up to 4 different entrance design alternatives that could include: water bars, curb cuts, curb cuts with indentations, and pavement milling to direct water.

The most challenging parts in its initial phase are site selection (this includes determining problematic areas, estimating the amount of water that the rain garden would treat, i.e. maximizing the amount acres of treated runoff in the various locations) and especially achieving landowner willingness to host a rain garden in their front yard and the ability to help with maintenance.

I've been developing a 10 -year Operations & Maintenance plan to put landowners more at ease and understand what kind of responsibilities it takes to operate this type of green infrastructure, and hopefully to change their behavioral attitudes towards making positive efforts for the health of the Lake Champlain Basin.

It is hoped that these gardens will be in the ground as of early summer, of 2017.

# Member Highlight: Bonnie Woodford

We are just about three months into this year's ECO service. There has been lots of learning and progress that has been made.

For me, serving with the Vermont Urban and Community Forestry (VT UCF) program has been busy learning about trees and their role in urban environments. I started off my service reviewing the program's website, reading every page while editing, making any updates I could, and building a document of changes that needed to be made. The review of the website gave me a great overview of the program and all that they do.

I assisted one of my colleagues in the program with public tree inventories in two towns. The tree inventories helped me start to learn tree identification and develop a deeper appreciation for town trees. After the tree inventories had been completed, the data was compiled into a spread sheet which was processed, where it can be used to look at tree species, size, health distributions, and more.

I've taken the lead revising an older inventory of Middlebury's public trees after new data had been collected. With the raw Middlebury data I then made four graphs showing; general, species, diameter at breast height, and tree condition. I also made several maps with the data, showing important information for the town to

utilize in the future, which included tree condition, trees that needed to be monitored, and ash trees for use in emerald ash borer [preparation](#) .

Now that the inventories are done I have started some new projects; one I am really excited about is revamping the Vermont Big Tree program. I am at the very beginning stages of the project and has put together questions, with the help of the VT UCF team, for other states'

Big Tree programs.

I am planning to remeasure the current champion trees in the spring and summer of 2017, which would also include getting photos of the trees. In the meantime, I am working on the background aspects including planning and figuring out coordination of running the program, and working on outreach material to spread the love and importance of Big Trees to Vermont communities.



*Bonnie Woodford  
Education Outreach & Technical Assistance Coordinator  
Urban Community Forestry Program*

# Member Highlight: Billy Ernest



*Billy Ernest  
Outreach Coordinator  
Windham County Solid Waste  
Management District*

Going into AmeriCorps I wanted to gain some semblance of educational experience. Serving at a Solid Waste Management Entity (SWME) I was a little skeptical about these opportunities. However, I never would have guessed that the world of waste included such a plethora of outreach avenues.

My principal effort focuses on decreasing the amount of food waste in Southern Vermont. This raises a need for education on the Universal Recycling Law (Act 148), food saving tips, composting methods and

services... the list continues. I have had the opportunity to relay these messages to multiple demographics of people.

In early November I was treated to the opportunity of facilitating a program for the Newbrook Elementary's annual Farm & Field day (see photo). Myself and the program coordinator for the Windham Solid Waste Management District (WSWMD) decided to run "recycling relay races." The students and I discussed which materials were compostable and recyclable. They were then put to showing their knowledge through a little activity I like to call the "running of the recyclabulls." Their energy was rejuvenating, and their understanding of the material was refreshing.

The next week I expanded these interests into an independent service project with the Bonnyvale Environmental Education Center (BEEC) (see photo). During days that elementary/middle school students typically have time off BEEC holds nature days that allow the youth to explore their natural World. The free-form activity run day was different from the structure of the relay races, but it only supported the benefits of exploring a child's surrounding. Truly, children are the quickest to learn in many instances.

My most recent project

has included the development of a business outreach model to assist local restaurants with their recycling and composting endeavors. I have met with key stakeholders in the Southern Vermont food industry to construct a workshop on this subject. On-site visits have started to happen and we're in the process of developing technical assistance to make composting a reality for many local hotspots. When the project is complete we'll have assisted an upwards of 80 businesses through this outreach.

So, needless to continue saying, AmeriCorps is giving me opportunities I never would have dreamed possible until now. As a person looking to enter the field of non-formal outdoor education for adolescents, these experiences are continuing to mold and build upon my professional skills. For that, I am thankful.

## *Did you know...*

Vermont was recently recognized by the Corporation for National and Community Service for the nation's 8th highest volunteer rate. 33.1% of Vermont residents volunteer.

# Member Highlight: Madeline Cotter

My name is Madeline Cotter and this is my second year as an ECO AmeriCorps member. During my first service term, I served in the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation's Clean Water Initiative Program as a Communications Specialist.

For the 2016-2017 term, I am serving at the Intervale Conservation Nursery at the Intervale Center in Burlington as a Conservation Nursery Assistant and Watershed Steward.

The Intervale Conservation Nursery (ICN) grows over 40 species of native, locally sourced trees and shrubs for conservation projects throughout Vermont.

Since starting my service on September 19, 2016, the Intervale Conservation Nursery has become my second home. Each day is different, which keeps things interesting. During my first few weeks at the nursery I helped transplant 3,000 trees from tube stock into our production field. Transplanting trees is no small feat. Using a dibbler, a wooden stick that pokes holes in the ground, we line up three rows of transplants in one bed. You can fit anywhere from 800-1000 transplants in a bed. After transplanting trees there is still plenty of work to be done. Keeping weed pressure down is a constant battle in our field. We use a wheel hoe, circle hoe, stirrup hoe, and hand-weeding to keep our trees out of the weeds.

Besides transplanting baby trees and taking care of them, I spend a fair amount of time working with volunteers. Over the course of a year we'll have 15-20 corporate groups and many individual volunteers, help us in our fields or with planting projects. Spending

time with people who don't normally get their hands dirty is a great learning experience, for myself and for them. Building relationships with volunteers makes them want to come back and help again, and it makes the day enjoyable.

We recently completed a planting project in Stowe that combined planting trees and working with volunteers. After building 5000' of fascines (which are bundles of sticks used in strengthening the sides of embankments) over the course of a week, we planted them along the

West Branch of the Little River. We spent six days planting at the site digging trenches to install the fascines and digging holes to plant bareroot trees. On the final day of planting, a group from Dealer.Com helped us plant 100 bareroot trees and 50 treepots to complete the project.

I am lucky to be serving at such an amazing site. Every day, the Intervale Conservation Nursery makes a direct impact on the land, and I am thankful I get to be a part of that for the next year.



*Madeline Cotter  
Conservation Nursery Assistant & Watershed Steward  
Intervale Center*

## *Did You Know...*

The State of Vermont was recently ranked by CNCS as the #1 state in the nation for producing the most Peace Corps volunteers.

## Member Highlight: Shannon Choquette



So far during my service, I have had the fortune of focusing on community outreach and education throughout the Lamoille county.

I have interacted with over 300 students, community members and business owners/employees to increase awareness about Vermont's Universal Recycling and Composting Law.

I have enjoyed the opportunity to make progress towards my Master Composter certification, which requires the completion of an online course and 20 volunteer hours of education and outreach. Through my service, it has been

easy to find opportunities to get volunteer hours, so I hope to complete the certification by the end of the AmeriCorps year.

The photo on the left is of me teaching one of the Master Composter lessons to nine local Jeffersonville residents, two of which were students with many great questions.

Our waste audits focus on the importance of diverting recyclable and organic material from Vermont's one landfill. These students are motivated to make the right choices about recycling and composting, and they now have the knowledge to make the right choices.



*Shannon Choquette, Solid Waste Implementation Plan Assistant with the Lamoille Regional Solid Waste Management District, conducts a waste audit with Mountain River School students in Stowe.*

### *Vermont volunteer stats in 2015...*

- 160,020 residents volunteered
- 20.1 million volunteer hours served
- 37.1 volunteer hours served per capita
- \$451 million in services contributed

# ECO AmeriCorps member helps LRSWMD achieve its goals



**By: Elly Ventura, LRSWMD Outreach & Communications Coordinator**

When the Lamoille Regional Solid Waste Management District (LRSWMD) received word this summer that we had been approved to share and ECO AmeriCorps member with the Northeast Kingdom Solid Waste District – dancing ensued! When thinking about this opportunity during the application process, it was uncertain that there would be enough projects to fill 37 hours a week; because of that this position is unique in that it is shared between two solid waste management districts. Both Districts have a small number of employees so this opportunity expands the outreach potential and helps increase access of services to District members.

The Universal Recycling & Composting law unanimously passed the Vermont legislature in 2012 as an unfunded mandate. The goal of the law is to educate Vermonters about the value of resources and move away from the idea of “waste.” The first step to reduce what is currently being sent to the landfill and the success of it

hinges on the education of and outreach to the public. Anyone who does outreach knows that one-on-one interactions are the most effective way to engage and educate people, and anyone who manages a budget knows that this is a resource intensive task.

Shannon Choquette has been serving with us for three months and we couldn't be happier. Shannon's willingness to learn the in's and out's of sustainable materials management has been most impressive. She has quickly absorbed the knowledge in a way to turn it back out as informative and effective communication with LRSWMD members. Having the ECO AmeriCorps position here has extended the resources of the LRSWMD allowing a more frequent and wide-spread educational campaign to occur while fitting into our existing budget.

There have been no shortage of opportunities for Shannon and 37 hours a week is never a challenge! The LRSWMD Outreach Team has doubled with an ECO AmeriCorps position and we have been busy - from compost to film plastics, medical waste to worms!

Outreach and education has touched on all of these and more. LRSWMD schools have enjoyed waste audits, composting presentations, upcycled crafts and recycling lessons. Hundreds of customers using the LRSWMD Transfer Stations have had the opportunity to engage in conversations about their materials management practices and have their recycling and Act 148 questions answered directly. This engagement at the transfer station is something that specifically would not be possible without an ECO AmeriCorps member serving with us.

There have been many benefits to the LRSWMD with the ECO AmeriCorps position provided in conjunction with the Department of Environmental Conservation. This position has increased the comprehensiveness of existing programs and has created new programs that were not possible before. We very much appreciate the contributions Shannon has already made to the LRSWMD and are anxious to see what she leaves behind for us to continue as her legacy.



*ECO member Shannon Choquette and her site supervisor Elly Ventura, Outreach and Communications Coordinator for the Lamoille Regional Solid Waste Management District prepare to do a Sustainable Solutions Business Program waste audit with Carolyn Grodinsky at Butler's Pantry in Stowe, VT.*

# ECO AmeriCorps expands Intervale Center's ability to 'get things done'



**By: Mike Ingalls, Intervale Center Nursery Manager**

The Intervale Center is a nonprofit organization in Burlington, Vermont. Our mission is to strengthen community food systems. Since 1988, we've been dedicated to improving farm viability, promoting sustainable land use and engaging our community in the food system. We are stewards of 350 acres of bottomland along the Winooski River.

The Intervale Conservation Nursery (ICN) was founded in 2002 and is dedicated to growing native, locally sourced trees and shrubs for conservation projects throughout Vermont. The 7-acre production field supports 40 different native Vermont tree species.

ICN provides bare root, tube stock and container trees and shrubs for conservation projects throughout Vermont. Our plants are grown in an ecologically sound manner without the use of synthetic herbicides or pesticides. ICN is

the only bare root nursery that offers plants, technical assistance and comprehensive planting services. The nursery has a full-time staff of two, with seasonal staff coming on during the spring and fall. The nursery is also supported by individual volunteers and volunteer groups that help throughout the year.

For the first time the Intervale Conservation Nursery has an ECO AmeriCorps member serving at the site. Madeline Cotter is serving as a Nursery Field Assistant and Watershed Steward.

Adding Maddie to the Conservation Nursery team increases the capacity of the nursery to get things done. Maddie helps with seed collection, harvest, planting projects, general field maintenance, equipment maintenance, and volunteer management. Since starting at the Nursery in September she has helped transplant 2,000 trees into the nursery field, as well as harvest and package 4,000 trees that were planted in different watersheds across Vermont this fall.

"The Intervale Nursery has been striving to become a valuable resource for our state in providing Native plants and planting services for water quality issues. We value our mission and try to work with anyone and everyone who is planting, restoring, enhancing or

establishing a riparian buffer. By adding more capacity to the nursery with an AmeriCorps member we will be able to supply more quality trees and services needed in the coming year," says Mike Ingalls the Nursery Manager.

"Maddie has immediately proved to be a huge addition to the Intervale Center's mission of organizing and educating volunteers about the connection between healthy farms, land and people. She has already added much needed capacity in terms of hosting additional volunteer groups at the nursery and at community tree plantings. Her calm, cheerful, and welcoming disposition are highly appreciated by staff and volunteers alike. We are beyond pleased that Maddie has been selected for a year of ECO AmeriCorps service at the Intervale Conservation Nursery," says Seth Gillim Assistant Nursery Manager.

"Before joining the Conservation Nursery I didn't have a lot of experience with trees, but after three months of service I have improved my tree identification a lot" says Maddie. "I had not realized the amount of work it takes to grow trees from seed to stem. Just two extra hands make a huge difference in how much gets done in a day."

# ECO Members in action



*ECO Member Annie Schatz researching the effectiveness of floating treatment wetland by collecting root samples for analysis.*



*ECO Member Carlie Wright presenting on Vermont's Universal Recycling Act to middle school students.*

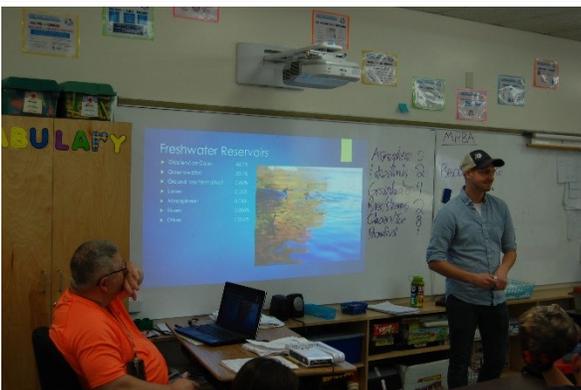


*Tree Planting with Missisquoi River Basin Association (MRBA).*

*ECO AmeriCorps (left to right) – Lindsay Cotnoir, Josh Klavens, Shannon Choquette, Thomas Bryce, Brodie Haenke.*



*Team Leaders from Vermont's AmeriCorps programs meet to collaborate on upcoming events.*



*ECO AmeriCorps member, Brodie Haenke presents to middle school students at Troy School in Troy, Vermont.*



*ECO Members Dominic Brennan and Marissa Ng enjoy the view while out on Otter Creek with Vermont's Department of Fish and Wildlife.*

# ECO Members in action



*ECO AmeriCorps Member Andrew Donahue helps residents in Barre, Vermont with their recycling.*



*ECO Members Chris Yurek and Michelle Graziosi serving together down in the Connecticut River Watershed.*



*ECO Members (from left) Thomas Bryce, Brodie Haenke, Stephi Drago, and Dom Brennan play a game of Scrabble during a breakout session at the SerVermont Conference.*



*AmeriCorps Members give the AmeriCorps Pledge while being sworn-in during the National Launch event.*



*ECO Member Emily Markstein receives training to safely and proficiently use chainsaw equipment while serving at Hubbard Park in Montpelier.*



*Clarice Cutler poses with two curious cows while out visiting Bedrock Farm in Georgia, Vermont.*

# The ECO AmeriCorps Bulletin Board

## Upcoming Important Dates

January 16<sup>th</sup> – MLK Day Service Project  
 January 27<sup>th</sup> – All-day ECO Training  
 February 24<sup>th</sup> – Winter Gathering  
 March 5<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> – AmeriCorps Week  
 March 10<sup>th</sup> – Central Region Gathering  
 March 17<sup>th</sup> – Northern Region Gathering  
 March 31<sup>st</sup> – All-Day ECO Training  
 \*April 4<sup>th</sup> – Mayor's Day  
 April 22<sup>nd</sup> – Earth Day Service Project  
 April 23<sup>rd</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> – Volunteer Appreciation week  
 April 28<sup>th</sup> – All-Day ECO Training  
 May 6<sup>th</sup> – Vermont Green Up Day  
 \*May 16<sup>th</sup>/17<sup>th</sup> SerVermont Conference  
 June 3<sup>rd</sup> – National Trails Day  
 June 20<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> – Overnight ECO Training  
 \*July 28<sup>th</sup> – All-Day ECO Training  
 August 11<sup>th</sup> – End of year celebration

\*denotes tentative dates

## 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter Accomplishments

10,868 Total hours served  
 8,266 Hours of direct service. Service that directly effects Vermont water bodies, landscapes, or citizens.  
 3.036 Miles of rivers and streams improved  
 4.5 Acres of public land improved\*  
 976 Vermonters educated  
 64 Vermonters reporting an intention to change their behavior as a result of ECO AmeriCorps programming.  
 139 Community volunteers organized.  
 335 Community volunteer hours logged

\* An additional 7.5 acres of private farmland located on bank of Connecticut River treated and improved.

## Accepting 2017 Applications Soon!

The ECO AmeriCorps program will be starting its recruitment campaign for its 2017-2018 in late February. Application instructions are available on our website - [www.ecoamericorps.org](http://www.ecoamericorps.org).

If you know of an individual who might be interested in serving and benefiting from our program, please reach out to them and direct them to our above-mentioned website. We are also happy to answer any questions that prospective members may have regarding our program and/or AmeriCorps in general.

## We need your help!

Dear Reader,

Are you aware of an upcoming event, conference or training opportunity? Our members would love to know about it! Many of our members are newcomers to the State of Vermont and are excited to learn how they can further immerse themselves and experience what Vermont has to offer. If you know of an event you believe would benefit our members, please contact either Team Leader [Zack Simpson](#) or ECO AmeriCorps Program Coordinator [Reuben Allen](#).

Thank you!

# Spring 2017 Newsletter



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## ECO AmeriCorps

1 National Life Drive,  
Montpelier, VT 05602



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## ECO AmeriCorps kicks off 2017 with MLK Service Day



Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. once said, "Life's most persistent and urgent question is: 'What are you doing for others?'"

In honor of these words and Dr. King's legacy, AmeriCorps members from across the United States answer that question by serving in a manner that helps empower and strengthen their local communities.

For their part, on January 16th, ECO AmeriCorps Members served at the ReSource Center in Burlington. This facility prevents tons of material from ending up in Vermont's landfill while

providing essentials to families and individuals in crisis.



*ECO Member Jimmy helps construct new shelving units.*

## Recognizing service efforts during AmeriCorps Week

# *It's AmeriCorps Week!*



March 4 to March 11

AmeriCorps Week is an annual week long event put on by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) to promote and thank serving AmeriCorps members and AmeriCorps alumni for their service. Held this year on March 4th and running through March 11th, individuals, programs, and organizations across the United States put on events and social media campaigns to honor and celebrate the contributions that 80,000 members have made to their communities and the service given by more than 1 million AmeriCorps alumni.

AmeriCorps Week is also a time when AmeriCorps programs across the country spread awareness of national service and the benefit it has on American communities through the efforts of their serving members.

To assist in this effort, ECO AmeriCorps led a social media campaign highlighting the efforts of members past and present by running themes for each day of the week. Through these efforts, the wonderful efforts of our members was noticed by a variety of agencies and individuals.

## *SerVermont Preps for Spring Conference*

In May, SerVermont is hosting its annual AmeriCorps Spring Professional Development Conference at the [Common Ground Center](#) in Starksboro, Vermont. This annual two-day conference will serve as a second gathering point for members serving with various AmeriCorps programs throughout the State of Vermont.

As with the fall conference, the spring conference will include opportunities for AmeriCorps members to network, attend workshops, and attend sessions with guest speakers. Many of these workshops and sessions will be geared towards helping AmeriCorps members prepare for their life after their respective service terms end.

# Recognizing service efforts during AmeriCorps Week



*AmeriCorps members serving in the Burlington area gather at Burlington City Hall to meet with Mayor Miro Weinberger.*



*AmeriCorps members serving in Central Vermont gather at Montpelier City Hall to meet with Mayor John Hollar.*

On Tuesday, April 4th 2017, more than 4,520 mayors and county officials representing 194 million citizens from across the country came out to recognize the efforts of national service in their communities. This annual event known as “Mayor and County Recognition Day for National Service” began five years ago as a way for mayors and county officials to acknowledge the impact of national service and thank those who serve within their communities.

On April 3rd and 4th, ECO members from across the State of Vermont gathered at the City Halls of Montpelier, Burlington, and St. Albans to meet with their respective mayors and discuss how their service has impacted their communities as well as how national service has affected them.

ECO Members Dom, Annie, Stephi, Joe, and Zack also gathered on the morning of the 4th to remove dog waste from Burlington’s Roosevelt Park for a “April Stool’s Day” event that was put on by the Lake Champlain Committee.



*ECO Members Brodie and Thomas (left to right) meet with St. Albans Mayor, Elizabeth Gamache.*



*ECO Members Dom, Annie, Stephi, & Joe assist Lake Champlain Committee in removing pet waste from Roosevelt Park.*

## ECO AmeriCorps holds regional spring gatherings

In mid-March, the ECO AmeriCorps Program held its second regional gatherings. These gatherings were an opportunity for members network with one another while learning about the State of Vermont's natural history as well as learn about other existing needs within the communities they serve.

Members serving in the Central and Southern Region met in the City of Montpelier to learn about the history of Vermont. Throughout the day they toured Vermont's Statehouse, the [Vermont Historic Society Museum](#), and concluded their day with a trek up to Hubbard Park's stone tower.

The following week, ECO members serving in the Northern Region gathered at the City of Burlington's [Fletcher Free Library](#) for a team building exercise and lunch before they tackled a service project with the [Chittenden County Emergency Food Shelf](#).

While at the food shelf, members served in a variety of ways. From unloading food trucks to stocking food shelves and preparing premade meals, members of the Northern Region provided a valuable service while learning about the needs of others within Chittenden County.

After their service, several members expressed interest in returning to the food shelf to earn independent service hours.



*ECO Members in the Central Region paid a visit to the Hubbard Park Tower after touring Vermont's State House and Historic Museum in Montpelier.*



*ECO Members in the Northern Region pose for a photo after serving with the Chittenden County Emergency Food Shelf.*

### **AmeriCorps in Vermont by the numbers**

- ▶ More than 5,100 members have provided more than 7.6 million hours of service since 1994.
- ▶ AmeriCorps members across Vermont have earned more than \$17.9 million in education awards since 1994.
- ▶ For the 2016-17 service year, the Corporation for National & Community Service has committed more than \$6.2 million to Vermont through national service and social innovation initiatives.

## Members visit water treatment facilities

The December ECO training was jam-packed full of exciting learning opportunities for the members. Beginning at the DEC's Annex building in Montpelier, members attended a presentation on the Lake Champlain TMDL by EPA Environmental Protections Specialist Eric Perkins, who was the lead author for the 2016 Lake Champlain TMDL. After a quick break, members then learned about communicating natural resource issues with volunteers in the municipal land use planning process from Vermont Fish and Wildlife's Jens Hilke.

Following a quick lunch

that included a competitive white elephant gift exchange, members donned their winter clothing and headed outside for a tour of the Montpelier Water Resource Recovery Facility. In their tour, members learned about the numerous steps (some more pungent than others) involved in process of treating wastewater. Their tour of the recovery facility complete, members jumped into their vehicles and headed to the Berlin Drinking Water Treatment Facility to learn how water is treated prior to consumption.

Members enjoyed their tours and learning how drinking and waste water is treated.



*An employee of the Berlin Drinking Water Treatment Facility leads a tour for the ECO members.*

## ECO AmeriCorps members learn about fluvial dynamics

In early January, ECO members participated in a day of training with a dual focus.

The morning portion of the training provided members with the exciting opportunity to meet with DEC River Scientist Staci Pomeroy and Environmental Scientist Amy Picotte, and learn about stream tables through their interactive river process simulator and fun group activity.

In the afternoon portion of the training, members participated in a Gallup StrengthsFinder assessment facilitated by DEC Lakes & Ponds Program Manager Perry Thomas. This exercise helped members identify their personal strengths and understand how to better utilize these strengths and the strengths of others in their service.



*ECO Members (left to right): Shannon, Michelle, Billy, Andrew D., Chris, Andrew N., Trevor, Brodie, Stephi, and Lindsay learn about stream dynamics from DEC River Scientist Staci Pomeroy.*

## Calvin Coolidge and the impacts of TS Irene

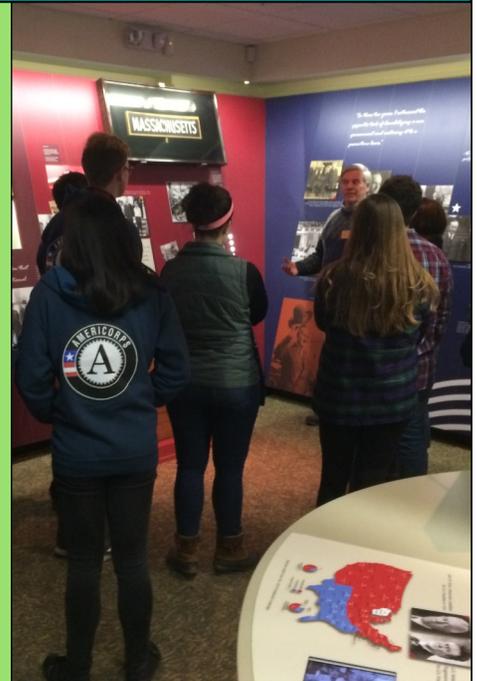
In February, ECO members made the trip to Plymouth to visit the Calvin Coolidge State Historic Site. There they were taken on an guided tour by Regional Site Administrator Bill Jenney, and learned about the life of America's 30th president, Vermont native, Calvin Coolidge.

As one of the many local communities directly affected by Tropical Storm Irene back in August of 2011, Plymouth was an ideal location for members to learn about the impacts of large storms like Irene.

Sitting down to watch a locally produced documentary, members learned not only of the devastation caused by this tropical storm, but also of the resiliency shown by the local residents in overcoming the aftermath of it.

After the documentary, members met with DEC Lakes & Ponds Program Manager Perry Thomas who presented on the water quality and the public policy implications of Tropical Storm Irene and similar large- scale disasters.

Members enjoyed seeing a unique part of Vermont's history and learning how communities respond to disasters.



*Coolidge Historic Site Administrator Bill Jenny leads members on a tour.*

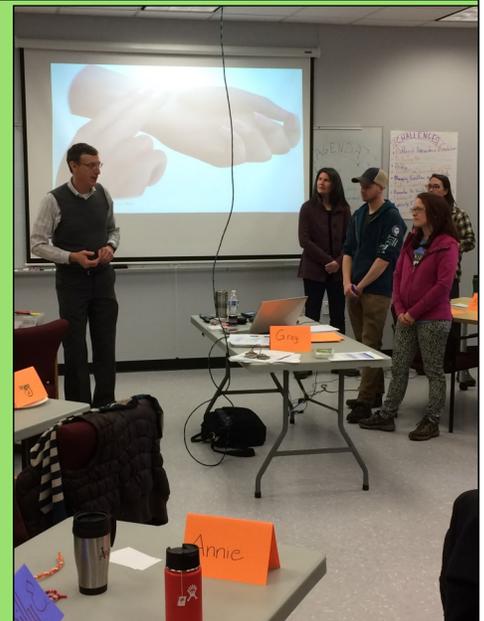
## Generational diversity training bridges the gap

In March, ECO AmeriCorps members returned to the DEC's Annex building in Montpelier to meet with Greg Hessel of ReGeneration Resources.

A consultant specializing in helping organizations grow, change, and manage conflict, Greg facilitated a presentation on generational diversity in the workplace. This session was designed to help the ECO members learn about how different generations have different communication styles, workplace expectations, approach work differently, use and view technology differently, etc. The goal of this training was for the members to ultimately gain a better

understanding and appreciation of these differences to result in improved workplace communication and success in their service and in their life after ECO AmeriCorps. Several site supervisors also attended this training to engage members and provided additional, diverse perspectives.

Members enjoyed the opportunity to discuss challenges that have encountered as well as some of the negative stereotypes they feel are placed on them for being part of the "Millennial Generation." Members expressed that through this training, they better understand the different communication styles, expectations and behaviors of individuals from across the generational spectrum.



*Greg Hessel of ReGeneration Resources helps members and their supervisors understand and manage expectations across different generations.*

## Stephi develops GIS capabilities serving with the NRCS



*Stephi Drago poses for a photo while out surveying an easement.*

ECO AmeriCorps has given me countless opportunities to gain important career experiences in agriculture and water resource management, while helping me cultivate a love of service.

In college, my academic interests focused on agricultural impacts on water quality. Serving with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Colchester, has allowed me to explore those interests and develop professional skills.

I have had the chance to work heavily with GIS and develop my cartographic skills by generating maps and ArcGIS layers in support of NRCS conservation efforts on private lands.

My position has helped me discover my love for map making, and the strong role I want it to play in my career. Not only have I had the chance to explore my passion for cartography and geospatial analysis, but I have also been able to participate in many different types of field work including wetland easement monitoring, cover crop certification, tree surveys, and hazmat reviews, with more opportunities to come in the next six months.

I have been extremely satisfied with my position, and I'm grateful for the valuable career experience I have gained from ECO AmeriCorps while serving the great state of Vermont.

## ECO AmeriCorps helps Annie pursue her Ph.D. goals

My time at the Lake Champlain Sea Grant, and as a second year AmeriCorps member, has been an amazing experience.

Last year, I served in a different AmeriCorps program which was very rewarding due to the strong connections I made with the kids I tutored, but it did not allow me to grow professionally towards my goal of earning a Ph.D. in marine biology\* like my time in ECO AmeriCorps has.

Since starting this program I have been able to bolster my Geographic Information Systems (GIS) skills, which was a personal goal coming into this program.

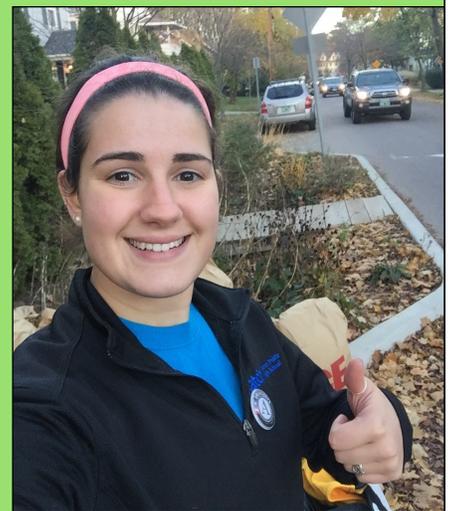
I just finished a GIS project analyzing the functionality of Green Stormwater Infrastructure (GSI) projects funded through grants from the Department of Environmental Conservation.

The maps I created in GIS were used to compare functionality scores between projects and were compiled into a report that was shared with the specific granting program.

Because of this report, several of the projects that were not there when we went to assess them are now going to be rebuilt.

It is experiences like these that have made me truly appreciate my time in the ECO AmeriCorps program.

*\*Since writing her article for this newsletter, Annie has been accepted at the Virginia Institute of Marine Science where she will pursue her Ph.D.*



*Annie Schatz helping to map a GSI bike tour in Burlington.*

## Carlie's service helps with her professional growth

In my year of service, I am an ECO AmeriCorps member with the Addison County Solid Waste Management District (ACSWMD) in Middlebury. I am a fresh graduate from St. Lawrence University. I have spent the last six months serving with ACSWMD, learning about the recycling and trash industry and trying to figure out how those things relate to my overall career goals.

Since September, I have grown both professionally and individually. Serving in ECO AmeriCorps has allowed me to learn about office dynamics and how to interact with my colleagues in a way that I was unfamiliar with before. I have gone from a complete introvert to readily introducing myself to new people that walk through the office door. This is especially useful since my service with ACSWMD has been focused on school outreach.

A project I recently completed in February was an after school program at Vergennes Elementary School. I taught a group of kids, ranging from grades 3-6 a new lesson each week focusing on waste reduction! The kids, who were deemed "Waste Warriors!" made posters to hang up in their school cafeteria in order to help their friends understand where their waste goes!

Serving with kids and being a part of the education field has really helped me narrow down my future career goals and I am looking forward to serving the rest of my term with ACSWMD.



*Carlie Wright presents on composting and recycling to a middle school class.*

## Clarice expands her knowledge of land use patterns



The last six months serving with the Vermont Land Trust (VLT) have offered me a variety of exciting experiences across the state. I've expanded my GIS skills, my understanding of land use patterns and the role of conservation easements in Vermont and beyond, and my knowledge of forest management.

One of the goals of my term of service is to collect and review forest management plans for conserved properties. For me, the most effective way to gather the plans is to visit county foresters. The county foresters have been very generous with their time and technical assistance and have offered an impressive preview into the work of a forester and state employee.

In the picture to the left, I'm coring an Eastern Hemlock that Dan (VLT staff forester), Liz (VLT staff ecologist), and Rick (Lamoille County Forester) correctly estimated qualifies as part of an "old forest" stand. After coring the hemlock I used the Bluetooth GPS unit on my hip to delineate the old hemlock forest so that the stand could be enrolled as an old forest ESTA (Ecologically Significant Treatment Area) in the forest management plan update.

## Trevor's time with the NorthWoods Stewardship Center



*Trevor Banister has fun at an after school fishing program.*



*Trevor poses for a photo while removing invasive plants on National Public Lands Day last fall.*

Here at the NorthWoods Stewardship Center we have a lot of exciting projects that kick into gear when the ground begins to thaw. One of my primary projects is assisting with the NorthWoods Riparian Buffer Planting Program (NWBPP) and the NorthEast Kingdom Lakeshore Buffering Program (NEKLB). These are buffer planting programs for lakes, ponds, river, and streams in the Memphremagog Watershed.

In mid-April we will be conducting site visits at prospective properties to develop a planting plan for each individual's riparian or littoral zone. Planting begins after the planning phase is complete and typically lasts 2-4 weeks. Lastly, we revisit sites in the late summer to conduct survival studies of the trees and shrubs.

Another upcoming project that I get the honor of spearheading is a watershed health survey for Sucker Brook, one of the main tributaries of Seymour Lake. Sucker Brook is directly adjacent to the boat launch, and it has been loading the river mouth with sediment which is inhibiting larger boats from launching. The source of this excess sediment is unknown and problematic now that dredging is no longer an option. I will be walking predetermined regions of Sucker Brook to catalog potential sources and recommend installation of well-suited best management practices in these problem areas.

My third major spring project is conducting water sampling for Seymour Lake through the LaRosa Program, a volunteer water quality monitoring analytical services partnership. We will be testing for total phosphorus, total nitrogen, and total suspended sediments. The goal of this sampling is not only to collect data to see general nutrient trends, but also to sample 2 high flow events to capture the sediment traveling down Sucker Brook. It will be interesting to see how the water sampling data compares with what I see during the Sucker Brook ground-truthing.

I'm excited and ready for all the planning I've done over the winter months to come to fruition. One of the greatest things about AmeriCorps is that we get to be the boots on the ground making that direct measurable impact on the land. Planting trees and taking samples are some of the direct impacts I get to make, and I can't wait to see all those trees in the ground improving our water quality for generations to come.

## ECO member helps CVSWMD expand its outreach



**By: Cassandra Hemenway,  
CVSWMD Outreach Manager**

The Central Vermont Solid Waste Management District has been thrilled to benefit from the service of Andrew Donahue as our Eco-AmeriCorps service member this year. Andrew has been an amiable, cooperative, capable young professional in our midst. It's been wonderful to see him bring his personal style to our outreach about recycling, composting, and reducing waste. Our experience with Andrew has made it clear that we would like to continue participating in the Eco AmeriCorps program next year.

Andrew has been a key organizer of one of our largest special collections of the year, an e-waste collection on America Recycles Day, which diverted 10 tons of electronics from the landfill (See his blog post about it [here](#)). Andrew has also produced an intelligent and engaging video about electronic waste, which we will use on our website, social

media, and presentations, explaining why e-waste is hazardous, and how to properly recycle it. See his e-waste video [here](#).

Creating eye-catching signage for our Additional Recyclables Collection Center (ARCC) has made it easier for ARCC users to sort materials. Been a key leader in "Project Tote," a creative outreach project engaging schools and local artists to upcycle our broken compost totes into beautifully painted recycling bins. Andrew helped us to display the totes and engage the public in voting for a favorite on Earth Day. He is also joining one of our School Program Coordinators in displaying the totes at U-32 high school's annual "Color Run." Andrew has done astounding work as a project coordinator on this event.

Andrew is just beginning a new project assisting the organizers of the Tunbridge World's Fair to increase recycling and begin vendor composting at this year's fair. While he will have completed his year of service prior to the fair dates, he will have made an impact before the fair ever opens its doors.

The existence of the ECO AmeriCorps program has allowed CVSWMD to extend our outreach, benefiting CVSWMD residents, school children, and the general public with regular outreach and education about Vermont's Universal Recycling Law, and the benefits of reducing the waste that goes to Vermont's

only operating landfill. I can see professional growth in Andrew even in just seven months, and love how the program is so "win-win." We get the help we need to reach the public in new and engaging ways, and Andrew gets assistance with the burden of student loans while gaining professional skills.



*Andrew Donahue poses for a photo at his desk in the CVSWMD's Montpelier office.*

### Did you know...

- ▶ AmeriCorps members currently serve at more than 21,000 locations across America.
- ▶ AmeriCorps leverages more than \$1 billion in outside funding and donations every year.
- ▶ More than 1 million members have served in AmeriCorps since it began in 1994.

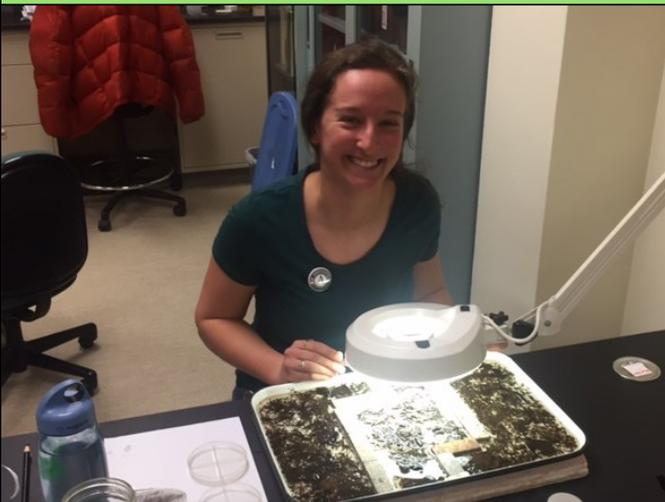
# ECO AmeriCorps members in action



ECO members Emily, Billy, and Zack pose for a pensive moment at the Vermont Historical Society Museum.



ECO member Stephi poses with a geospatial map that she created.



ECO member Michelle assists with aquatic insect studies at the DEC Biomonitoring lab.



ECO member Lindsay meets with land owners to discuss Land Treatment Plans.



ECO members learn how drinking water is treated while touring the Montpelier Water Filtration Facility.



ECO members learn about the life of President Calvin Coolidge at the Coolidge Homestead State Historic Site.

# ECO AmeriCorps members in action



ECO members Rachel, Dom, Annie and Lindsay learn about the complexities of property management in watershed areas.



ECO members Zack, Thomas, Rachel, Lindsay, Annie, and Dom volunteer with the VT Food Bank at Burlington's annual Mardi Gras parade.



ECO members Clarice and Zack mark off a riparian buffer at a farm in Barre.



ECO members Jimmy, Maddie, and Joe along with ECO Program Director Carey help load bags of food at the Chittenden Emergency Food Shelf.



ECO member Maddie at the Intervale Center prepping dogwood clippings for later planting in riparian areas.



ECO member Shannon serves to educate elementary school students on the importance of recycling and composting.

# ECO AmeriCorps Program Bulletin Board

## Upcoming Events

May 17<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> SerVermont Conference

June 3<sup>rd</sup> – National Trails Day

June 20<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> – Overnight ECO Training

July 28<sup>th</sup> – All-Day ECO Training

August 11<sup>th</sup> – End of year celebration

## 2nd Quarter Accomplishments

24,522.5 Total hours served

20,600 Hours of direct service that directly effects Vermont water bodies, landscapes, or citizens.

3,685.5 Hours of training accomplished

237 Hours of fundraising accomplished

4 Miles of rivers improved/put into use.

573 Vermonters educated on environmental stewardship

70 Vermonters reporting an intention to change their behavior as a result of training/ education

59 Volunteers supported

47 first time volunteers

12 recurring volunteers

350.5 volunteer hours served

*Do you have any service projects or training ideas?*

Are you aware of an upcoming event, conference or training opportunity? Our members would love to know about it! Many of our members are newcomers to the State of Vermont and are excited to learn how they can further immerse themselves and experience what Vermont has to offer. If you know of an event you believe would benefit our members, please contact either Team Leader [Zack Simpson](#) or ECO AmeriCorps Program Coordinator [Reuben Allen](#).



## DEC RCPP Application Checklist

- RCPP Application Submitted, Initial/Date: \_\_\_\_\_
- RCPP Applicant & Information Release Form Complete, Initial/Date: \_\_\_\_\_
- RCPP Applicant & Information Release Form Sent to DEC, Initial/Date: \_\_\_\_\_
- VAAFM BMP Application Completed by Landowner, Initial/Date: \_\_\_\_\_
- Screening Complete, Initial/Date: \_\_\_\_\_
- Ranking Complete, Initial/Date: \_\_\_\_\_
- Engineering Letter Sent to DEC, Initial/Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Assigned Planner: \_\_\_\_\_

### **The Lake Champlain Regional Conservation Partnership Program:**

Accelerated Implementation of Agricultural & Forestry  
Conservation Practices in the Lake Champlain  
Watershed of Vermont and New York



Hello Conservation Planning Staff & Partners,

We had a great introduction to Farm Viability resources at the VACD Annual Training event last fall, when Ian Hartman from the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB) presented. We thought we would build upon that momentum, especially as many of you are finishing up working with farmers on their Nutrient Management Plans and may be transitioning into assisting them with project sign-up and development. The VHCB Farm and Forest Viability Program coordinates a network of organizations that provide farm viability resources. These include UVM Extension Farm Viability, the Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont, The Center for an Agricultural Economy, and the Intervale Center.

Through network partners, VHCB Farm and Forest Viability Program offers one-on-one, in-depth business planning, technical assistance and management coaching to Vermont farm, food and forestry enterprises in order to improve the economic viability of Vermont's working landscape. During this 2-year program, landowners and producers extensively review finances and operations to develop an individualized business plan. Please see the attached brochure; further resources and an informational video found here: <http://www.vhcb.org/Farm-Forest-Viability/> Please direct questions to Ian Hartman, [ian@vhcb.org](mailto:ian@vhcb.org), 802-828-1098.

UVM Extension Farm Viability provides farm and forest product managers with several business management education options to meet their needs. These programs provide one-on-one farm education through their team of skilled agricultural professionals. Resources offered include:

- ❖ Water Quality Business Analysis
- ❖ Enterprise Analysis
- ❖ Dairy Management Teams
- ❖ Forest Business Coaching
- ❖ Cash Flow Planning
- ❖ Business Plan Review
- ❖ Maple Business Benchmark
- ❖ Comprehensive Business Plan
- ❖ Farm Transfer/Exit Plan/Acquisition Plan

Accessing these resources can be as extensive as developing a Comprehensive Business Plan or as modest as some light cash flow planning. Please see the attached handout for further information. The UVM Extension Farm Viability website is available here: <http://blog.uvm.edu/farmvia/>. Please direct questions to Mark Cannella, [mark.cannella@uvm.edu](mailto:mark.cannella@uvm.edu), 1-866-860-1382.

NOFA-VT is a technical service provider of the Vermont Farm & Forest Viability Program. NOFA- VT provides full business planning services as well as assistance with cash flow projections and enterprise analysis to dairy, livestock, vegetable and fruit producers who are

using organic practices or transitioning to organic. In addition, conventional dairy farmers who are exploring the viability of a transition to organic production are also eligible to utilize these resources. NOFA-VT also provides one-on-one technical assistance to farmers in pasture evaluation, marketing consultation, production efficiency advice, and beyond. Please visit: [NOFA-VT Farm Business Planning Services](#) . For more information or to make a referral, contact Jen Miller, NOFA-VT Farmer Services Coordinator, [jen@nofavt.org](mailto:jen@nofavt.org), 802-434-4122.

The Intervale Center is collaborating with farmers to enhance the viability of farming in Vermont. The Intervale Center supports this initiative by working with farmers through the Vermont Farm and Forest Viability Program, with Beginning Farmer Business Planning and Coaching and through the Vermont Land Link. Further information can be found at [successonfarms@intervale.org](mailto:successonfarms@intervale.org) or call 802-660-0440 extension 116.

The Center for an Agricultural Economy, located in Hardwick, provides one-on-one business planning and technical assistance to farms and value-added producers in the Northeast Kingdom and surrounding areas. Please visit: [CAE Farm Business Advising](#). For more information, or to make a referral, please contact Daniel Keeney, [daniel@hardwickagriculture.org](mailto:daniel@hardwickagriculture.org) or 802-472-5362.

Thank you for taking the time to familiarize yourself with these resources. We look forward to broadening our collaboration and understanding of each other's programs now and into the future. Please feel free to share this information widely.

Sincerely,  
Alli

**Allison N. Compagna**  
**RCPP Project Coordinator**  
***Vermont Clean Water Initiative Program***  
1 National Life Drive, Main 2  
Montpelier, VT 05620-3522  
490-6124 / [Allison.Compagna@vermont.gov](mailto:Allison.Compagna@vermont.gov)  
[www.watershedmanagement.vermont.gov](http://www.watershedmanagement.vermont.gov)



**Our email addresses have changed** (now @vermont.gov)  
**Please update your address book!**

*To preserve, enhance, restore, and conserve Vermont's natural resources, and protect human health, for the benefit of this and future generations.*



## UVM Extension Agricultural Business Programs

*UVM Extension Farm Viability provides farm and forest products managers with several business management education options to meet their needs. These programs all provide one-on-one farm education through our team of skilled agricultural professionals. Explore the various program options to decide what is the best fit for your farm operation. Contact program staff to learn about additional group workshops and special projects.*

Subscribe to our blog to get updates on workshops and clinics.

For more information and applications go to our website at: [blog.uvm.edu/farmvia/](http://blog.uvm.edu/farmvia/)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Water Quality Business Analysis</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Forest Business Coaching</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Maple Business Benchmark</b></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Enterprise Analysis</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Cash Flow Planning</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Comprehensive Business Plan</b></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Dairy Management Teams</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Business Plan Review</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Farm Transfer/Exit Plan/Acquisition Plan</b></li> </ul>

### Water Quality Business Analysis

- Work with a business educator to analyze your options to meet conservation and regulatory compliance goals.
- Analysis will include: financial planning, strategic planning and coordination with related agencies.



### Comprehensive Business Plan

- Develop a comprehensive plan that covers all aspects of the business for 1-3 years.
- Completed plans include sections on: business goals, current situation, production decisions, management and human resources, marketing, financial analysis, implementation strategies and timelines.

### Enterprise Analysis (2-6 month planning project, generally 3-4 meetings)

- Isolate and analyze one enterprise (or proposed idea) to assess business performance
- Consider options to expand, modify or remove certain components of your business.

### Farm Transfer/Exit / Acquisition Planning

- Develop a transfer plan that respects the unique needs of farm family communication and the business goals of exiting owners and new owners.
- Completed plans include: retirement plans/estate plans for exiting owners, tax planning, legal consult, business feasibility for new owners and a process to transfer business assets and/or management over time.



### Cash Flow Planning: Crunching the Numbers

- Develop budgets for the next 1-3 years and update financial statements
- Set short term financial targets and make changes to achieve financial goals

### Dairy Management Teams

- Assemble a team of advisors to problem solve current issues facing the business.
- Facilitated group meetings address short term decisions and longer term strategies.
- Teams are led by a facilitator and often include: vet, lender, financial specialists, nutritionist or others

### Forest Business Coaching (for loggers, mills and wood products manufacturers)

- Work with a business educator to improve business management and identify key areas for growth and business development.
- Projects may include: job costing, equipment investment analysis, strategic planning and more.

### Maple Business Benchmark

- Complete a detailed cost of production analysis for your maple enterprise and use the information to advance business development.

### Contact a regional specialist for more information or to request an application

<b>Bennington:</b> Betsy Miller, <a href="mailto:betsy.miller@uvm.edu">betsy.miller@uvm.edu</a> 1-800-287-1552 (toll-free in VT)	<b>Berlin:</b> Mark Cannella, <a href="mailto:mark.cannella@uvm.edu">mark.cannella@uvm.edu</a> 1-866-860-1382 (toll-free in VT)
<b>St. Albans:</b> Tony Kitsos, <a href="mailto:tony.kitsos@uvm.edu">tony.kitsos@uvm.edu</a> 1-800-639-2130 (toll-free in VT)	<b>Berlin:</b> Kim Kayhart, <a href="mailto:Kimberly.kayhart@uvm.edu">Kimberly.kayhart@uvm.edu</a> 1-866-860-1382 (toll-free in VT)
<b>Rutland:</b> Chris Lindgren, <b>(FOREST BUSINESS)</b> <a href="mailto:christopher.lindgren@uvm.edu">christopher.lindgren@uvm.edu</a> 1-800-281-6977 (toll-free in VT)	

Visit our website for more information

<http://blog.uvm.edu/farmvia/>

**These programs are funded by the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board, Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets, USDA Risk Management Agency, Private Donors and UVM Extension**

# FARM VIABILITY



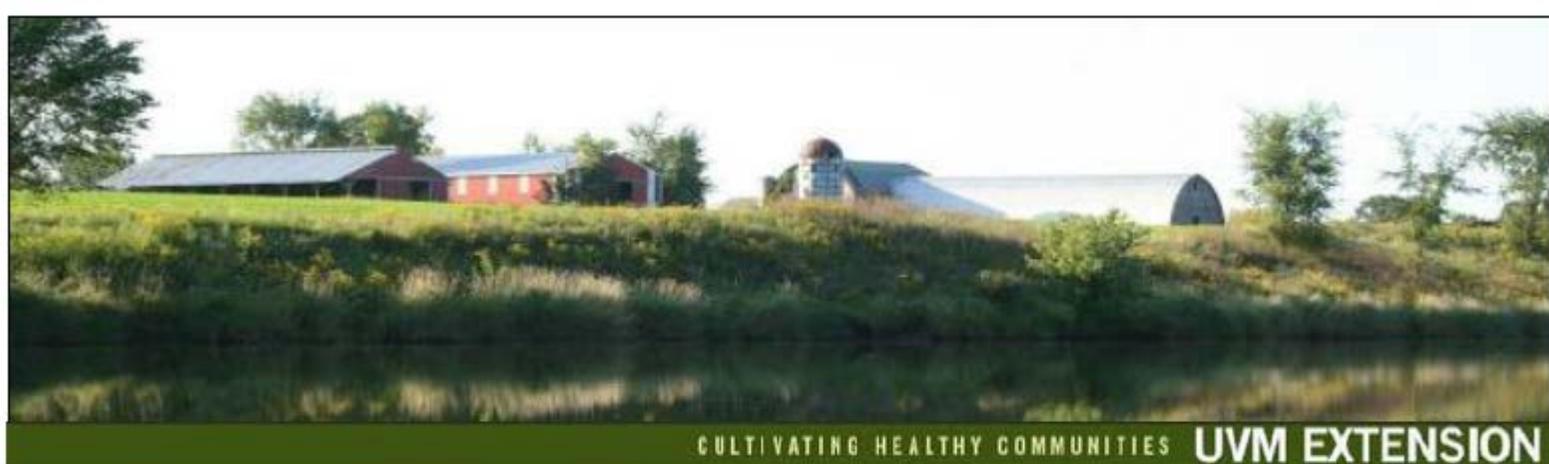
UVM Extension Farm Viability provides a suite of farm business management education programs and applied research resources. Our team of skilled, agricultural professionals offers one-on-one, small group and online learning opportunities to enhance business viability.

### *Program Options:*

- *Applied Research / Feasibility Studies*
- *Budget Clinics (by appointment)*
- *Financial Analysis or Enterprise Analysis*
- *Comprehensive Business Plan*
- *Dairy Management Teams*
- *Farm Transfer/Exit Plan*

For information and application visit our website at: <http://blog.uvm.edu/farmvia>

University of Vermont Extension, and U.S. Department of Agriculture, cooperating, offer education and employment to everyone without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or familial status.



## Water Quality Business Analysis

UVM Extension Farm Business Educators are available to work with dairy and livestock farm owners to assess and plan for business changes to meet water quality goals. In addition, owners and educators can evaluate and determine the feasibility and impact of changes facing the farm and business.

Topics for business support include:

- *Cash flow and budget analysis*
- *Assessment of new practices and investments*
- *Short/long term strategic planning*
- *Current business analysis*
- *Farm transfer/exit plan*
- *Referrals when necessary*

For information and application visit our website at: <http://blog.uvm.edu/farmvia>

University of Vermont Extension, and U.S. Department of Agriculture, cooperating, offer education and employment to everyone without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or familial status.



**Date:** May 19, 2017

**NEW YORK BULLETIN NO. 300-17-17**

**Subject:** Fiscal Year (FY) 2018 Application Cutoff Date and Press Releases for the Lake Champlain RCPP-EQIP

**Purpose:** The purpose of this bulletin is to announce the application cutoff date for FY2018 Accelerated Implementation of Agricultural and Forestry Conservation Practices in the Lake Champlain Watershed of Vermont and New York Program RCPP-EQIP and to provide a Press Release for use by local field offices and RCPP Partners.

**Expiration Date:** September 30, 2018

**Background:** The RCPP-EQIP Lake Champlain was originally rolled out in fiscal year (FY) 2017. A new signup is being offered for obligation in FY2018.

**Action Required:** NRCS and its partners have selected **September 15, 2017** as the application cutoff date for the current signup. Applications accepted after September 15, 2017 will be considered for funding in a subsequent funding round, if funds are not fully expended during the current signup.

Field offices shall utilize the attached Press Release to announce the application cutoff date through local media. The Press Release must be customized with the correct local information and distributed to the field office's local media contacts no later than **August 15, 2017**. The RCPP Partners may develop additional Press Releases but must submit any Press Releases related to the RCPP funding to the NRCS State Office Program Manager for review before sending to the media.

The attached document entitled "RCPP-EQIP- LC-Financial\_Assistance\_Program\_Deadlines" indicates the current timeline for the Lake Champlain RCPP-EQIP.

**Contacts:** Rebecca Foltasz, Program Manager, at 315-477-6508.

/S/ 5/19/17

Gregory A. Kist  
State Conservationist

**Attachments:**

Att A: RCPP-EQIP- LC\_Financial\_Assistance\_Program\_Deadlines  
Att B: FY18\_RCPP\_LC\_Press\_Release

**NY Financial Assistance Program Deadlines for FY2018**

<b>Program-Focus Area</b>	<b>Application Cutoff Date</b>	<b>AEM/ CNMPs due</b>	<b>All applications entered in Protracts, last day to mail Pending Letters</b>	<b>Eligibility Established and marked in Protracts, all application materials submitted/ Ineligible Letters Mailed</b>	<b>All Applications marked with Prioritization, Ranked, and Cost Estimates in Protracts</b>	<b>QA and Peer Reviews with all corrections made, Plans Uploaded to Protracts</b>	<b>Preapprovals</b>	<b>Preapproval Letters Mailed</b>	<b>Obligation Deadline</b>
RCPP-EQIP Lake Champlain	September 15	October 20	October 20	November 10	November 24	November 28	November 29	December 1	December 29



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT:

District Manager, Name, ###-###-####

EMAIL: [first.last@email](mailto:first.last@email)

### Essex and Washington County SWCDs and NRCS-NY Announce Application Cutoff Dates for Regional Conservation Partnership Program

**Your Town, N. Y., Date** – The Essex and Washington County SWCDs in New York State have partnered with the Vermont Association of Conservation Districts and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to offer funding the in Lake Champlain watershed through the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). RCPP uses partnerships to coordinate and target resources to address regional conservation goals.

**September 15, 2017** has been selected as the application cutoff date for targeted conservation projects through the NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) in Essex and Washington counties for Fiscal Year (FY) 2018. Participants applying to address farmstead related concerns must provide their CNMP by October 20, 2017 to be considered in this round of funding. All applications are competitive and are ranked based on locally identified resource priorities and the overall benefit to the environment.

This special funding will be used to implement practices to address localized priority resource concerns. The SWCDs and NRCS offices will work together to provide assistance to producers in the project area in developing and implementing conservation practices.

Interested farmers and landowners should contact their local NRCS office for additional information and to obtain an application.

As part of application process, all landowners will need to complete USDA eligibility requirements. To find information on EQIP Eligibility please visit:

[http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/ny/programs/financial/eqip/?cid=nrcs144p2\\_027069](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/ny/programs/financial/eqip/?cid=nrcs144p2_027069) .

If you are interested in applying for an NRCS conservation program please visit the NRCS web site for information at:

[http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/ny/programs/?cid=nrcs144p2\\_027058](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/ny/programs/?cid=nrcs144p2_027058) .

You may apply by visiting your local SWCD office, which can be located using the website: [http://www.nys-soilandwater.org/contacts/county\\_offices.html](http://www.nys-soilandwater.org/contacts/county_offices.html) or by visiting your NRCS field office, which can be located using the web site:

<http://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app?state=NY> .

USDA is an Equal Opportunity Provider, Employer, and Lender



United States Department of Agriculture

###

## **RCPP ACEP-ALE Meeting**

Date: 5 January 2017, 10AM-12PM

### AGENDA

10:00-10:10: Critical Updates

10:10-10:20: Engineering Order of Operations

10:20-10:20: Soils Waiver Memo

10:20-10:30: Cultural Resources Reviews

10:30-10:45: Outreach Letter & Further Efforts

10:45-11:00: Project Selection

11:00-12:00: Project Updates

Extra Time: Roundtable Updates

**The next ACEP-ALE Meeting will be Tuesday February 7th, 12pm-2pm directly following the RCPP Advisory Board Meeting.**

## RCPP Advisory Board & ALE Meeting Agenda

### **Board Meeting:**

- 10:00-10:20: Sign-Up Update & Outreach
- 10:20- 10:35: Budget Update & ALE Budget Discussion
- 10:35- 10:45: Engineering & Wetlands Updates
- 10:45- 10:50: Soils Waiver Update
- 10:50- 11:00: Parking Lot

### **ALE Meeting:**

- 11:00- 11:25: Project Updates & Next Steps
- 11:25- 11:40: Potential Projects with the Soils Criteria Waiver
- 11:40- 11:50: Expanding ALE Efforts- Looking to the LIS RCPP
- 11:50- 12:00: Rescheduling Next Meeting- Falls on Town Meeting Day

The next Advisory Board Meeting is Tuesday May 2, 2017 in the Ottawaquechee Room at National Life.

## RCPP Advisory Board & ALE Meeting Agenda

### **RCPP Board Meeting**

10:00-10:10am- Review of Agenda & Roundtable Introductions

10:10-10:20am- Events/Efforts Since Last Board Meeting- Roundtable from Partners

10:20- 11:00am: Overall Budget Update from Obe & Board Discussion

- EQIP Applications & Contract Approvals with Remaining Balances
  - Forestry Budget Discussion- lay out the options, group discussion & consensus on whether to amend the agreement to move EQIP funds into forestry
- Easement Applications with Remaining Balances
  - Wetlands Update & Discussion of options for match funds (still have considerable DEC wetlands funds (“match”) to spend but have used most of the ACEP-WRE funds)

11:00-11:10am- Staffing Update from VACD

11:10-11:20am- Cold Hollow to Canada RCPP Forestry Efforts & Collaboration

11:20-11:45am- Engineering Update & Discussion

11:45am-12:00pm- Parking Lot Items and/or Break

### **ACEP-ALE Meeting**

12:00pm- Discuss Montagne Project- Call in from Jon.

12:30pm- Phillip Jones Reviews the Clean Water Road Map

Other Project Updates & Timelines- Nancy & Tracy

Assigned Staff for Projects- Jeff

Review of projects for VHCB Board Meeting in June- Nancy & Tracy

***The next ALE meeting is June 6, 2017.***

***The next RCPP Advisory Board & ALE Meeting is August 1, 2017.***

## Financial Status Report (FSR)

Project: RCPP

Name: Regional Conservation Partnership Program

Award #: 68-1644-15-4

									ASAP	
	grant period	months done		required	actual	Award	Spent	Remaining		
Start	5/1/2015	5/1/2015	Federal	44.5%	4%	16,300,000	159,549	16,140,451	Remaining in FA	16,182,085
End	9/30/2019	3/31/2017	Match	55.5%	92%	20,325,483	3,863,504	16,461,979	Remaining in FSR	16,140,451
months	53	23				-		-	difference	41,634
		Total Spent	43%				Indirects			
			11%				Remaining Federal Grant		16,140,451	

grant	RCPP
section	(All)
division	(All)

make note about the 3264 double draw

Sum of Amount	Column Labels					total	amount
Row Labels	Budget	Federal Share	Match	Encumbered		expenses	remaining
Contractual	28,151,974	130,005	3,560,290	183,375		3,873,670	24,278,304
Equipment						-	-
Fringe Benefits	2,593,974		190,608			190,608	2,403,366
Indirect	159,122		17,176			17,176	141,946
Other (Services)	2,212,000		7,583			7,583	2,204,417
Personnel	3,470,413		86,895			86,895	3,383,518
Sub-Awards		29,544				29,544	(29,544)
Supplies	38,000		101			101	37,899
Travel			851			851	(851)
#N/A						-	-
(blank)						-	-
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>36,625,483</b>	<b>159,549</b>	<b>3,863,504</b>	<b>183,375</b>		<b>4,206,428</b>	<b>32,419,055</b>

**Journal Date**

All Periods MONTHS ▾

2016 2017

OCT NOV DEC JAN FEB MAR APR N

449 – DEC May 31, 2017

Reporting Item	Responsible Entity	
	NRCS	Partner
1) The number and types of eligible partners, landowners, and producers participating in the partnership agreements selected	33 participants enrolled in EQIP, 2 participants enrolled in ACEP-WRE, 4 participants enrolled in ACEP-ALE	22 partners
2) The number of producers and landowners receiving assistance	33 participants enrolled in EQIP, 2 participants enrolled in ACEP-WRE, 4 participants enrolled in ACEP-ALE	
3) The number of new producers and landowners reached (i.e., those who have not previously participated in NRCS programs) and if any beginning farmers or ranchers, limited resource farmers or ranchers, socially disadvantaged farmers or ranchers, eligible farmers or ranchers, or Indian Tribes received assistance	37 beginning farmer, 4 limited resource farmers, 0 socially disadvantaged, 3 Veteran Farmers	
4) Total funding committed to projects, including from Federal and non-Federal resources	EQIP - \$3,167,017; ALE - \$637,500; WRE \$365,000	
5) A description of how the funds are being administered under an alternative funding arrangement	There is no alternative funding arrangement	
6) means for tracking adherence to any applicable provisions for payment eligibility	NRCS tracks adherence for program eligibility through existing software systems	
7) Any oversight mechanisms implemented	Quarterly RCPP Advisory Boards	
8) The process through which program appeals by participants are resolved	NRCS handles all appeals through the processes set forth in 7 CFR 614	