



The Association of Vermont Conservation Commissions

2020 Annual Report

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Dear Members, Supporters and Friends,

For 30 years, the Association of Vermont Conservation Commissions (AVCC) has been supporting conservation commissions and other community groups in protecting and stewarding natural resources, taking action and providing education at the local level, and effectively engaging in town and regional government. But we never expected a year like 2020.

The health crisis resulting from the spread of COVID-19 and the need to change how we all operated day-to-day provided us with a challenge. How would AVCC continue to support the work of conservation commissions and volunteers throughout the state? We not only wanted to continue offering technical, program, and capacity support, but also to provide guidance on navigating these unprecedented times.

I am proud of the efforts of the AVCC Board and all of the conservation commissions and community groups across Vermont that stayed focused on protecting and preserving Vermont's natural resources. Here are some highlights from 2020:

- AVCC awarded Tiny Grants to conservation commissions in Brattleboro, Cornwall, Enosburgh, Fayston, Georgia, Greensboro, Hartford, Putney, and Salisbury, for projects including trail management and signage; invasives management; and documenting wildlife activity on conserved lands. These small grants leverage groups' other funding.
- We held our 2020 Annual Summit virtually: **Conservation In The Time of COVID-19**. Sessions explored the Value of Town Forests; Success Stories During COVID-19; Perspectives on Land Access, Equity and Conservation; Agriculture and Clean Water; and a keynote address by Paul Costello called Resilience and Change: Conservation and Community in a Renewed Vermont. We thank the 150 people who attended our programming, and all speakers and sponsors for their support. All of the sessions were recorded and can be accessed at vtconservation.com.
- AVCC continues to offer an active listserv with more than 500 members, providing a lively discussion forum on topics such as building climate resilience, managing town-owned forests and their varied uses, and establishing and maintaining a town conservation fund.

In 2020, we became even more aware of the importance of nature and community in our lives, which brings greater focus and importance to our work. The AVCC Board appreciates the support of our members and friends. We look forward to another year of collaboration as we conserve and steward Vermont's natural resources and build a more resilient place for future generations. Stay safe and healthy.

Mark Nelson, Board Chair



2020 AVCC Conservation Summit

Paul Costello Looks Ahead

It was an honor to have Paul Costello, Executive Director of the Vermont Council on Rural Development (VCRD), deliver our 2020 keynote address, Resilience and Change: Conservation and Community in a Renewed Vermont.

Costello shared a vision for Vermont where services like broadband Internet for all, universal childcare, and a flourishing of mutual aid allow our communities to grow and cultivate resilience as we recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and deal with climate change.

Find the recording of Costello's talk at vtconservation.com.



What's *your* vision for Vermont?

Under Costello's leadership, VCRD is currently embarking on The Vermont Proposition, a vision of recovery and renewal for the future of Vermont.

The Vermont Proposition initiative will develop a set of transformational goals designed to optimize the best of Vermont at mid-century — for our economy, environment, communities, and people — and propose bold priorities for action as foundations for progress.

Learn more and share your input at www.futureofvermont.org.



Costello's keynote address provided an inspiring look forward during these uncertain times for Vermont and the nation.

We thank him for sharing his perspective, insight, and optimism.

AVCC SUMMIT 2020

Conservation
in the time of
COVID-19



SESSIONS WEDNESDAYS @ NOON

- SEPT 23 VALUE OF TOWN FORESTS
- OCT 7 CONSERVATION SUCCESS STORIES
- OCT 21 PERSPECTIVES ON LAND ACCESS,
EQUITY AND CONSERVATION
- NOV 4 AGRICULTURE AND CLEAN WATER

KEYNOTE

- NOV 11 PAUL COSTELLO
7-9PM RESILIENCE AND CHANGE:
CONSERVATION AND
COMMUNITY
IN A RENEWED VERMONT

Conservation In The Time of COVID-19

AVCC held our Annual Summit virtually this year. We offered four core sessions on Wednesdays at noon throughout the fall, followed by Paul Costello's keynote address on a November evening.

Sessions explored the value of town forests during a time when Vermonters were depending on them more than ever; success stories and tips from conservation commissions adapting to the pandemic; perspectives on BIPOC land access, equity, and ownership; and how conservation commissions can encourage clean-water-friendly farming.

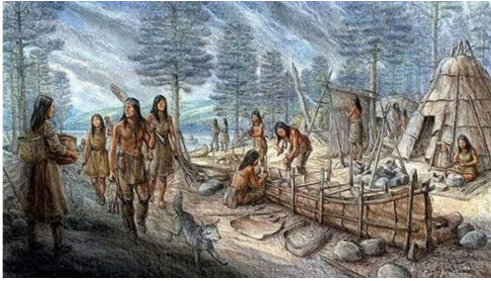


Some of our wonderful panelists, presenting on Zoom.
From left to right: Chief Donald Stevens, Kenya Lazuli, Kristen Balschunat, Nick Warner, Linda Hecker, and Elaine Wang.

Though we missed seeing you all in person this year and gathering for a leisurely outdoor lunch, we were pleased with the success of our virtual programming. We thank the panelists and sponsors who made this year's event possible, and the 150 attendees who joined us to learn and share!

We plan to hold our Summit virtually again in 2021. Stay tuned for details.

AVCC Funds Nine Tiny Grant Projects in 2020



This image can be found on one of the new signs.

Brattleboro Creates Interpretive Trail

The Brattleboro Conservation Commission created 20 interpretive trail signs depicting the ecology and geology of the Riverstone Preserve—a third-of-a-mile trail off of the West River Trail in Brattleboro—along with Abenaki perspectives and knowledge. The signs will be mounted in the spring. *Pictured: a scene depicting construction of a traditional birchbark canoe by Sokoki Abenaki.*

Cornwall Tracks Wildlife Movement

The Cornwall Conservation Commission purchased trail cameras to capture data on the movement of larger mammals between large forest blocks, including where they are crossing town roads, to inform the maintenance of vital connectivity linkages. In the context of the town's fragmented landscape, the long-term survival of these animals depends on their ability to move safely between the town's core forest blocks, wetlands, and other natural areas.



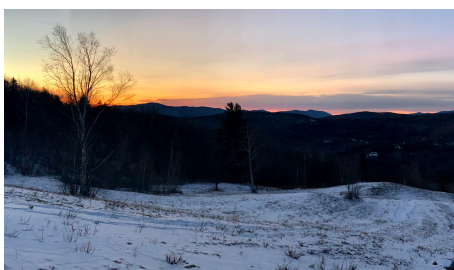
A raccoon mother and her kits, caught on camera in July 2020.



A young deer caught on camera

Enosburgh Captures Wildlife Footage

The Enosburgh Conservation Commission purchased and installed trail cameras in the Enosburgh Town Forest and produced a series of popular YouTube videos edited from the captures. The cameras have captured video of fishers, bears, deer, grouse, foxes, raccoons, coyotes, and more. Enosburgh will continue to explore and document the animals that live in and pass through the Town Forest while nurturing public appreciation of wild spaces.

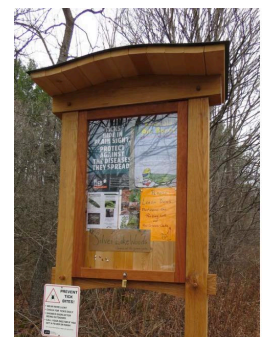
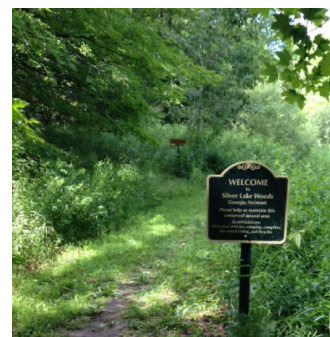


Fayston Completes Forest Assessment

The Fayston Conservation Commission assisted the Town of Fayston in completing a draft of the Natural Resource/Ecological Assessment of the Boyce Hill Town Forest, a 93-acre parcel donated to the town late last year. Fayston is looking forward to sharing the information publicly through a series of online educational forums in the spring and summer.

Georgia Improves Local Trails

The Georgia Conservation Commission purchased and installed several signs and a kiosk on conserved land, and started marking new trails with paint. They also removed a culvert and installed two foot bridges to improve the trails, encountering many happy hikers in the process!



AVCC's annual Tiny Grants help support local projects around the state. The grants provide seed money and/or matching funds for specific conservation projects at the local level. Grants are available in the range of \$250-\$600 each.

All conservation commissions and groups working to become conservation commissions that are members of AVCC are eligible. To learn more, become an AVCC member, or apply for a Tiny Grant, visit <http://vtconservation.com>



Greensboro Adds Color to Hiking Spot

The Greensboro Conservation Commission prepared new trail signs for the Porter Brook Nature Trail (PBNT) and installed directional signs between the PBNT and Barr Hill. They also replaced the three old (since 1991) wooden panoramas on the Barr Hill Nature Trail with colored vinyl graphic panoramas, and rerouted the trail following point M through the forest to eliminate the hazardous descent from the granite outcropping.

Hartford Tackles Invasive Species

The Hartford Conservation Commission addressed invasive species in the David Chang Conservation Area, located along the Ottauquechee River. Deploying a combination of methods, the project forced the invasive plants to retreat off the stream edge, preserving critical habitat for the rare and threatened plants on the site. A future follow-up treatment is planned in summer 2021 to re-treat any invasive plants that have re-seeded or re-sprouted, and to further control invasive plants within the interior of the property. *Photo: A cut European Black Alder stump, treated with herbicide to prevent re-sprouting.*



Tom Hinckley (and Maggie) on the job

Putney Maps Emerald Ash Borer

The Putney Conservation Commission completed surveys of the occurrence of Emerald Ash Borer along town roads with the help of volunteers and commission members, and input the data into a web program that is now being converted into a shareable map and Excel file. The final report will be presented to the Town of Putney and incorporated into its Hazard Mitigation Plan. Two students from Landmark College, Matt Houston and Cullen Elwell, worked on an internship that collected at least half of the surveyed tree data.

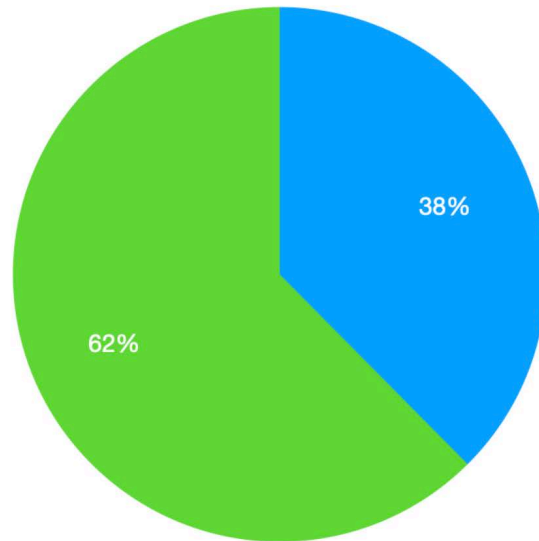
Salisbury Enhances Pitch Pine Trail

The Salisbury Conservation Commission built a fully-operational kiosk for its new 1.7-mile Pitch Pine Trail on town forestland, and better delineated the parking area. The kiosk contains a map, information, and a visitor's log. The trail boasts a diversity of trees, including the rare Pitch Pines for which it is named. Salisbury has received such positive feedback that it is hoping to expand this trail, with the hope of leading field trips to talk about trees, birds, wildflowers, and tracks when the pandemic allows.

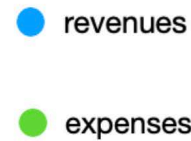


2020 Financial Year in Review

Overview

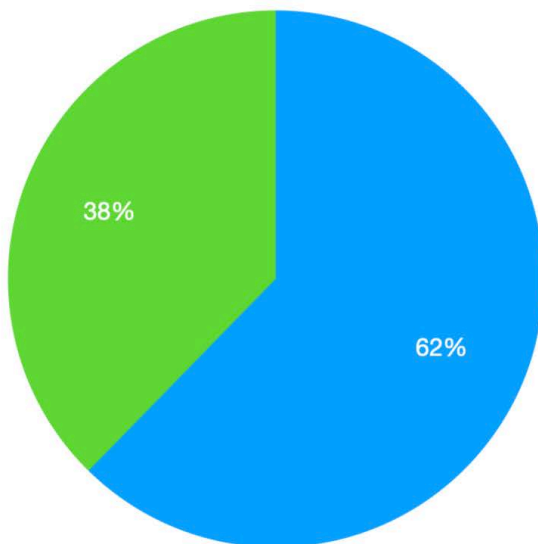


Note: Revenues were lower this year because we offered our online summit free of charge. Your memberships dues are more important than ever!



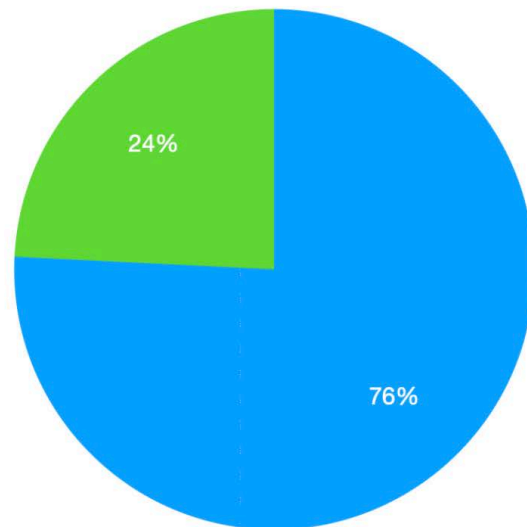
Revenue

● Membership ● Summit Sponsorship



Expenses

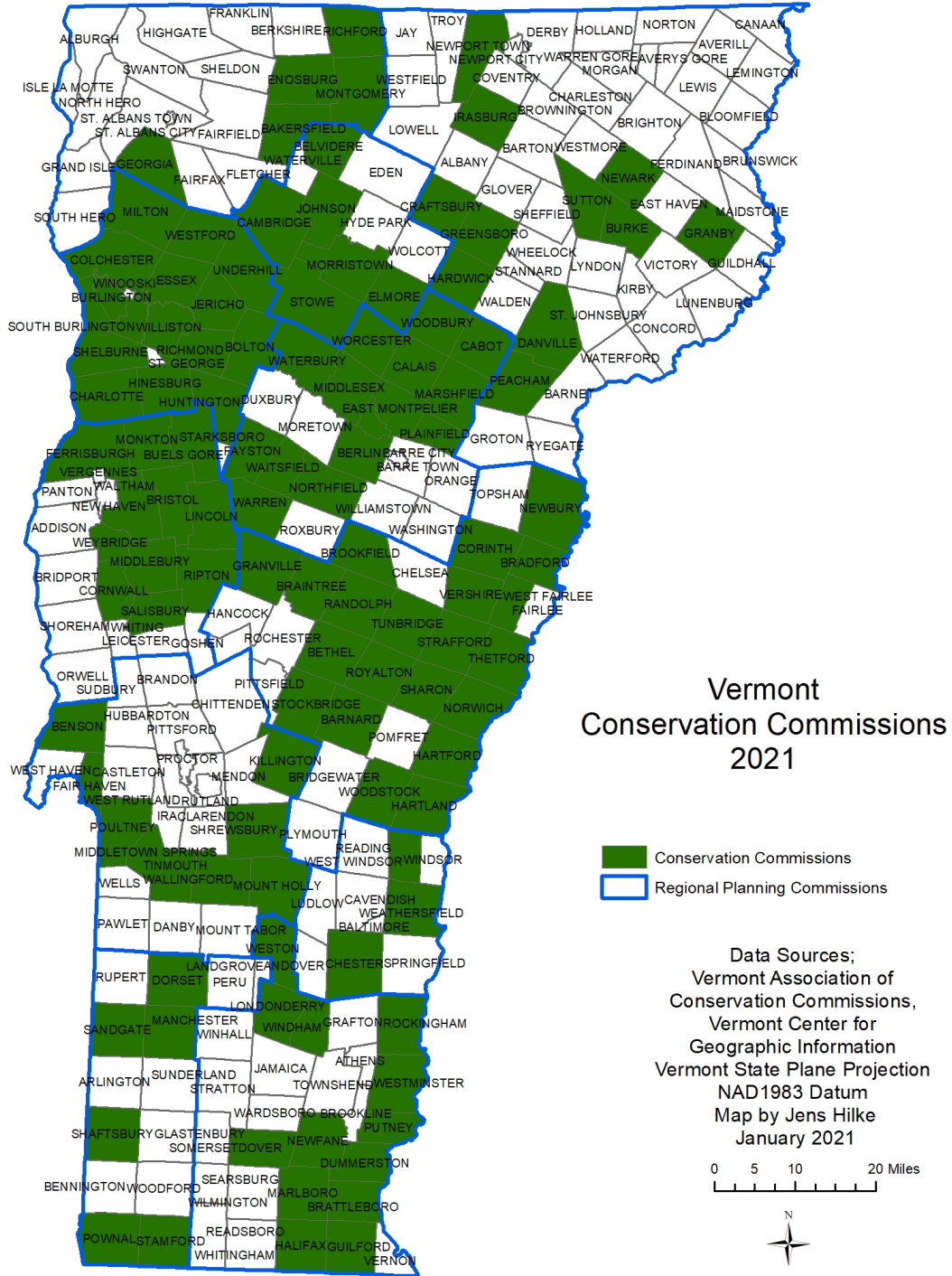
● Tiny Grants ● Operating



We are a volunteer-run organization that relies on individual and conservation commission memberships.

If you or your conservation commission are not AVCC members, we encourage you to join. If you are members, thanks for your support!

Vermont Conservation Commissions



Do you know of a conservation commission that is missing from the map?

Please let us know! Email us at vtconservation@gmail.com

Memberships, Sponsorships, and Listserv

MEMBERSHIPS: We offer two types of AVCC membership: organizational (\$50) and individual (\$20). Memberships are effective through the calendar year. Members receive discounted admission to our annual summit. Renew today if you haven't already!

To become a member, renew your membership, or check on your membership status, visit vtconservation.com/join-us/.

You can pay for your membership online or mail a check to:
AVCC c/o VNRC
9 Bailey Ave
Montpelier, VT 05602

LISTSERV: To join the AVCC listserv, send an email to:
vtconservation+subscribe@googlegroups.com.



Photos by Bob LoCicero, courtesy of the Vermont Natural Resources Council

SUMMIT SPONSORSHIPS:

Thank you to our wonderful 2020 Summit sponsors! We are grateful for your support, especially during these unprecedented times.

Ecopixel
Front Porch Forum
Lintilhac Foundation
The Nature Conservancy in Vermont
Two Rivers Ottawaquechee Regional Commission
Trust for Public Land
Vermont Association of Planning and Development Agencies
Vermont Land Trust
Vermont Natural Resources Council

Your Work is Making a Difference!