



The Association of Vermont Conservation Commissions

2021 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 Seven Tiny Grant Projects in 2021



Bradford Constructs Trail Benches

The Bradford Conservation Commission (BCC) purchased cedar lumber to construct four trailside benches placed in the Wrights Mountain Devil's Den Town Forest. The benches were built and marine-varnished by students in the Construction Academy of the River Bend Career and Tech Center. BCC also purchased a plaque for each bench to commemorate the young people's work.

Dummerston Monitors Monarchs

The Dummerston Conservation Commission held its second Monarch Butterfly project, instructing residents how to care for this species and planting swamp milkweed to attract them. Participants become involved in a local conservation effort, got outside, learned from their neighbors, and worked towards increasing biodiversity in their garden and in the community.



Hartford Protects Amphibians

The Hartford Salamander Team (HST) formally joined the North Branch Nature Center's Amphibian Road Crossing (ARC) project, accessing training on safe handling of amphibians, amphibian ecology, and data collection to help reduce roadkill and protect local populations. Team members identified local amphibian crossings and contributed to the regional Amphibian Road Crossing map.

See map of 70+ amphibian crossing locations at HartfordSalamanderTeam.org

Hinesburg Supports Pollinators

The Hinesburg Conservation Commission has begun designing and building a pollinator garden at Geprag's Park, with the long-term goal of enhancing community engagement around no-mow initiatives and efforts to cultivate wildlife within human communities.



Huntington Mitigates Invasives

The Huntington Conservation Commission hired two goats (Sigyn and Fulla) to munch on Japanese knotweed, clearing the hillside and lower flat area around Huntington's town offices. The threatened buildings are now knotweed-free, and HCC has plans to use the goats to mitigate an infestation around adjacent town property. (Photo to left)



Johnson Makes Media

The Johnson Conservation Commission filmed four updates of its educational videos about the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) and completed a new public service announcement about the menacing green bug. (Photo above)



Shrewsbury Surveys Wildlife Crossings

The Shrewsbury Conservation Commission purchased game cameras to survey wildlife road crossings, with hopes to engage the community—including elementary school students—in identifying wildlife tracks and getting outdoors this winter as citizen scientists.

AVCC's annual Tiny Grants provide seed money and/or matching funds for specific conservation projects at the local level, in the broad categories of land conservation, education and outreach, stewardship and management, and planning. To learn more, visit <http://vtconservation.com>

Basic Information

Grant range: \$250 - \$600

Grant application due: May 6, 2022 **Grant award announcement:** Summer 2022

Evaluation Criteria: Demonstrated need; Evidence of matching funds and/or in-kind services; Closely aligns with grant goals; Project readiness; Local support and volunteer involvement

How to apply: Please email ALL completed applications to vtconservation@gmail.com (AVCC Board). We are strongly discouraging mailed applications, but if it is not possible for you to email your application, our mailing address is on the front page of this Annual report.

2022 Application

In a separate document, please provide the following information:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| -Contact Person | 1. Brief description of the project (300 words max) |
| -Organization | 2. Total budget for this project |
| -Mailing Address | 3. Amount of grant money requested (min. \$250 – max. \$600) |
| -Email | 4. Other funds, if any, for this project |
| -Phone | 5. List the source(s) and amounts of other funds and/or in-kind contributions |
| -Fiscal Sponsor, if any (legal name) | 6. Explain how these funds will make a difference to the success of your project (600 words max) |
| -Fiscal Sponsor contact information | 7. Explain how you will measure the success of your project (300 words max) |



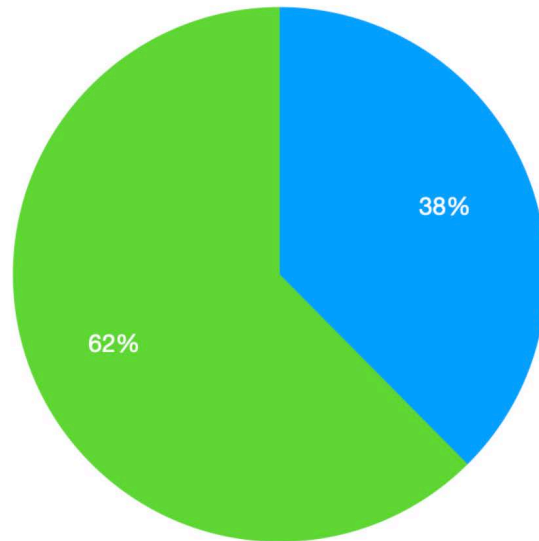
To be eligible for an AVCC Tiny Grant, groups must be: Vermont conservation commissions or local committees/groups that are working towards becoming a conservation commission **AND** paid members of AVCC. To check your membership status, please email vtconservation@gmail.com.

Other Stipulations: Groups must be a municipality or IRS certified 501(c)(3) public charity, or have fiscal sponsorship by a municipality or IRS certified 501(c)(3) public charity. Prior recipients of grants from AVCC must have completed those grants and closed them out. Grants cannot be used for general funds, dues or subscriptions. Grantees will be required to submit a Conservation Success Story online using the AVCC website (vtconservation.com/success-stories), presenting evidence of grant completion with photographs and text detailing outcomes and challenges.

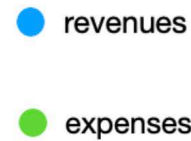
Timetable: Applications must be submitted (or postmarked if sent by mail) on or before May 6, 2021. Grantees will be notified of funding approval in summer 2021. Projects must be completed and a final report submitted by May 26, 2023. Extensions may be considered. The funds awarded under this grant will be available approximately a month after the awards are announced. Checks will be issued by the Vermont Community Foundation.

2020 Financial Year in Review

Overview

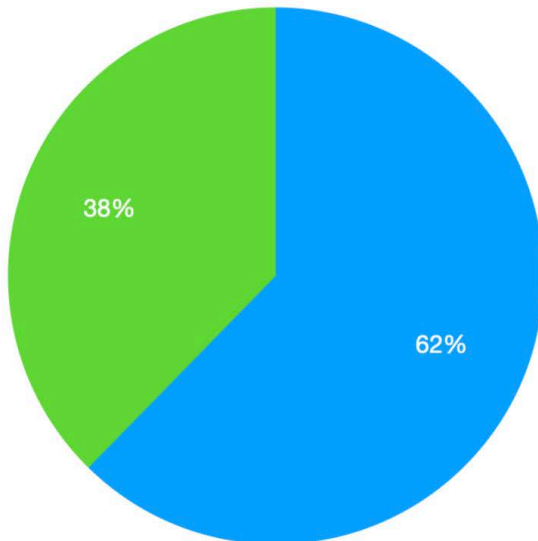


Note: Revenues were lower this year because we offered our online summit free of charge. Your memberships dues are more important than ever!



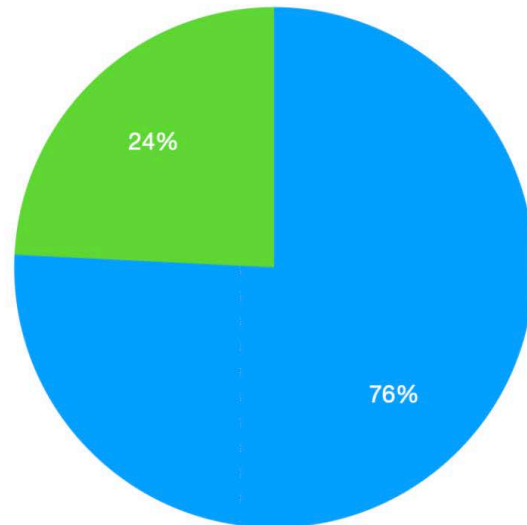
Revenue

● Membership ● Summit Sponsorship



Expenses

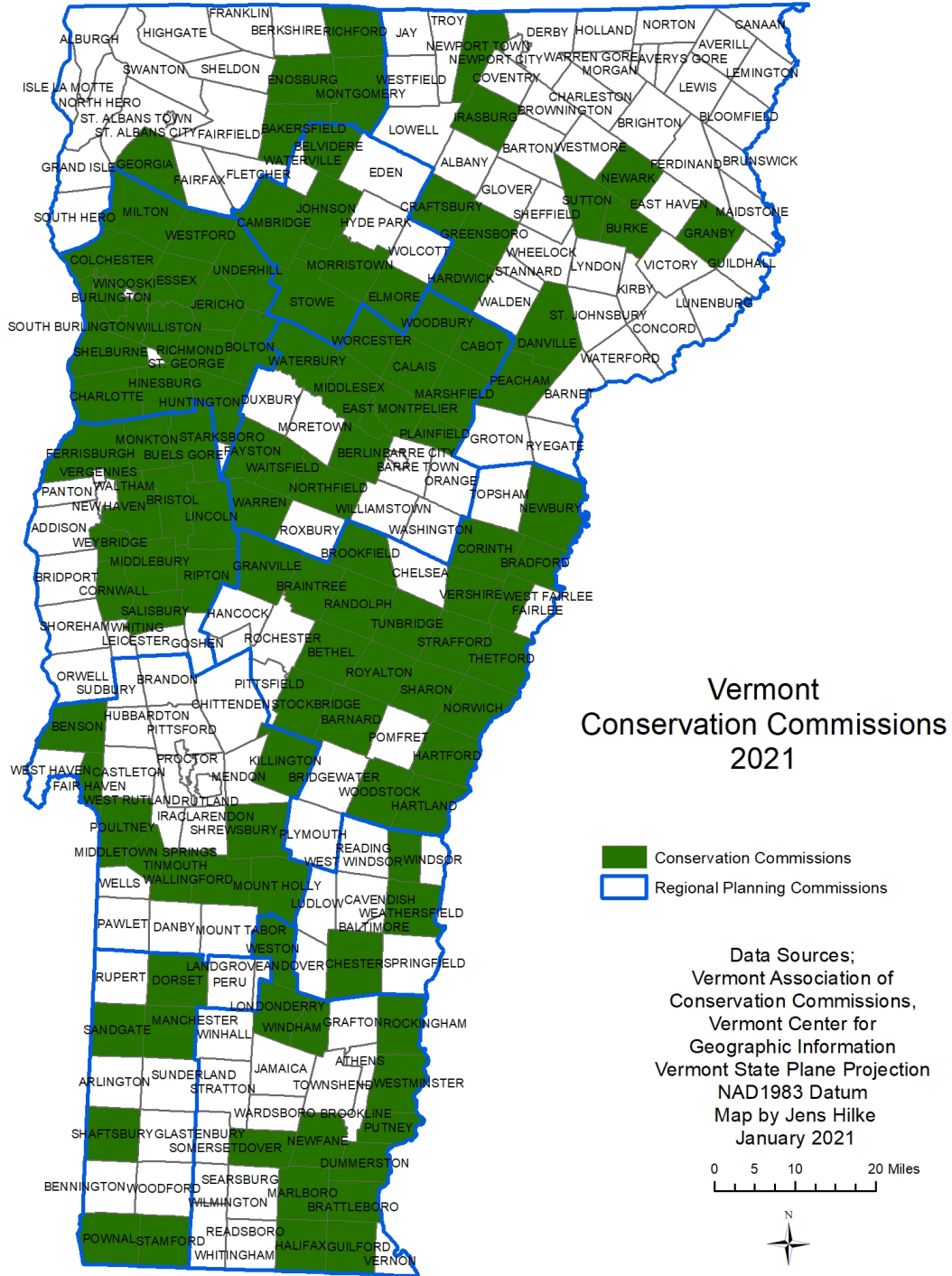
● Tiny Grants ● Operating



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!