

VERMONT'S  
MAD RIVER VALLEY



A CONTINUING  
*Conservation Legacy*

# Where Brooks Begin

Today I found  
a spring-time pool  
high upon the wooded hill,  
a tiny pond  
left by melting snows.  
It held reflections  
deep  
beyond imagination,  
where bare-branched trees  
stretched  
down  
into endless clouds,  
blending moss  
and trees  
and sky.  
The earth held  
this leaf-lined cup,  
a silver jewel,  
where brooks begin  
in the waking woods.

*Ann Day*



Scotch Highland cattle at the Knoll Farm

The Mad River Valley was the first example in Vermont where a group of towns thought about their collective goals for both development and conservation. From those community-wide conversations seventeen years ago emerged a specific course of action, which has not only helped strengthen the Valley's economic base, but which has also permanently protected more than 7,000 acres of farmland, working forests, recreational lands and wildlife habitat. It has truly been a partnership effort at all levels.

*Darby Bradley,*  
President of Vermont Land Trust

On the cover:  
Simplicity Farm conserved in 1996

Why would a watershed organization be interested in land conservation? The answer is simple: whatever you do on the land can impact the river. How can we best take care of this community watershed we share? By paying attention to what is happening during both dramatic and incremental changes. With the knowledge we gather, we can define a shared vision for the future and protect what is important to our quality of life. The Conservation Partnership is the embodiment of our commitment to our landscape, our valley, and our community. The Friends of the Mad River is dedicated to help with protecting access to swim holes and other recreation resources, with protecting the riparian buffers along the river and tributaries, with protecting the forests for water quality and erosion control, and for the homes and livelihoods of wildlife. We care about the homes and livelihoods of the humans who make up this wonderful community too, and the rich mosaic of forests, farmland, neighborhoods, and businesses we depend on. The Conservation Partnership is a cooperation of organizations that are working to protect not only the natural landscape but also the local economy and way of life.

*Kinny Connell,*  
President of the Friends of the Mad River

The Mad River Valley Planning District has since its inception fostered and facilitated land conservation as part of its overall planning strategy for the Valley. We have had an enduring and productive relationship with VLT and look forward to participating in the Partnership's goals to work with landowners who wish to voluntarily conserve their land. The long-term health of the Valley rests on a lot of things – promoting tourism and a viable situation for dynamic local businesses, providing affordable housing, encouraging growth in appropriate places – and conserving critical lands and natural resources that provide significant value to our community is an integral part of this overall equation.

*Elwin Neill,*  
Chair of the Planning District



For the past two decades, a unique partnership of public and private organizations has been assisting landowners to protect open space in the Mad River Valley. Initiated by the **Mad River Valley Planning District** and the **Vermont Land Trust** in 1983, the cooperative relationship between these organizations was broadened by the formation of the **Friends of the Mad River** in 1990 and formalized as the **Mad River Watershed Conservation Partnership** in 2000.



Joslyn parcel overlooking the Round Barn.

The three partner organizations, often working in conjunction with individual watershed towns, local organizations such as the Mad River Valley Path Association, and other state and national land conservation organizations such as the Trust for

## The Mad River Watershed Conservation Partnership

The Mad River Watershed Conservation Partnership's mission is to identify critical conservation resources and assist willing landowners, organizations and communities in protecting and strengthening the watershed's:

- **working landscape**, by preserving productive farm and forest lands;
- **ecological health**, by preserving wildlife habitats and corridors across the landscape, and identifying and protecting rare and fragile natural areas;
- **rural character**, by protecting and enhancing the scenic landscape, historic sites and structures that contribute to the community's agricultural heritage, and by reinforcing traditional settlement patterns;

Public Land, have permanently conserved more than 7,000 acres of farm and forest land. When combined with the other approximately 7,000 acres of state and federally owned land in the watershed, these efforts have created a conservation legacy that will contribute to Mad River Valley's scenic, ecological, cultural and economic well being for generations to come.

A key to the partnership's success has been the distinct – yet complementary – goals of the three organizations. These

- **recreational opportunity**, by maintaining and providing public access to open space, the Mad River, and its tributaries; and,
- **community vitality**, by fostering economic and social well being through open space protection.

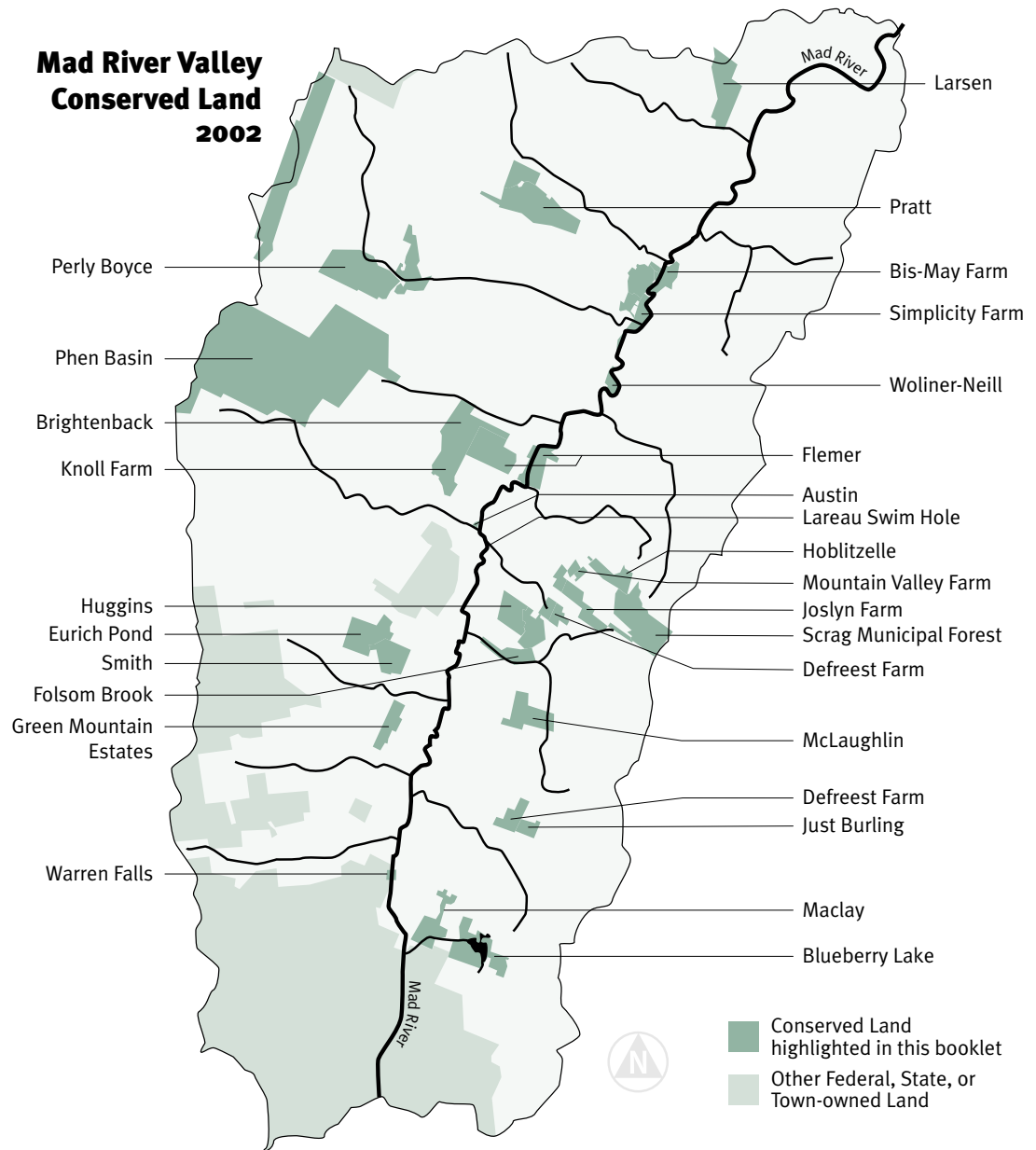
The Conservation Partnership is furthering this mission by making voluntary options for land conservation available to landowners and communities, serving as a local source of information, technical assistance and financial support, and through continued collaboration with local towns and organizations on conservation projects.



The Maynard's bank barns are part of the Bis-May parcel which was conserved in 1996.

goals have been articulated in a number of documents, including the *Mad River Rural Resource Protection Plan* (1988), the *Best River Ever: A Conservation Plan to Protect and Conserve Vermont's Beautiful Mad River Watershed* (1995); and *Kicking Stones Down a Dirt Road: Rural Resource Protection in the Mad River Valley* (1998). The extent to which these goals have been achieved through the conservation of different parcels of land, however, has not been well documented.

This publication has been developed by the Conservation Partnership to describe the number and diversity of successful land conservation projects in the Valley, and to highlight the effective and sustained relationships that have made these complex projects possible. In addition to documenting our conservation legacy, another goal is to educate and further encourage the community to continue contributing in whatever way possible to the ongoing protection of important open space and undeveloped land.





The **Mad River Valley Planning District**, comprised of the towns of Fayston, Waitsfield, and Warren, has since its inception in 1985 integrated land conservation into its planning strategies for the Valley. The mission of the District is to plan for the physical, social, economic, fiscal, environmental, cultural and aesthetic well being of Valley towns. In fulfilling its mission the District has assumed a leadership role in protecting the natural resources and rural character of the Valley. The Rural Resource Commission oversees the District's Certified Local Government (CLG) program, which is partially funded by the National Park Service and is administered locally by the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation. This program was developed to provide local governments an opportunity to become more directly involved with identifying, evaluating, and protecting historic resources. The Planning District was designated a CLG in 1988, at which time the Rural Resource Commission was established. Since then the Commission has worked on projects that have focused on the protection of the Valley's historic resources in the context of the rural land-

scape. Past historic preservation projects include the nomination of the Valley's four National Register Districts – Warren and Waitsfield villages, the Waitsfield Common, and the Rural Agricultural District. Resource protection efforts include the publication and implementation of the 1988 "Rural Resource Protection Plan" and the 1998 "Kicking Stones: Rural Resource Protection in Vermont's Mad River Valley," and participation in the recent formation of the Conservation Partnership.

#### FRIENDS OF THE MAD RIVER



The **Friends of the Mad River** was formed to protect and improve the ecological, scenic and recreational values of the Mad River and its watershed. In addition to consistently and persuasively facilitating ongoing community stewardship of the Mad River, the Friends strive to educate residents and visitors of the Mad River Valley. Examples of their efforts include regularly measuring *e. coli* bacteria levels in the Mad River and its tributaries, stream bank stabilization efforts, and participating in community events which celebrate the Mad River's value as a community resource. Their ultimate goal of watershed protection led the Friends of the Mad

River to collaborate with the Planning District and VLT to form the Conservation Partnership. In 1995 the Friends developed and published *The Best River Ever*, a series of recommendations for protecting and restoring the Mad River Watershed and have worked continually since then to implement the plan's strategies.



#### Vermont Land Trust

The **Vermont Land Trust** has been working with the residents, towns and local organizations of the Mad River Valley since 1983. Its mission is to conserve land for the future of Vermont. VLT provides technical and legal assistance to individuals, communities, and local land trusts to help them achieve local, regional, and state conservation objectives. VLT provides many tools to help landowners voluntarily conserve their land including facilitating the donation and purchase of land and development rights. With assistance from the Valley towns, the Planning District, and other local organizations, VLT has used a variety of conservation tools to help protect over 7,000 acres in the Valley and holds conservation easements on many of the projects listed in this document.



The Knoll Farm's 1880 bank barn and farmhouse



### Brightenback

In 1997 **Eleanor Brightenback** sold a 269-acre woodland parcel to the Vermont Land Trust. This land is adjacent to the conserved Knoll Farm. Together the two properties, which rise above Irasville and Waitsfield Village, create a 430-acre tract of conserved land off Bragg Hill Road in Fayston.

### Knoll Farm

Ann Day donated the first conservation easement in the Valley in 1983 when she conserved the 144-acre **Knoll Farm** on Bragg Hill in Fayston. Ann later conserved a 17-acre meadow adjoining Knoll Farm. The two parcels total 161 acres. This scenic hill farm — listed on the National Register of Historic Places — includes rolling meadows and pastures, impeccably managed woodland, and two c. 1880 bank barns. The larger barn is still in agricultural use and is also used for a variety of community-oriented workshops and events. The farm was recently sold to new owners who will continue to manage the land in a sustainable manner.



The Brightenback parcel encompasses much of the woodland that provides the backdrop to Waitsfield Village.

## Perly Boyce Farm

**Charles Farnsworth** donated the development rights on a portion of the **Perly Boyce Farm** off North Fayston Road in Fayston in 1985. Charles' son, **Ronald Farnsworth**, worked for Pearly Boyce as child and got to know this land quite well. The parcel consists of 171 acres of open land, managed forest, and prime secluded wildlife habitat, including 60 acres managed for horse and cattle pasture. Timber is harvested from the woodlands in accordance with a sustainable forest management practices.



The Perly Boyce parcel's peaceful woodlands grace the lower reaches of Burnt Rock in Fayston.

*"Mr. Boyce's grandfather stewarded this land in the early 1800s, and since I feel like family to the Boyces, I think we owe it to our forebears to maintain the lands in the a way they would like to see them. The land is a legacy we would like to keep this way forever."*

– Ronald Farnsworth

## Folsom Brook

**Bob and Jackie Rose** donated 68 acres of their Waitsfield land to the Vermont Land Trust in several transactions from 1983 through 1996. In addition to extensive riparian forest along Folsom Brook, the farmland stretching along Rolston Road provides some of the most stunning views in the Valley — as well as pastureland for Bob's herd of belted Galloways.



Belted Galloways grazing the Folsom Brook parcel.





Double Top as seen from Fuller Hill Road.

### Double Top Mountain

In 1986 **Green Mountain Estates** donated the development rights on 100 acres on Double Top Mountain off the Golf Course Road in Warren to VLT as part of a limited development project involving the Town of Warren. This project protects two prominent knolls that accent the Valley's southern end. The conservation easement provides for public access, which allows the community to use trails on portions of the property. A deer yard is also protected.



### Eurich Pond

In 1986 the owners of the **Sugarbush Inn** put a conservation easement on 144 acres as part of a limited development project that included the Town of Warren. This donation includes a public access easement allowing the public to enjoy the Eurich Pond and the Catamount Trail behind the Inn.



Beavers are frequently spotted in ponds along the western edge of the Eurich Pond parcel.

## *The Common Road (Maple Avenue) Conservation Project*

*The “Maple Avenue” Conservation Project was completed during 1991 and 1992. It included several properties along the Common Road in Waitsfield whose owners worked closely with the town of Waitsfield, the Mad River Valley Planning District and the Vermont Land Trust to collectively conserve a large block of land that comprises some of the most scenic farmland in the Valley. The voters of Waitsfield agreed to contribute funds to the project. Additional*

*funds were received from the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board and private donations. The total acreage permanently protected through conservation easements associated with this project was more than 1,000 acres. Limited development areas were excluded from the project.*

*Specific properties conserved include the following five parcels:*



A bobolink flies low over the Defreest fields.



The Defreest Farm (formerly Eurich).

### **Defreest Farm**

**Chris Whittle** sold a 203-acre farm on Waitsfield Common to the Vermont Land Trust at a charitable “bargain price.” The farm was conserved and transferred to Tom Defreest and David Defreest, Jr. who operate a portion of the Valley’s largest dairy farm. The crop fields and pasture land of the farm straddle the Common and East Warren roads, and the woodlands climb the lower reaches of the Northfield Range to the east. Funds that made this purchase possible included \$20,000 approved by Waitsfield voters and a grant from the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board.

Also as part of the Common Road (Maple Avenue) Project, Chris Whittle sold a 140-acre parcel of woodland off the East Warren Road to **Barbara Huggins**. At the time, three reserved house sites were permitted on the property. In 2000, Barbara Huggins extinguished the right for the three houses and donated a permanent conservation easement to the Vermont Land Trust prohibiting any future development on the property.

*“To me, Vermont is the open fields and woods, so I’ve protected the ones I have. I want to take care of it. My parents were involved in land conservation so it’s nothing new to me.”*

– Barbara Huggins



## *The Common Road Conservation Project*

The Common Road,  
sometimes called  
“Maple Avenue”

## **Joslyn Farm**

**Donny Joslyn** donated development rights on his highly visible 180-acre sheep



farm that straddles the Common Road, a short distance from Maple Avenue Farm. Donny Joslyn and his historic hill farm, which stretches from just behind the Inn at the Round Barn Farm nearly to the summit of Scrag Mountain, were featured in Peter Miller's *Vermont People*, a photographic essay of the people who inhabit Vermont's traditional working landscape.

## **Scrag Municipal Forest**

Dave Gavett and Jane and Al Hobart, of **Scrag Corporation**, donated the development rights on 360 acres of remote forestland on the side of Scrag Mountain to the Vermont Land Trust. Simultaneously, the large woodland parcel was given to the town of Waitsfield and is now the town's municipal forest.



Scrag Municipal Forest with the Donny Joslyn Farm (foreground).



Jane Hobart of Scrag Corporation and Elwin Neill, Jr., chair of the Waitsfield Selectboard, at a gathering celebrating the completion of the Common Road (Maple Avenue) conservation project.

## *The Common Road Conservation Project*

### **Hoblitzelle**

**Harry and Olivia Hoblitzelle** donated the development rights on a 114-acre woodland parcel off the Common Road adjacent to the Scrag Municipal Forest.

This parcel was a significant addition to the large block of land conserved on the Northfield Range in Waitsfield. The land is accessible to the public, and can continue to be harvested for timber. It is also extremely visible from several vantage points in the Valley, and in adjoining other conserved properties contributes to the proliferation of wildlife species that require a large, unfragmented expanse of forested land.



Hoblitzelle parcel flanked by other conserved parcels on the Northfield Range.

### **Mountain Valley Farm**

**Bob Lang and Alice Outwater** donated the development rights on a scenic 36-acre farmstead that includes a restored 1882 high-drive bank barn. Gib and Suzanne Geiger now own this oft-photographed property, known as the **Mountain Valley Farm**, where they nurture a young orchard, make cider, maple syrup, and honey, and run sleigh rides in the winter. Pigs, goats, Scotch Highland cattle, chickens and ducks make for a lively barnyard.

*“Gib’s aunt had a cabin in Warren that he had been visiting since he was a kid. When I started coming up to Vermont with him, on trips to Waitsfield we would always take the Common Road since it was so beautiful. We passed the farm many times and knew it well. It was for sale for a couple years when we finally decided to inquire. The price was right and we bought it. We had horses down in Connecticut and to be able to bring them up and run a farm on conserved land was like a dream come true.”*

– Sue Geiger

## Defreest Farm and McLaughlin Parcel

In 1986, the town of Warren worked with the Defreest family to buy the development rights and permanently conserve 78 acres of the former **George Elliott Farm** on the corner of East Warren and Roxbury Mountain roads. An additional 147 acres along the west side of East Warren Road formerly owned by the McLaughlin family were also conserved three years later. The last working dairy farm in Warren, the Defreests utilize hundreds of acres to sustain their Holstein herd, thereby maintaining many of the open pastures and meadows that contribute to Warren's stunningly scenic working landscape.



The Defreests' heifers can often be found grazing the McLaughlin parcel off East Warren Road.



Birch trees are prominent on the Maclay parcel.

## Maclay

In 1992 **Bill and Alex Maclay** donated conservation restrictions on 151 acres of woodland as part of a limited development project. This land borders the Green Mountain National Forest to the south of Fuller Hill Road in Warren and abuts the conserved Blueberry Lake lands, recently acquired by the USFS. The land includes a deer wintering yard and a public access easement.

## Lareau Swim Hole

The **Lareau Swim Hole** was conserved in 1994 by the Mad River Valley Planning District, the Friends of the Mad River and the town of Waitsfield. The 6.5-acre parcel was acquired from Janet Stoddard Miller. The property was purchased with help from the Valley Rotary Club and the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board. The state of Vermont signed a relinquishment agreement that obligated it to give up the one-acre piece of land under the salt shed that had tarnished this scenic river access point for years. The site is now a 7.5-acre park. The Friends and the Planning District have continued to work with the town of Waitsfield to help manage the park.



A young beach comber enjoys the Lareau Swim Hole.



And they're off...

## Austin

Bill and Ellen Austin donated a right of entry to VLT in 1999 on a five-acre parcel that is nearly adjacent to the town-owned Lareau Swim Hole. They also donated the land to the Town of Waitsfield for limited recreational uses associated with the Lareau Park. In addition to 800 feet of frontage along the Mad River and 650 feet along the Mill Brook, the parcel also contains a small wetland. The **Austin parcel** will have a management plan that guides recreation and stream bank uses.

## Phen Basin

A 3,120-acre area in Fayston known as **Phen Basin** was salvaged from a virtual clear-cut in 1995 in an extraordinary collaborative effort that included the Mad River Valley Planning District, the state of Vermont, the Vermont Land Trust, and the Trust for Public Land. In addition, the project was supported by the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board, the town of Fayston, Sweet Water Trust, the Friends of the Mad River, the Green Mountain Club, and other organizations and individuals. The project includes a 2,100-acre ecological protection zone and hosts both the Catamount Trail and a major thoroughfare for VAST.



A stream crossing on the Catamount Trail on the Phen Basin parcel.

## Ridley Brook Swim Hole

In 1995 the Duxbury Land Trust purchased a 10-acre parcel on Ridley Brook and conveyed a conservation easement to VLT, which assisted in securing funding and technical assistance. The **Ridley Brook Swim Hole** conservation project allows for public access to the brook from the Camel's Hump Road in Duxbury and provides access for an important stretch of the VAST trail. A popular swimming and fishing spot, the parcel's 1000 feet of river frontage, picnic site and two swimming holes are now permanently protected.

*"We didn't want to see a new property owner close off what has for generations been a resource to us, our families, and neighbors."*

– Oren Kronick, former-chair of the Duxbury Land Trust



VAST intersection in Phen Basin.

*"The Phen Basin Block of Camel's Hump State Forest represents the successful conclusion of negotiations between state, local governments, and private interests. I know I speak for many Fayston citizens when I say that we are fortunate to have such rich and diverse natural habitat to enjoy in our town. We owe enormous thanks to the Vermont Land Trust and the Trust for Public Land for being patient and steadfast in their commitment to securing this land for multi-recreational uses as well as protection of highly sensitive ecological zones."*

– Jared Cadwell, Fayston Selectboard



Ridley Brook

*Providing an important gateway to the Mad River Valley, the Bis-May and Simplicity farms total almost 380 acres and boast some of the most significant scenic agricultural land in the watershed. Both of these landmark farms flank Route 100 and were protected through grants from the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board and the Freeman Foundation. Increased attention to the management of the riparian buffer zone between the agricultural lands and the Mad River will work to discourage run-off and erosion of these critical wildlife and river protection areas and will augment work that the Friends of the Mad River is doing elsewhere along the river. Additionally, both farmsteads are on the National Register of Historic Places as part of the Mad River Valley's Rural Historic District that was designated because of the historical importance of the many farms and farmland that line both Route 100 and North Road from Waitsfield Village north to the southern edge of Moretown Village.*



The Mad River flows past a recently cut cornfield of the Maynard's Bis-May Farm.



### **Bis-May Farm**

In 1996 Everett and Ella Maynard sold the development rights on their 257-acre dairy farm to VLT, which includes 53 acres of managed woodland and 8,000 feet of Mad River frontage. The **Bis-May Farm**, which straddles the town line between Waitsfield and Moretown, supports 130 registered Holsteins. Kendall Maynard (Ella and Everett's son) and his wife Barbara, now own and operate the farm's dairy business.



## Simplicity Farm

The **Simplicity Farm** in Waitsfield was conserved in 1996 when Albert and Marion Turner sold the development rights on their 122-acre dairy farm to VLT. Douglas and Sharon Turner, and their son Joseph, now own and operate the farm, home to more than 85 registered Holsteins. With 5,200 feet of frontage along the Mad River, the farm's outstanding scenic and agricultural attributes include an important riparian corridor.



Turner's Simplicity Farm



The Mad River Greenway on the Woliner/Neill parcel

## Woliner/Neill

**Elwin Neill, Jr.** conveyed the development rights on 45 acres between Route 100 and the Mad River north of Waitsfield through a bargain sale in 1999. The conservation of this land, which was acquired from Stan Woliner, permanently protects a key piece of scenic agricultural land along Route 100 and provides public access to the Mad River and the Mad River Greenway. A trail easement for the Greenway was transferred to the town and a river buffer easement was transferred to VLT at the time of the transaction. A management plan is being prepared by the Friends of the Mad River to enhance the riparian buffer, which helps to protect the ecological integrity of the river and provides important wildlife habitat.



Warren Falls is a popular swimming spot in the Mad River Valley.

## Warren Falls

**Warren Falls** is one of the most stunning — and most popular — spots on the Mad River. The huge cliffs, “loungable rocks,” and kid-friendly pebble beach allow Valley residents and visitors to enjoy the river as it passes by. The Vermont Land Trust and the Mad River Valley Planning District laid the groundwork for the project back in the early 1990s. The Friends of the Mad River worked with the Conservation Fund in 1999 to orchestrate an effective grass-roots fundraising campaign to conserve the 72-acre parcel. Acting as a valuable liaison

among various parties to the project, the Friends facilitated the Falls’ transfer to the Green Mountain National Forest.



River rock art



The Dutch-style barn and beautiful view are part of the Larsen parcel.

## Larsen

**Tim and Mary Larsen** donated a conservation easement on their 255-acre woodland parcel off of Stevens’, Brook and Cobb Hill roads in Moretown in 1998. An old apple orchard and dairy operation once dominated the farmstead, whose rural and historic character the Larsens wished to protect in perpetuity. The property also contains managed woodland, beaver ponds, vernal pools, and frontage on Stevens’ Brook.

## Just Burling

In 2000 **Ann Just Burling** conserved 45 acres of open meadow and woodland on the East Warren Road in Warren. Formerly part of the Elliot Farm, Ann's goals include fostering organic agriculture and sustainable forestry. Adjacent to the parcel is the town-owned East Warren School House, which has recently seen revitalization through the opening of a market that sells local and Vermont-made products. The schoolhouse also provides space for a variety of classes and workshops offered to the community, and is the home of the Warren Grange and the non-profit organization Rootwork (dedicated to community-supported organic agriculture). Ann has allowed use of her conserved land to facilitate these various agricultural-related ventures.



The Northfield Ridge from the Just Burling parcel in East Warren.



Camel's Hump as viewed from the Pratt parcel.

## Pratt

**Frederick and Eleanor (Chris) Pratt** permanently conserved 463 acres off of the Ward Hill Road in Duxbury by donating the development rights to the Vermont Land Trust in 2000. This woodland parcel, close to Camels Hump State Park, provides remote wildlife habitat to a number of species and adds additional protected acreage to a considerable chunk of undeveloped woodland. It will be managed on long rotations in order to maintain a healthy and biologically diverse forest.

*“This is in no way locking up the land. This is conserving it for what it is best at doing – growing trees. Sustainable forestry is a far better way to manage the land than the cut-and-run tactics too often practiced.”*

– Chris Pratt



A paddler and his son ply the smooth waters of Blueberry Lake.

### Blueberry Lake

In 2000, Jack Keir sold 368 acres that include the land surrounding **Blueberry Lake** off Plunkton Road in Warren to the Trust for Public Land (TPL). TPL sold the majority of the land, which includes almost the entire shoreline of the lake, to the United States Forest Service in 2001 to be incorporated into the Green Mountain National Forest. A small portion of the land that includes the lake's dam was sold to the town of Warren. The remaining acreage will be sold to the Forest Service within the next few years. The Mad River Valley Planning District was instrumental in steering this complicated project to completion by acting as a liaison among the landowner, the Town of Warren, TPL, the USFS, and various funding sources. The Conservation Partnership helped make the project possible by contributing to the purchase price of the land. A citizen advisory group was formed to help the Forest Service develop a management plan for the property. The recommendations encourage managing the land as a fragile natural area, while allowing for low-impact recreation of the lake and surrounding lands.





The Smith parcel provides the backdrop for this view from Golf Course Road.

## Smith

In 2001 **Win and Maggie Smith** donated a conservation easement to the Vermont Land Trust, resulting in the protection of nearly 200 acres in Warren. The Smith property abuts the conserved Eurich Farm Pond property behind the Sugarbush Inn. The parcel provides a variety of different habitat values ranging from riparian corridor habitat for birds, deer and moose, to predator habitat (such as for the bobcat or fisher), as well as habitat for wide-ranging species (such as the black bear). As is common with most donated conservation easements, the landowner has reserved rights for limited development.

*“The Mad River Valley is a special place, and we are pleased to do our part to contribute to the conservation of the Valley. Our land is a unique property, and we were eager to see that it remains in its natural state in perpetuity.”*

– Win Smith

## Flemer

The 330-acre Flemer property, conserved in 2002, enhances the scenic gateway of historic Waitsfield Village with open fields flanking both sides of Route 100. The property provides a significant part of the hillside backdrop to the village and links several hundred acres of VLT-conserved land, including the Brightenback property and the Knoll Farm in Fayston. This conservation project was a top priority for the Conservation Partnership due to its many significant natural and scenic resources. The property includes prime and statewide agricultural soils, including river-bottom cropland rented to a local farmer. The Mad River winds its way through the eastern portion of the parcel creating 10,000 feet of river frontage. The property also encompasses significant woodland resources, including deer wintering areas and habitat for other numerous species of wildlife.



The Mad River flows beneath the covered bridge in historic Waitsfield Village before passing by the Flemer property.



Ann Day and Karen Freeman, of Vermont Housing and Conservation Board, taking in the view.

## Resources and Contacts

### **Mad River Watershed Conservation Partnership**

(802) 496-7173

P.O. Box 471

Waitsfield, VT 05673

[madriverconservation@madriver.com](mailto:madriverconservation@madriver.com)

### **Mad River Valley Planning District and Rural Resource Commission**

(802) 496-7173

P.O. Box 471

Waitsfield, VT 05673

[mrvpd@madriver.com](mailto:mrvpd@madriver.com)

### **Friends of the Mad River**

(802) 496-9127

P.O. Box 255

Waitsfield, VT 05673

[friends@madriver.com](mailto:friends@madriver.com)

### **Vermont Land Trust**

#### **Mad River Watershed Office**

173 Old Route 100

Moretown, VT 05660

(802) 223-0870

[virginia@vlt.org](mailto:virginia@vlt.org)

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# Giant

I first met you in fifty-seven  
when I drove with my family  
up the steep road to look at the farm  
that would soon become our home.  
You grew up on the hillside farm  
many, many years before,  
but it seemed as though you were  
just waiting for us to come.

There you were, greeting us  
that afternoon in May  
as you stood graciously on the lawn  
in front of the white, clapboard house.  
Your huge stature dwarfed the buildings  
and your shadow filled the yard  
We could only stand in silence  
under your wide-reaching branches  
and feel the comforting aura  
of your overwhelming presence.

I put my hands on your ledgy bark  
and tipped back my head to gaze  
into your mass of limbs  
and newly-opened, heart-shaped leaves.  
A faint breeze moved through  
the far reaches of your vastness  
and stirred your flat-stemmed leaves  
into a shimmering dance.

Our family of four held hands, and,  
with out-stretched arms, just barely  
could circle  
your wide and craggy trunk.  
Now, forty years later, it takes six adults  
to stretch around your ever-expanding  
diameter.

Ever since that first day in spring of '57,  
You have remained the center  
of our lives.  
Your gray, rock-hard trunk makes you look  
much older than your ninety years.  
My whole hand can fit into  
the crevices of your bark.  
To a nuthatch that travels head first  
down your trunk looking for  
insect eggs,  
The furrows must be like canyons  
and cliffs.

Each spring we sit in your new-leaf shade  
and watch an oriole weave her  
hanging nest  
while her mate sings from your top-most  
branch.

An old rope swing with wood-plank seat  
hangs from your lowest limb.  
For 40 years the young in heart  
from one to ninety-two  
have let the swinging breeze  
bring happy summer smiles.

Your ever-turning leaves provide us  
with air-conditioning beyond  
any man-made machine.  
Your endless renewal  
is a source of constant amazement.

When cold and ice split your trunk  
we drilled two holes through your  
heartwood  
to slide in the two steel rods that still  
hold you tight to protect you  
from winter's freeze and gale-force winds.



From your long, reddish tassels  
and sticky bud casings  
that cling to our dogs' hair  
to your greenening leaves  
that turn gold in the fall  
to your majestic bareness of winter,  
You mark our seasons  
here on our farm.

*Ann Day  
Eastern Cottonwood Tree at Knoll Farm*

VERMONT'S  
MAD RIVER VALLEY

A CONTINUING  
*Conservation Legacy*



Flemer parcel



**Mad River Watershed  
Conservation Partnership**  
P.O. Box 471  
Waitsfield, VT 05673

PRSRT STD  
US Postage  
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Waitsfield, VT 05673  
Permit #16

