

Wildlands are lands that are permanently protected from development, in which management is explicitly intended to allow natural processes to prevail with “free will” and minimal human interference. Humans have been part of nature for millennia and can coexist within and with Wildlands without intentionally altering their structure, composition, or function.

Wildlands covered most of Vermont and New England for thousands of years. Wildlands are vital for nature and society as they:

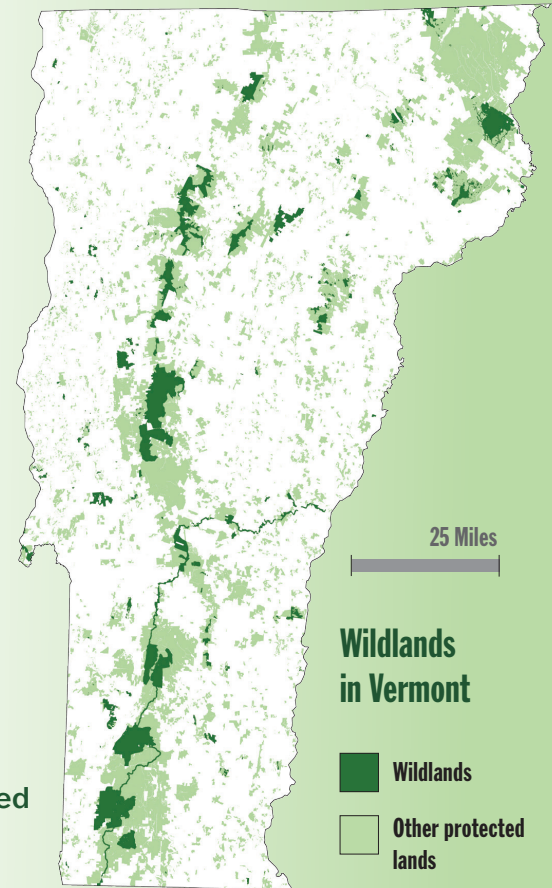
- **Acknowledge and support** the intrinsic value of wild nature to exist
- **Preserve** wildlife habitat and biodiversity
- **Mitigate climate change** by sequestering and storing carbon
- **Enhance landscape resilience** through ecological complexity
- **Offer quiet space** for spiritual and physical renewal
- **Serve as references** for science, management, and conservation
- **Support 30x30**, the global effort to protect biodiversity

Wildlands in New England is the first regional study in the United States to characterize all “forever wild lands” that are protected so that natural processes can prevail, with minimal to no active management. These lands—designated wilderness areas and diverse public and private natural areas and reserves—provide critical support to nature and society. In Vermont, Wildlands are an important part of the state’s land conservation strategy, which takes an integrated, sustainable, and equitable approach.

To reach the goals for Wildlands and improve the landscape resilience of the region, *Wildlands in New England 2023* makes the following recommendations:

- **Center Wildlands** in an integrated approach to land planning and conservation that includes actively managed forests and farms.
- **Strengthen existing Wildlands** through permanent protection and landscape buffering.
- **Create more Wildlands**, thoughtfully and strategically, with a diversity of partners, through private and public action.

**Only 3.7%
of Vermont
is considered
Wildlands
today.**



Three Vermont Wildlands

Peacham Bog Natural Area in Groton State Forest protects one of Vermont’s largest peatlands within a multiuse area in Vermont’s Northeast Kingdom. A boardwalk and interpretive sign offer easy access to visitors and researchers who can safely enjoy and study the bog without causing damage. The peatland, underlain by several feet of partially decomposed organic matter, has been the subject of ecological research and

has provided a living classroom for countless students of ecology.



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Woodbury Mountain Wilderness Preserve, owned by Northeast Wilderness Trust, is one of Vermont’s newest Wildlands, and the largest nongovernmental wilderness in Vermont at over 6,000 acres. It lies in a critical wildlife linkage and provides safe movement for bears, fishers, bobcat, and moose. A mere half-hour drive from the state capital of Montpelier, it provides opportunities for hiking, nature study, and hunting.



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Lye Brook Wilderness is one of eight wilderness areas in the Green Mountain National Forest and comprises over 18,000 acres of forests, streams, and wetlands, mostly above 2,500 feet in elevation. It provides habitat for a diverse array of wildlife species, including those with large home ranges and solitary habitat needs. Many hiking trails, including the Long Trail and Appalachian Trail, enable access and enjoyment of this land.



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State, Regional, and Global Support for Wildlands

The following initiatives make strong cases for Wildlands and emphasize the need for increased permanent protection with measurable targets.

Vermont Conservation Design is a broad vision that calls for at least 9 percent of Vermont’s forest to be maintained as old forest, much of that Wildland, with the remaining forest managed to provide additional habitats and a continued source of forest products.

Wildlands, Woodlands, Farmlands & Communities (WWF&C) provides a regional vision and state-specific land protection goals that call for at least 70 percent of New England to be protected as forest—at least 10 percent protected as Wildland and 60 percent protected as Woodland (managed forest)—and for all existing farmland to be permanently conserved. This vision intentionally values wild and managed forests, farmlands, and communities and relies on the collaboration of conservation efforts across the region.

30x30

Wildlands form a central component of “30x30,” the national and international goal to protect 30 percent of Earth’s land and waters by 2030, addressing the looming challenges of climate change, biodiversity loss, and threats to human health and welfare.

What You Can Do:

- Visit **Wildlands in New England** to read the report and access related resources.
- Contact **Northeast Wilderness Trust** to learn about their Wildlands Partnership Program.
- Contact other Wildlands conservation partners, listed below, to learn about their efforts and available programs.
- Support local, statewide, and regional conservation efforts in implementing Vermont Conservation Design and WWF&C goals.

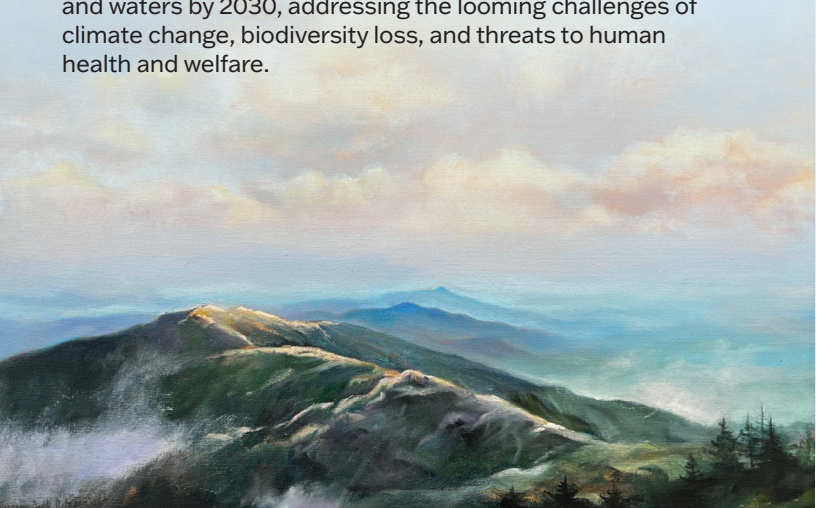
Vermont’s Wildland Conservation Partners:

Public

- **State:** Vermont Agency of Natural Resources, Vermont Housing and Conservation Board, Vermont Legislature
- **Federal:** U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- **Regional and Municipal:** Vermont Association of Conservation Districts, Association of Vermont Conservation Commissions, Regional Planning Commissions, all municipalities

Private

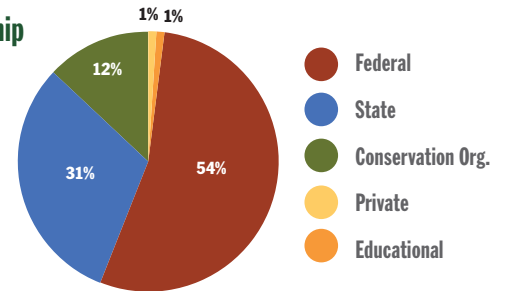
- Conservation organizations, especially Northeast Wilderness Trust and The Nature Conservancy, which focus on Wildlands, and also Vermont Land Trust, Trust for Public Land, and Audubon Vermont, which do small amounts of Wildlands conservation as it complements their other conservation work
- Regional and local land trusts, conserving Wildlands in various amounts
- Colleges, universities, public and private schools



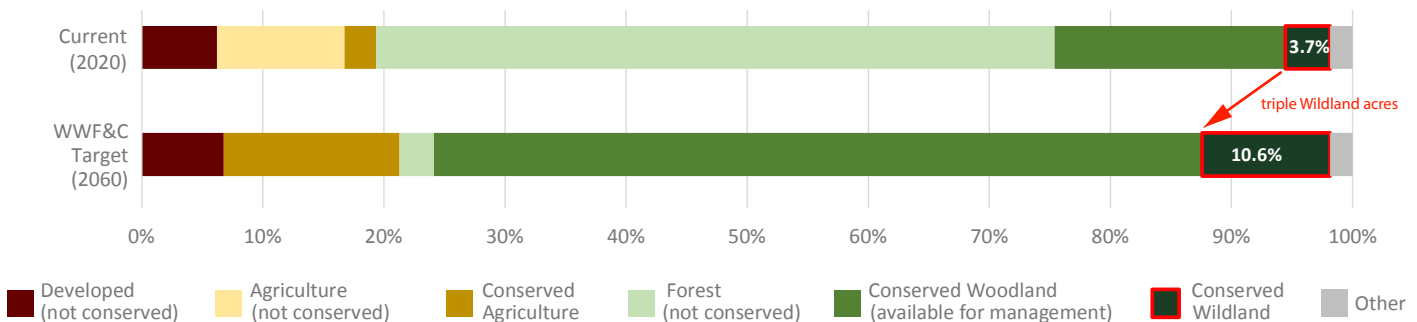
© Susan Bull Riley / The Mansfield Ridge / Oil on canvas

Wildland Ownership in Vermont

221,307 acres



Land Cover in Vermont: Current and WWF&C Target



Copies of the full report, the Wildlands web map, and additional information are available on the website of Wildlands, Woodlands, Farmlands & Communities: wildlandsandwoodlands.org/resources/wildlands-in-new-england/

To learn more about ways to directly support Wildlands conservation throughout New England, visit newwildernesstrust.org/

