

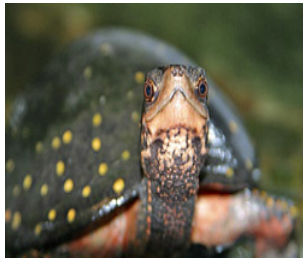


VERMONT RIVER CONSERVANCY

Protecting Lands Along Our Waters

ANNUAL REPORT

2006—2007



Message from the Board Chair and Executive Director



Greetings from Montpelier—

The past two years have been productive and evolutionary for the Vermont River Conservancy. Completed projects have protected critical amphibian habitat in Vernon, a scenic river corridor in Elmore, a community swimming hole in Worcester, and perpetual public access to the Nulhegan River in Bloomfield. This array of projects illustrates a growing diversity of conservation values being protected by VRC.



We are also in the early stages of a long-term partnership with the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation River Management Program to secure River Corridor Easements along critical reaches of Vermont rivers. This program will fully engage VRC in the role of easement holder, and enhance our organizational capacity for effective conservation stewardship. VRC worked closely with the Land Use Institute of the Vermont Law School to develop a model river corridor easement which protects a river's geomorphic stability, water quality, and riparian habitat values.



On the organizational front, in early 2006 VRC bid adieu to Jeff Meyers, our first and only Executive Director, with much gratitude for the high standards of project management and organizational development that Jeff provided during his tenure. We physically moved the VRC office from downtown Middlebury to our current location in Montpelier. This move has put us in much closer contact with our project partners and funding organizations. Like Middlebury, Montpelier offers too many good coffee options!



In the fall of 2007 we increased our part-time staff to two by adding Linn Syz as business manager and general overseer of the organizational development of VRC. This coming summer we will have the welcome services of two interns from the Vermont Law School. While we will see a significant increase in the number of completed projects over the next year, we hope to keep the organizational staffing at its current level, being more efficient by implementing new administrative procedures and developing in-house GIS capacity.



We look forward to an exciting future for VRC, a future that would not be possible without the support and encouragement of our Board of Trustees, project partners, and VRC members. Thank you to all of you for your continued interest in our work. We always appreciate hearing from you, and hope to see you at one of our project sites as we organize events this summer.



Steve Libby, Executive Director

Brice Simon, Board Chair



Vermont River Conservancy Accomplishments

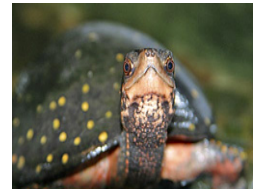
2006 was a year of much “behind the scenes” work, finalizing language for river corridor easements and laying the groundwork with our partners for our 2007 projects. The VRC board also began thinking about a capital campaign to enable the organization to move from doing 2-3 projects to 10 or more each year.

In 2007 VRC obtained its first easement and is responsible for the stewardship of a beautiful waterfall and swimming hole on Hancock Brook in Worcester. In addition, using the newly developed river corridor easements, we started working with eleven landowners and anticipate completing many of them in 2008.

VRC closed on four conservation projects in 2007:

- **North Branch/Green Crow:** VRC transferred 69 acres of important woodland and wildlife habitat in the headwaters of the North Branch River to the Vermont Department of Forest, Parks & Recreation. VRC received \$100,000 from the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB), \$11,000 from Fields Pond Foundation, and \$25,580 from member/donor contributions to bring this project to a close.
- **Vernon/Spotted Turtle:** 17.4 acres of the only known spotted turtle habitat in the state are now protected. In order to complete this project, VRC received \$118,000 from VHCB and \$20,820 from the Vermont Department of Fish & Wildlife that now owns this important parcel.
- **Bellemeur/Hancock Brook:** VRC holds the conservation easement and the Town of Worcester owns the 1.7-acre “Upper Pot” swimming hole and waterfall on Hancock Brook. Member contributions of \$11,980 and a Fields Pond grant of \$3,000 helped VRC complete this project.
- **Belknap/Nulhegan River Access and Campsite:** VRC closed out the end of 2007 with this 2.3-acre easement on the lower Nulhegan River. With a \$30,000 grant from the Upper Connecticut River Mitigation and Enhancement Fund of the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation, VRC transferred the easement to the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks & Recreation.

VRC also ramped up its fundraising activities in 2007, both for project support and for the beginning of its capital campaign. We received 464 donations from 302 donors in 2006-2007; 225 individual donors supported VRC’s work in 2007, an 80% increase over the number of our 2006 donors. In addition, 40% of our 2007 donors were new members, many of whom contributed to support specific conservation parcels. We look forward to building our membership in 2008 as we take on an increasing number of new projects and officially launch our “Securing Access to Waters” capital campaign.



**Vermont River Conservancy Year End Financial Statement
December 31, 2007**

INCOME

Contributions Restricted

Endowment Fund	\$ 83,018
Bellemeur/Hancock Brook Acquisition	\$ 11,980
North Branch/Green Crow Acquisition	\$ 25,580
VRC/Trout Unlimited Raffle	<u>\$ 910</u>
	\$ 121,488

Contributions Unrestricted/Misc. Income **\$ 42,898**

Grants

VHCB Capacity Grants (2006-2007)	\$ 36,000
VT Dept. Fish & Wildlife (Spotted Turtle)	\$ 20,820
Upper CT River Mitigation & Enhancement	\$ 16,000
CT River Joint Commission	\$ 1,125
Fields Pond Foundation	\$ 14,000
Norcross Wildlife Foundation	<u>\$ 2,300</u>
	\$ 90,245

TOTAL INCOME **\$ 254,631**

EXPENSES

Operating Costs

Bank Fees/Miscellaneous Expenses	\$ 623
Equipment/Software	\$ 2,587
Insurance	\$ 1,414
Personnel—Salaries/Payroll Expenses	\$ 60,841
Postage	\$ 890
Printing/Copying	\$ 1,921
Professional Fees/Consultants	\$ 4,196
Rent/Maintenance	\$ 3,690
Supplies	\$ 1,425
Telephone/Internet	\$ 1,401
Travel/Mileage	<u>\$ 4,879</u>

Total Operating Cost **\$ 83,867**

Project Costs

Acquisition	\$ 43,054
Appraisal	\$ 3,000
Legal Fees	\$ 513
Mapping/Baseline Documentation	\$ 1,177
Real Estate Taxes	\$ 166
Survey	\$ 3,936
Transaction/Closing Costs	<u>\$ 6,702</u>

Total Project Costs **\$ 58,553**

TOTAL EXPENSES **\$ 142,415**

NET PROFIT/(LOSS) **\$ 112,216**

Securing Access to Waters Capital Campaign

In January 2008 the VRC Board of Trustees initiated an Endowment Capital Campaign to place the organization in a position to sustainably complete at least ten conservation projects each year. This decision was made in response to:

- the rapid increase in the demand for services to protect river corridors and important places along our waters for perpetual public access;
- the fact that the Vermont River Conservancy is the only statewide organization in Vermont that focuses solely on protecting access to and enjoyment of our waters;
- VRC's already having twelve active projects in early 2008;
- VRC's success since its inception in 1995 in conserving over eighteen waterfalls, swimming holes, shorelines, canoeing campsites, gorges and other similarly important water-related places that would otherwise no longer be available to the public;
- a 40% increase in membership in 2007, now over 400 members, including individuals, businesses and supporting foundations;
- receiving over \$100,000 of anonymous donations towards initiating an endowment.

The Vermont River Conservancy has established a solid history of both fee and easement acquisitions in partnership with local citizens, municipalities, the state and federal governments and other local and statewide conservation organizations. Local residents, foundations, businesses and the State have contributed generously towards the purchase cost of lands.

The properties acquired have become town forests, a state forest, a state park, and municipal parks, all conserved for the public to use and enjoy in perpetuity. VRC has also been asked to participate in the purchase of land in water supply watersheds to help assure that towns will have pure water in their reservoirs instead of runoff from sprawl. The River Conservancy has worked in collaboration with other organizations, bringing its expertise where there are opportunities to conserve water-related lands.

VRC finds and permanently conserves special places along streams and lakes, where families have gone for generations to cool off, drop a hook and socialize at the end of a hot, hard day's work. All the transactions have been between willing sellers and buyers. VRC take no small measure of pride in knowing that all around Vermont, people are enjoying the water and the lands it has conserved. These people may not know about the conservation agreements that protect the sites for them and future generations; they do know, and appreciate, that the water and the land will always be accessible to them in the conserved areas.

Unlike other states, Vermont does not have a state law protecting the vegetation buffers along our waterfronts or a program to assure that swimming holes and other water-related lands are protected for public access in perpetuity. This part of our landscape is vulnerable to development in Vermont, and it is, in fact, being rapidly developed to the exclusion of ordinary Vermonters. One project at a time, VRC is working to protect some of the most ecologically rich and most publicly valued waterfront properties in the state.

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Connecticut River Joint Commissions
Fields Pond Foundation
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Norcross Wildlife Foundation
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Upper CT River Mitigation & Enhancement Fund
Vermont Dept. of Environmental Conservation
Vermont Dept. of Fish and Wildlife
Vermont Housing and Conservation Board

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Friends of the Winooski River
Friends of the Worcester Range
Montpelier Conservation Commission
Town of Elmore
Town of Morristown
Town of Vernon Conservation Commission

Town of Worcester
Vermont Dept. of Forests, Parks & Recreation
Vermont Law School/Land Use Institute
Vermont Land Trust
Vermont River Management Program
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