

Mountain Views

Fall/Winter 2022

News from
STOWE
LAND TRUST



celebrating 5 years!

Long Winter Farm, Nebraska Valley

They took a risk, and it's paying off

Innovations and partnerships allow a family farm to thrive

Five years might not seem like a long time to many, but to the farmers at Long Winter Farm in Stowe, it almost seems like a lifetime.

"These last five years have flown by. But at the same time, we've learned and grown so much since then, it feels like we've been here forever," explains Annie Paradee, now co-owner of Long Winter Farm.

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connect to something more

Volunteers lead the way!

This summer, volunteers helped us replace the aging Howard Carroll Memorial Bridge in Wiessner Woods.

Want to join them? Sign up for our volunteer email list: stowelandtrust.org/support/volunteer



Stowe farmer panel at SLT's 35th Annual Meeting. From left to right: Paul Percy, Molly Pindell, Lew Coty, Annie and Andrew Paradee

“Without it, we’d be sunk”

A note from the executive director

Land. It’s the heart of every farm. “Without it, we’d be sunk,” said one Stowe farmer to me recently. I was asking what more the land trust can do to help support a sustainable future for farming in the area. The answer was clear: protect more farmland and make it affordable to farmers.

With secure and affordable access to land, farmers do amazing things for our community. We see the benefits multiplying five years in at Long Winter Farm in Nebraska Valley (cover story); as the next generation of farmers invest in modern conservation equipment and practices (see page 11); and in all the healthy, locally produced maple syrup, fruit, vegetables, meat, and cheese available at area markets and farmstands.

At our 35th Annual Meeting and Celebration in September, we heard from a panel of new and long-time Stowe farmers about how they support each other by sharing everything from know-how to equipment to medicine for a sick animal. Clearly, farming takes a community: of other farmers, land-owners, businesses, and people like you and me who love what farms do for the beauty of our landscape, our local economy, and our collective wellbeing in the face of climate change.

With your support of the conservation of the Ricketson Farm earlier this year, Stowe Land Trust has been able to work with our partners and community to permanently protect nearly 1,000 acres of productive farmland in the Stowe area since 1987. This is good news!

And with more than 3,000 acres of active farmland in our area still unprotected—combined with rising development pressures and cost of land—so much is still at risk. Fortunately, we have a chance now to protect more land and help more farmers secure access to land. This is one of the most important things we can do today for the future of farming in our community.

Please join me in showing your love for our farms: become a member, volunteer, donate today.



With gratitude,

Kristen Sharpless



“

We love the amazing connections the farm has made possible over the last five years.”

Andrew Paradee
Farmer, Long Winter Farm

WE ♥ OUR FARMS

(continued from cover)

Want to farm. Can't buy land.

Annie and Andrew Paradee purchased their 49-acre farm in 2016, thanks to an innovative farmland access program.

Working together with Vermont Land Trust (whose Farmland Access Program has become a national model for making farmland affordable), Stowe Land Trust brought together community members and local businesses to donate funds to purchase an agricultural conservation easement on the property. The agreement ensures the farm's productive soils will continue to be put toward agricultural use—and will remain affordable for future generations. Like other farmland protection projects, the land remains on the tax rolls and is managed by the landowner.

Conservation Offers a Solution

Yet with every farmland access project, there are at least two families involved.

In this case, it was Christine Kaiser whose family had owned and cared for the farm for over seventy years. Christine wanted to see her family farm passed on to someone who would continue to work and care for the land. But finding a suitable buyer—someone

committed to the land, with experience farming, and able to afford Stowe's high property values—was a challenge.

"We looked around for a long time. There is absolutely no way we would be farming in Stowe without having had the opportunity to purchase conserved farmland," says Annie. "But thanks to the land being priced at its conserved agricultural value, we were able to create a business plan that supports our family and allows us to operate the farm sustainably."

The past five years have been busy, yet thanks to the Paradees' innovation and hard work, the results at Long Winter Farm are plain to see. Their Community Supported Agricultural (CSA) program continues to expand, serving approximately 70 households this summer. Their flexible CSA model allows people to spend their credit at a self-service farm store, as well accommodating non-member shoppers. Andrew Paradee, Annie's husband, notes that the CSA structure is important for small and mid-sized growers. "For us, it's a way to work with our community, grow the food they want to eat, and have the necessary funding in the spring to prepare for the year and make the improvements needed."

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L to R: The Paradees (photo by Leah Licari, bewellvermont.co); Long Winter's seed house; produce waiting to be packed into CSA boxes

(continued from page 5) Along with visits by the general public to their farm store, the Paradees estimate they now serve around 100 families a week.

Growing Connections to Local Food

Over the last five years the farm has expanded to include four high tunnel greenhouses, a refrigerated farm store, a diversified vegetable operation, and organically fed chickens, pigs, and cows.

In addition to retail operations, Long Winter wholesales their produce to local markets.

This past spring, the farm began regularly supplying produce to Mountain Village School after they worked with school staff to apply for a Vermont Department of Agriculture CSA grant. The private school, located in Stowe Village, offers nature-based early childhood education and after school programs for students six weeks of age through fifth grade.

Thanks to the grant award, Mountain Village School's Chef Ryan now turns the farm's excess harvest into healthy, delicious meals for school students, including Oliver—the Paradee's oldest child.

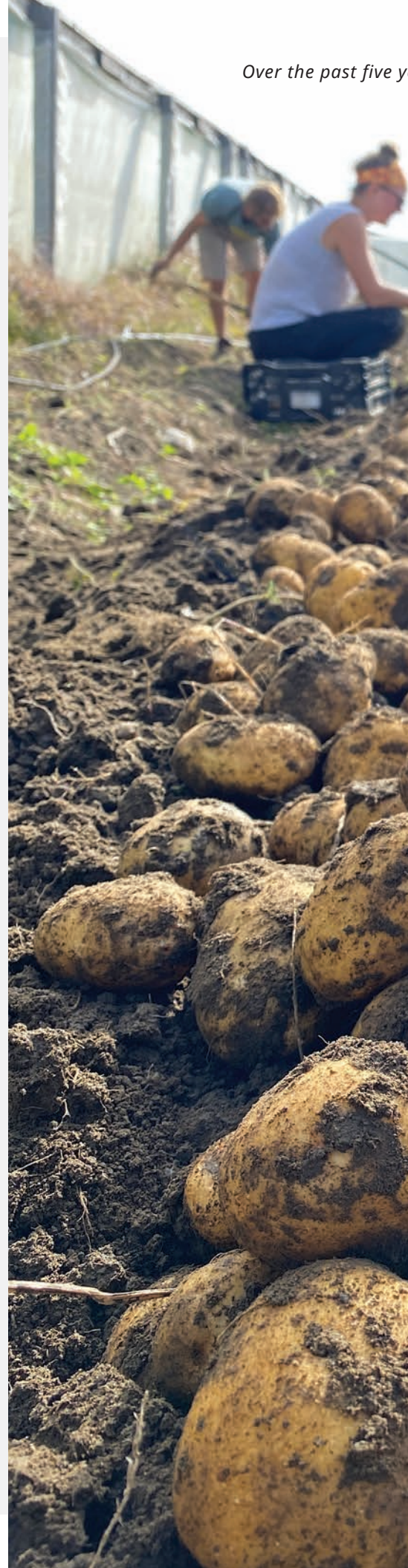
"Working with Mountain Village School has been great. Having the farm be a part of the kids' lives is pretty special," says Andrew. "We love the amazing connections the farm has made possible over the last five years."

Farming is Undergoing a Major Generational Shift

Vermont, as is true for much of the country, faces the reality that over 30% of farmers are over the age of 65. Many, like Christine Kaiser, are looking to retire, with the hope that other farmers will take over their land rather than see it be sold for development.

Yet, as was the case with Long Winter Farm, hope isn't enough. Much of the time, farm families, land trusts, and communities will all need to be willing to take some risk and work together to successfully transition farms from one generation to the next. At the time of Long Winter's conservation, there had never been a farmland access project in Stowe, and there were a lot of questions about whether it could succeed. Farming—even on conserved land—remains a hard business with thin margins and no guarantees. But five years in, it is exciting to see that the risks and investments are paying off.

This coming year, with increasing support from the Stowe community



Over the years the Paradees have been steadily increasing winter capacity.



“

We are so fortunate to be farming in Stowe, and want the same opportunity for other farmers hoping to enrich their communities.”

Annie Paradee

Farmer, Long Winter Farm

and our state and federal partners, Stowe Land Trust will continue to explore opportunities to conserve additional farms and help farmers secure access to land.

“There are many younger entrepreneurs in Vermont who are interested in starting or expanding sustainable agricultural enterprises,” says Annie. “We are so fortunate to be farming in Stowe, and want the same opportunity for other farmers hoping to enrich their communities.”

Looking forward, Annie and Andrew don’t take anything for granted, yet they also see a future worth investing in. “We became a part of the community in ways we didn’t fully expect when we started,” says Annie. “Stowe has really embraced us. And knowing that what we’re doing is part of people’s lives, that we’re feeding our friends and neighbors, is incredibly rewarding.”

The Long Winter farmstore is located at 1187 Nebraska Valley Road. For information on the store’s hours, or CSA membership, visit longwinterfarmstowe.com.

Please note that this working farm is not open to the public. When visiting the farm store, please park in the designated parking area.

Looking for more sources of delicious, healthy, local food?

Visit our website’s Guide to Eating Local for a list of food producers in our area.

Trailside Treasures

Naturalist notes from Carolyn

After fall foliage, the transition from late autumn into winter can feel... bland. Slightly underwhelming. But wait—what about those newly revealed views? Or the quiet of nature tucking itself in for the winter ahead?

Stick season may be undersold, but it can offer us an intimacy with the outdoors that is different from any other time of year. It is also an important time of year for wildlife, as animals prepare for the onset of winter.

Late fall is an especially great time to become more acquainted with the trees and shrubs we share the land with. This fall, take some time to slow down and see if you can identify these trailside treasures:

Balsam Fir: Want a new party trick? Take a dead twig and carefully pop one of the blisters on a balsam fir tree. Put the sappy twig in water to create a natural motorboat. (Note: popping only one blister per tree will keep the tree healthy.)

ID Tip: Balsam fir needles are flat, so they won't roll well between your fingertips. Eastern hemlock, our only other native evergreen tree with flat needles, has slender stalks that connect each needle to the twig, which balsam fir lacks. Resin blisters are also a balsam fir identifier.

Yellow Birch: Forget your toothbrush? No problem—here's a natural alternative. Strip a twig, chew up one end, and use it to brush your teeth. The wintergreen flavor is a subtle alternative to toothpaste.

ID Tip: I used to call these "golden birch" as a kid. On old trees, look at exposed roots for the golden color, as the trunks become shaggy with age. Branches are alternate, the twigs have alternate buds, and twigs smell like wintergreen when scratched.

Witch Hazel: Feeling nostalgic for flowers? Then witch hazel might be for you. This enigmatic native shrub bears small yellow flowers in the late fall.

ID Tip: If you've found a shrub with small, bedraggled looking yellow flowers in the late fall, it's probably witch hazel!

Carolyn Loeb joined SLT in August as our new Conservation Program Manager. Looking for a place to spot the plants listed above? Carolyn recommends a visit to Page Forest this fall. Check out our website for trail maps and more!



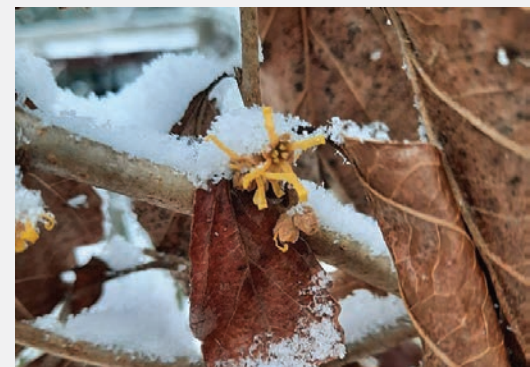
Photo by Joseph O'Brien

Balsam fir



Photo by Joseph O'Brien

Yellow birch



Witch hazel in winter

“Now the next generation will have a chance to experience the land like I did growing up”

Connecting with family & place in Brownsville Forest

Like a lot of 20-somethings living in Burlington, Kelli Grimes likes to spend her weekends riding mountain bike trails all around the state.

A mechanical engineer by day, Kelli is also an avid outdoorist who is passionate about maintaining the privilege of getting to use public land and trails. Last year, she served as an Ambassador for the Vermont Mountain Bike Association, advocating for access and coaching fellow riders how to ride with respect for other trail users and the environment. Kelli’s love of the outdoors can be traced back to her childhood in Morristown and hunting with her dad in the Vermont woods.

One of Kelli’s first memories of hunting is her dad, Kenny, taking her to what is now Brownsville Forest—a 758-acre tract of land that was purchased and conserved as state forest land by Stowe Land Trust in 2019. “I was about 10-years old. I remember hiking that hill [Hollis-Brown Mountain],” she recalls. “It was exhausting.” But for Kelli and her dad it was special to be out in the woods together as a family. It meant a lot to Kenny that he could take his kids to the same place his dad took him as a child, and have the same experiences he did growing up.

A Deep Loss

Once the Grimes family farm, the property had changed hands over time, and the family had lost their connection to the land. In 2019, the property went on the market for \$10 million. “We worried about what was going to happen to it,” recalled Kenny. “The fact that it was in Stowe and with the way Vermont is changing, we knew it could easily become another private development.” The Grimes’ knew firsthand that you can’t take access to land for granted, and that it was important to save places where the next generation can build a love of the outdoors.

Kelli Grimes picks her line on the trail.



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(continued from page 9) They were not alone in this belief. In response to the sale, hundreds of local families—both newcomers and long-time residents—came together to support SLT’s purchase of the land and its addition to the surrounding state forest. Thanks to their support, the old Grimes family hill farm was protected, and reopened to the public in July 2019.

Getting Back on the Land Together

Since then, Kelli and Kenny have been able to reconnect with their family’s old land. Last Thanksgiving, the Grimes’ returned to Brownsville for the first time in over a decade. Kenny was sitting right next to Kelli when she successfully shot a 175-pound 8-point buck. This would be a proud accomplishment for any hunter, but what was most important to Kelli and her dad was being able to share the experience together on the land that had so much meaning for their family. “It was really special to be able to take my kids up there again. Now the next generation will have a chance to experience the land like I did growing up.”

The Grimes family last Thanksgiving

Read the Grimes’ full story online at stowelandtrust.org/news-events/stories & visit our website for trail maps of Brownsville Forest and other conserved land!

Hunting Season Tips

The start of fall means the beginning of hunting season in Vermont. From now through early December, it is important to stay mindful of the season as you safely enjoy the woods.

Wear bright colors when on the trail, and consider planning outdoor activities for the middle of the day, when visibility is high and recreational use is lowest. Keep your dogs on leash, and add a bright orange collar or vest to your dog’s wardrobe. During the busiest times of year (regular deer season runs from November 12-27), try a visit to properties where hunting is prohibited (including Wiessner and Kirchner Woods). For more information on season dates, visit vtfishandwildlife.com



Three generations of our family including our children and grandchildren have bonded with Stowe’s natural beauty.

We believe it is imperative to conserve this great asset for current and future generations. So, Jill and I decided to do our part by making the Stowe Land Trust a beneficiary in our wills.

We see it as a gift to all.

Roger Witten
Legacy Society Member



Make a Lasting Gift:
Join the Legacy Society

To learn more, contact Kristen Sharpless at (802) 253-7221, or visit our website.

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Stowe Land Trust is dedicated to the conservation of scenic, recreational, and productive farm and forest lands for the benefit of the greater Stowe community.

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Above: Ryan Percy with his no-till drill

Board Member Spotlight: Ryan Percy

Do you know Ryan Percy? If not, you have probably met the Percy cows, who are a beloved fixture of the Stowe landscape. The Percy farm cares for several iconic properties around Stowe—many of them conserved by Stowe Land Trust. Ryan is a Stowe farmer and is serving his third term on the land trust board. His hayrides are a yearly favorite at SLT's Annual Meeting, and his Calling in the Heifers events always attract a big crowd. We appreciate the farmer's perspective Ryan brings to our board's work.

Earlier this year, Ryan received grant funding for the purchase of a no-till drill. No-till farming is being adopted by a growing number of farmers as a way to mitigate the climate impacts of agriculture in a cost-effective manner. In a no-tillage system, seeds are planted directly into undisturbed soil, reducing emissions, decreasing erosion and runoff, and improving soil health. Farmers benefit as well, with lower fuel and labor costs, and higher crop yields.

"Stowe is a special community, and we are blessed to have a strong land trust that has worked with our farm to conserve land," says Ryan. "It has been my pleasure to contribute what time I can to SLT. With fairly strong pressure in Stowe to develop, conserved land is part of what makes Stowe special."

Looking for our member list? The number of our supporters has outgrown our newsletter! Visit our website to view a list of our supporters and partners.

Thank you for your help conserving
land for our community!



STOWE LAND TRUST

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Black-capped Chickadee by Charles Gangas



Explore, learn, and connect with SLT!

Kirchner Woods Volunteer Workday
October 22

Sunday Family Programs with Kendra
2nd Sundays, November & December

Family Forest Carbon Program Lecture
November 15

Winter Solstice Sunset Walk
December 21

Midwinter Celebration
February 4

Don't miss an event!

**Sign up for our
email list & read
more online!**

stowelandtrust.org