



U P P E R  
S A C O  
V A L L E Y  
L A N D  
T R U S T

ANNUAL REPORT

2015



## *Preserving Land for Community Benefit*

The Upper Saco Valley Land Trust is a nonprofit organization working with local landowners to permanently protect the lands and waters that define our communities and enrich our quality of life.

USVLT serves northern Carroll and western Oxford counties, including the communities of Bartlett, Jackson, Hart's Location, Conway, Albany, Madison, Eaton, Chatham, Fryeburg, Brownfield, and Denmark.



The Land Trust Accreditation Commission independently verifies, through a rigorous review process, that a land trust meets national quality standards: sound finances, strong transactions, excellent land and easement stewardship and effective governance.

*Cover: Conway Lake Spring/Linda Gray/Oil on Canvas  
This page: Hermit Thrush/USVLT photo*

# A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

**Doug Burnell**

As you will see from the variety of excellent articles in this report, we are celebrating our 15th year as a land trust, looking back on a rich legacy of local conservation projects. Looking ahead, the recent announcement of our success meeting the rigorous standards for national accreditation with the Land Trust Alliance has bolstered the confidence in our systems and the conservation spirit of both our talented staff and dedicated volunteers.

With full staffing, an energetic board, and productive committees, USVLT is embracing several new and exciting land protection projects with significant community benefit. Simultaneously, we are seeking to become more effective at preserving and improving our agricultural and water resources.

Forging partnerships with other stakeholders continues to be a priority. With that in mind, over the past year during several facilitated sessions in Augusta, I have been sharing and learning with 15 or so other Maine land trust executive directors and board leaders about how we might better collaborate with diverse organizations in our respective service areas to foster healthier and more resilient communities. At our latest USVLT board retreat, I introduced some of these learned concepts toward getting to know better and partner more effectively with fellow upper Saco Valley community groups. Accordingly, we are actively seeking out collaborations and ways to contribute we might not have considered before.

Poised for progress, we also look to you and your generous support as vital to our success. Please tell us your good ideas for how we might better benefit our communities, and accept our gratitude for all you do to help keep USVLT viable and making a real difference.

Doug Burnell



# 15 YEARS STRONG BIRTH OF A LAND TRUST

Fifteen years ago, need and opportunity came together to inspire a group of people to form a local land trust. David Thurlow, who was volunteering at Tin Mountain Conservation Center at the time, brought that organization together with the Mount Washington Valley Community Supported Agriculture Project, which operated out of Earle Family Farm. There was strong consensus that a local land trust was a necessary component to fulfill the need for growth of sustainable agriculture in the Valley. The group wanted to ensure that our community always has the ability to grow its own food and forest products locally. Conserving prime farmland and valuable forests by protecting those properties from development was key to such community sustainability.

Using national Land Trust Alliance guidelines, David and our very own Linda Comeau took a very thoughtful approach to next steps. They looked to determine:

1. Was there a need for a local land trust? At the time there were none in our service area, the upper Saco River watershed.
2. Could our community support a local land trust? Research indicated that the community and many local and statewide foundations could provide the needed support.
3. Were land conservation goals broad enough to sustain a new entity? With a service area encompassing eleven towns in NH and ME, the land conservation goals were intentionally made to be as expansive as our territory.

With research completed, David, Linda, Tom Earle, Carl Demrow and Dennis Sullivan signed the paperwork to establish a nonprofit organization that sub-

sequently was named the Upper Saco Valley Land Trust (USVLT). The signatories were joined on the first Board of Directors by: Tom Henderson, Linda Gray, Peter Benson, Larry Garland, Pam Smillie, David Condoulis, David Shedd, Nels Liljedahl, Cathy Steers, Allison Nelson, and Ginny Kanzler. At last, the Valley had its own presence to complement state and national conservation organizations and provide local direction over land protection projects. The homegrown, grassroots nature of USVLT's birth and growth has helped it to partner readily with local landowners as well as community leaders, responding to their desire to protect such special places as Foss Mountain and the Albany Town Forest.

Tom Henderson noted that, "We were pleasantly surprised at the landowner response. We were not aware there was such pent-up interest. Families wanting conservation easements on their lands had limited options and USVLT filled the gap."

From Tom Earle's perspective, "An important revelation is just how important land and its conservation are to our community. USVLT is successful because of this devotion people have for the land. The volunteer time that individuals contribute to serving on the Board and stewarding conservation easements is remarkable."

Over fifteen years USVLT has made great strides with the vision and support of our founders, many of whom are still involved with the organization. We have successfully protected 53 properties and over 7,900 acres throughout the upper Saco River watershed in NH and ME. Including partnership projects, we have permanently protected 10,500 acres from development.

As Linda Comeau observed, "We have learned that 'it takes a village.' Our success is directly attributed to the dedicated work of many, many folks including our past and present board members, volunteers, and project partners as well as the generous support of our members and local, state and federal partners/grant funding sources." We have much to celebrate and yet always more work to do.



# HARDING EASEMENT

## WHERE IT BEGINS

Dexter Harding

When my mother and father bought fourteen acres on the Wildcat River in Jackson in the mid-1970s, they did it partly because they met and learned to ski here. They thought of this place as home even though work demanded they live a day's drive away. Our young family spent long summers and wonderful winter holidays here. The beauty of the woods and fields, rivers and mountains seeped deeply into us all.

All my life I'd known that when I was ready to put down roots, it would be in the Mount Washington Valley. Before my wife and I bought the land from my parents, we discussed their thought to donate a conservation easement on most of the property with the newly formed Upper Saco Valley Land Trust. It made perfect sense. The fields and trails and the riparian forest would still be open to traditional uses but forever protected from any development. Ours was USVLT's first land project, and meeting with board members was exciting. Careful to make sure we understood what we would be getting into, they asked us to think hard about the future: ours and the land's.

A few years later I joined the USVLT board of directors and have since played a number of roles. It has been quite an education – both in land conservation and the functioning of a non-profit board. Most rewarding have been working with landowners as they consider donating land or easements and finding ways to get locals and visitors out on some of the properties we have conserved. It feels just right to play a role in leading this organization. It is doing for the larger community what it has already done for my family.



Harding Family/Harding Easement



## VISION AND LEGACY

# THE OSGOODS

The Mount Washington Valley is like a magnet that draws like-minded people to enjoy its natural beauty. Charles and Patricia Osgood met at an AMC function; avid members, their love of climbing and hiking often brought them to the Valley. In 1955 they bought a house lot in Kearsarge. They so loved the area that as neighboring property became available they looked to purchase it as well.

Over time, they established a trail from Mt. Surprise up to Bartlett Mountain that their AMC friends helped them to maintain. Anyone who wanted to climb or ski or snowshoe using the trail was always welcome. Patricia walked or hiked every day, and the hike up toward Bartlett Mountain was one of her favorites.

As the family grew, their two sons started hiking at a young age. Charles would give them the Latin name for every plant and tree along the trail. Over time, the Osgoods would instill their value system, including their love of the land, into their sons. They grew up thinking about permanently protecting the area.

By the 1980s, sprawl had come to the area and condo development was working its way up into Kearsarge. The Osgoods began to worry about development potentially blocking access to Bartlett Mountain and the Merriman State Forest. They continued to acquire property to protect access.

In 2003, the Osgoods delivered on a promise and put most of their property under conservation easement with USVLT. Their son, Neill, says, "The project is never done as long as there is additional property that might be available to continue their vision." Thanks to the foresight of families like the Osgoods, USVLT has experienced 15 strong and successful years of preserving beloved lands.

# 2015 LAND ACQUISITIONS

## A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

William Abbott

### DEACON CHADBOURNE PRESERVE

Located in East Fryeburg, ME, this donated property protects 18 acres of forested upland and wetlands including a hemlock-hardwood pocket swamp. One of its special features is the presence of rare native black gum trees, at the northern limit of their natural range, that have been assessed to be between 300 to 500 years old. They could be candidates for the oldest known black gum trees anywhere.

The preserve fronts Route 302 and is also adjacent to the Nature Conservancy's 600-acre Mount Tom Preserve. The property is located within a large, unfragmented 1,454-acre "habitat block" identified as the Maine Natural Areas Program's Upper Saco River Focus Area, because the area boasts excellent habitat and exceptional wetland communities.

### DANNIES EASEMENT EXTENSION

In 2006, the Dannies Family generously donated a 94-acre working forest conservation easement, ensuring the use of "best management practices," which promote sustainable forestry, wildlife habitat improvement, and protection of surface and groundwater quality. This easement is consistent with both Eaton's and Madison's Master Plans.

In 2015, they decided to add another 12 acres to the original easement. As conservation easements protect land "in perpetuity," amending them can be a complicated process that involves the approval of the Attorney General's Charitable Trust Unit Office. We are profoundly thankful to the Dannies Family for their generosity, and also thankful for their patience as staff navigated the waters of a formal easement amendment process for the first time.

Black Gum/Linda Comeau

People often ask me how USVLT supports itself, from paying rent to meeting payroll. They're surprised to find out that our "operations" are entirely funded by membership dues, donations to the annual fund, and grants from foundations and donor-advised funds. Our membership – more than 500 families strong in 2015 – is our most reliable and diversified source of income. You, our members, fuel our work and keep the lights on, empowering us to get more conservation projects done.

2015 was marked by many accomplishments, all buoyed by the *strongest membership support in our organization's history*, a significant achievement worth celebrating. In 2015, you, our members, also supported this key work:

- Receiving the "seal of approval" from the Land Trust Alliance's accreditation commission (we passed with flying colors), after hundreds of hours of work from staff and dedicated volunteers,
- Protecting a rare pocket swamp in East Fryeburg, ME, which boasts some of the oldest black gum trees anywhere,
- Completing our first conservation easement amendment, adding 12 acres to an existing undeveloped habitat block in Madison, NH,
- Convening stakeholder meetings in both Maine and New Hampshire to answer the question of how we can support area farmers above and beyond land protection (we're just beginning this work – stay tuned),
- Growing our team of passionate professionals by hiring two new staff members,
- Continuing to refine our strategic goals for 2020, so that we can leverage limited amounts of grant funding and staff time for the greatest conservation outcomes and the most meaningful community impact.

We can't do it without you. Thank you for investing in our work, and we're looking forward to the next 15 years of preserving land for community benefit.



# AGRICULTURE FOCUS IN OUR FUTURE



Dundee Easement/Ann Bennett



Sustainable agriculture and local food production were of key concern to its founders fifteen years ago in establishing the Upper Saco Valley Land Trust. Without question, some of the finest farmland in New England is situated along the Saco River corridor in USVLT's 11-town service area, and the future of farming and a vibrant agricultural community continue to be critical issues to the organization today.

With that in mind, last fall USVLT sought funding in the form of an "opportunity grant" from the NH Charitable Foundation targeted for agricultural revitalization work with the ultimate goal of supporting and strengthening local food system networks in Carroll County, NH and Oxford County, ME. Janet Wilkinson, former executive director of NH Organic Farmers Association and a Madison resident, was engaged to research the local food systems (including production and harvesting, processing, distribution, consumption and nutrient waste management) and to analyze both available resources and gaps.

Utilizing a variety of survey tools, Wilkinson reached out to over 500 members of the local, state and regional food system constituency and conducted a series of community-based meetings. She presented an analysis of her results to USVLT board members in January, pinpointing both opportunities that exist for improving the local systems (citing "community education and marketing... and improved networking/collaboration") and threats (including "public policy/regulatory issues...and infrastructure not currently provided, such as processing, storage and distribution").

Moving forward, the report will help guide strategic planning as USVLT targets organizational resources, prioritizes land and conservation easement acquisitions, and facilitates local food and agriculture initiatives. Maintaining food security and sustaining local agriculture are issues as important to USVLT today as they were 15 years ago to its original founders.

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Linda Zembsch  
Ms. Kathleen Zorka

—continued next page





## BUSINESS PARTNERS

Alkalay & Smillie (V)  
At Home Real Estate  
Attitash Grand Summit  
Hotel  
Cafe Noche  
Computer Port  
Cooper, Cargill, Chant (V)  
Darby Field Inn  
Flatbread Company  
Forest Land Improvement, Inc.  
*Frost Mountain Yurts, LLC*  
Hannaford  
HEB Engineers (V)  
Maple Leaf Motel  
Mt. Washington Valley Ski  
Touring Association  
Northway Bank  
PDM, Inc.  
R & R Woodworkers  
Ragged Mountain  
River Run Company  
Saco Valley Canoe Rental  
Stonehurst Manor  
Tamarack Construction  
The Echo Group  
The Other Store  
Winona Camps - Ordway  
Family  
Woodland Acres  
Campground  
Wyonegonic Camps  
White Mountain Hotel &  
Resort

*Italics: One Percent for the Planet  
Partner*

**Bold: Business Partner that con-  
tributes more than \$250 and/  
or is a Contribute to Place™  
Partner.**

For more information about Busi-  
ness Partners & program benefits,  
please see our website: usvlt.org

## ART CELEBRATES PLACE CONTRIBUTORS

Lindsay & Ryan Bushnell  
Marnie Cobbs  
Flatbread Company  
Eleanor Jenkins  
Lucy Gatchell

Linda Gray  
The Local Grocer  
Missy Myers & Margaret  
Rieser  
Sunnyfield Bakery  
Allie Thompson  
Tuckerman Brewing  
Company  
Virginia Ward

## GRANTS AND SPECIAL PROGRAM SUPPORT

**Outreach Programs**  
Pequawket Foundation  
Robert & Dorothy Goldberg  
Charitable Foundation

## Stewardship & Stewardship Endowment

Bob & Priscilla Dannies  
NH Land & Community  
Heritage Investment  
Program (LCHIP)  
Maine Community  
Foundation

## Internship Program

Mrs. Eleanor Jenkins  
An anonymous family  
foundation

## Perley Mills

Ms. Dorothy Hender

## Grow Green Hills

Roland & Bette Dubois  
Ms. Margaret Scully

## Accreditation & Strategic Planning

An anonymous family  
foundation  
Maine Community  
Foundation  
Land Trust Alliance

## The Lucy Family Farm Project

Kendal C. & Anna Ham  
Charitable Foundation  
Gibson/Woodbury  
Charitable Foundation  
The Lucy Family  
NH Land & Community  
Heritage Investment  
Program (LCHIP)  
USDA Natural Resources  
Conservation - ACEP-ALE

Conway Conservation  
Commission  
**General Support**  
Anonymous family  
foundations (2)  
NH Charitable Foundation:  
Stanton & Elisabeth Davis  
Fund  
Natural Resources Fund  
Governor Gallen Fund  
Lakes Region  
Environmental Fund  
Jessie B. Cox Fund for  
Environment  
Marshall Family Fund

## Matching Gifts

GE Foundation  
**Advancing Local Agriculture**  
Thomas W. Haas Fund  
of the NH Charitable  
Foundation  
An anonymous family  
foundation

## Preserve & Trail Development

Margaret E. Burnham  
Charitable Trust

## GIFTS IN MEMORY OF:

Charles & Patricia Osgood  
by Christina Valar Breen  
Robert Anderson Miller  
by Robert Osgood  
Beverly Klitsch  
by Frank Murphy

## GIFTS IN HONOR OF:

Mr. & Mrs. James Cobbs  
by Helen & Bruce Dixon (2)  
Larry Garland  
by Marc Garland

## GIFTS IN HONOR OF THE MARRIAGES OF:

Peter Kracke and Celeste  
Codington-Lacerte  
by Emily Schmalzer  
Andrew Krackiewicz and  
Megan Brooks  
by Emily Schmalzer



# BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President: Doug Burnell, Conway  
Vice-President: Tom Henderson, Madison  
Secretary: Dexter Harding, Jackson  
Treasurer: Jim Hastings, Bartlett

Ann Bennett, Jackson  
Jim Doucette, South Conway  
Tom Earle, South Conway  
Sarah Garlick, North Conway  
*(until November 2015)*  
Tom Gross, South Conway  
Rick Jenkinson, Kearsarge/Portsmouth  
*(from October 2015)*  
Wendell Lees, Kearsarge  
Chris Meier, Conway  
*(until May 2015)*  
Mona Pinette, Center Conway/Exeter  
Tyler Ray, North Conway  
*(from May 2015)*  
Burgess Smith, Brownfield

# STAFF

William Abbott  
Executive Director

Linda Comeau  
Land Protection Specialist

Susan Beane  
Development Associate

Jesse Wright  
Office & Outreach Manager

# SUMMER INTERNSHIP

Hilary Niles  
Middlebury College



Lovewell Pond/Kate Briand

# FINANCIAL REPORT

(Year Ended December 31, 2015 — Unaudited)

## COMBINED STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

	Unrestricted	Temporarily Restricted	Total
<b>OPERATING REVENUE:</b>			
Membership Contributions	\$ 61,406	\$ -	\$ 61,406
Grants and Donations	69,679	63,427	133,106
Other	7,753	-	7,753
Net Assets Released from Restrictions	56,596	(56,596)	-
<b>Total Operating Revenue</b>	<b>\$195,434</b>	<b>6,831</b>	<b>202,265</b>
<b>OPERATING EXPENSES:</b>			
Program Services:			
Land Project Development	\$ 61,930	\$ -	\$ 61,930
Land Stewardship	67,128	-	67,128
Total Program Services	129,058	-	129,058
Management and General	28,320	-	28,320
Fundraising	14,796	-	14,796
<b>Total Operating Expenses</b>	<b>172,174</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>172,174</b>
<b>Change in Net Assets</b>	<b>\$ 23,260</b>	<b>\$ 6,831</b>	<b>30,091</b>

## COMBINED STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

	Unrestricted	Temporarily Restricted	Permanently Restricted	Total
<b>ASSETS:</b>				
Cash, Unrestricted	\$ 60,468	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 60,468
Cash, Restricted	-	265,594	-	265,594
Due to/from Unrestricted Funds	4,896	(791)	(4,105)	-
Prepaid Expenses	1,623	-	-	1,623
Beneficial Interest Held by Others	-	-	165,804	165,804
Property & Equipment, net	8,169	-	-	8,169
Land & Conservation Easements	-	-	1,110,856	1,110,856
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$ 75,156</b>	<b>\$ 264,803</b>	<b>\$1,272,555</b>	<b>\$1,612,514</b>
<b>LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS:</b>				
Accrued Expenses	\$ 12,158	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 12,158
Net Assets	62,998	264,803	1,272,555	1,600,356
<b>Total Liabilities and Net Assets</b>	<b>\$ 75,156</b>	<b>\$ 264,803</b>	<b>\$1,272,555</b>	<b>\$1,612,514</b>

Unrestricted funds may be used for day to day operations. Temporarily restricted funds are grants and donations for a specific project or purpose to be used in the future. Permanently restricted assets include land, easements and stewardship endowment.

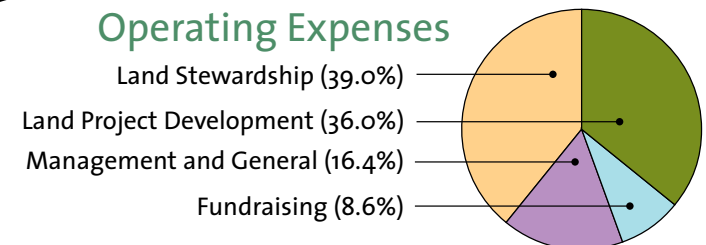
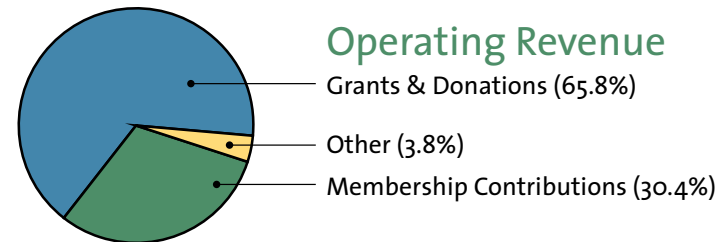


Saco River/Bradford Fuller

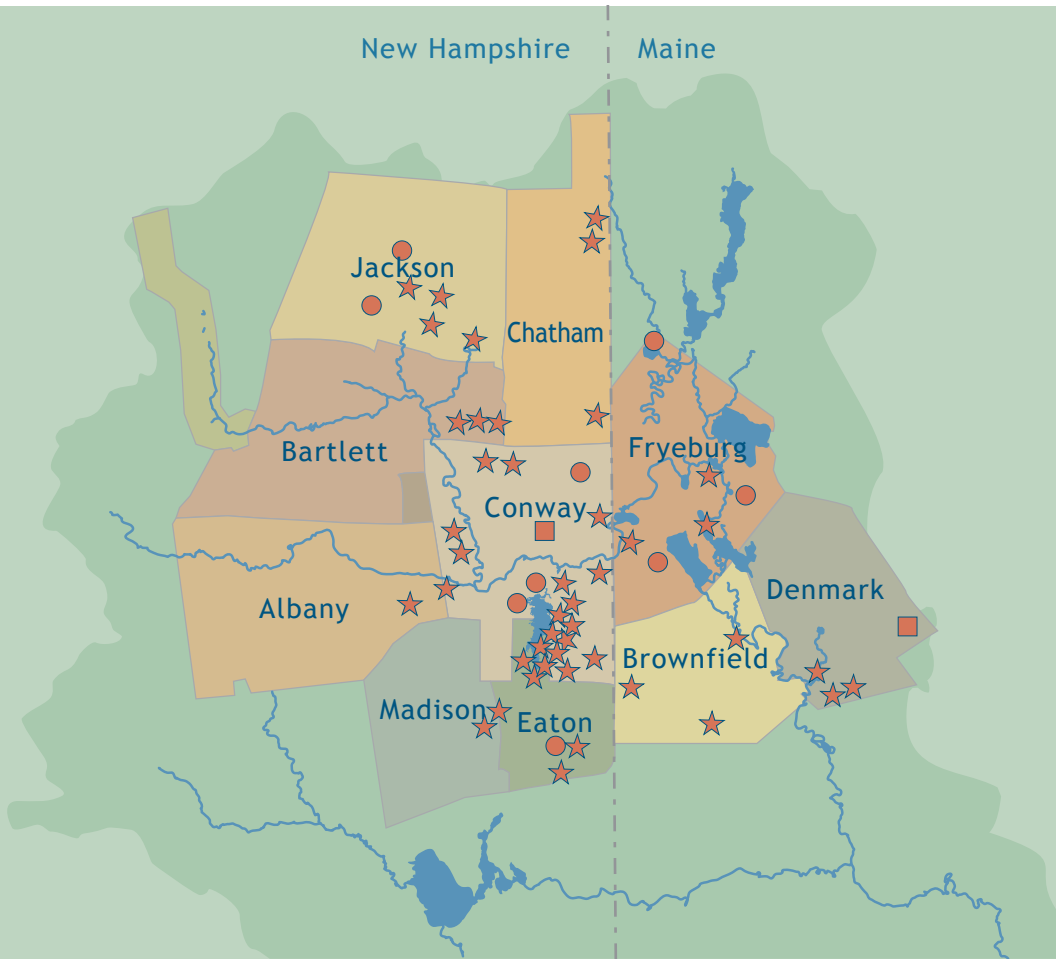
Thanks to the generosity of its members and friends, the Upper Saco Valley Land Trust is in a stable financial position with adequate liquidity to withstand short term, unexpected demands on cash and has resources to grow in the future. Highlights from 2015 include:

- Received the highest amount of membership contributions in the organization's fifteen-year history.
- Collected membership contributions, grants and donations more than covering operating expenses.
- Awarded a one-time \$20,000 operating grant from the NH Charitable Foundation, having a significant impact on funding.
- Succeeded in raising funds for special projects, which include the Lucy Family Farm project, and also secured grants to offset the cost of seeking accreditation from the Land Trust Alliance. When these special projects are completed, the funds associated with them are no longer restricted and are released (see Net Assets Released from Restrictions on the prior page).
- Strengthened reserves, grew stewardship endowment for conservation easement properties and created a new fund for owned preserves.

For USVLT to carry out its mission, we must continue to receive and increase the support of the local community and those members and friends who share our sense of purpose. Initiatives are under way to grow membership and, more immediately, increase involvement of local businesses that rely on the natural assets of USVLT's service area to attract customers to their places of business. Help us build on our first fifteen years of success in preserving land for community benefit.



# CELEBRATING SPECIAL PLACES



★ CONSERVATION EASEMENTS    ● LAND IN FEE    ■ PARTNERSHIP PROJECTS



PO Box 424, North Conway NH 03860  
(603) 356-9683 • [info@usvlt.org](mailto:info@usvlt.org)  
[www.usvlt.org](http://www.usvlt.org)

At the close of 2015, the Upper Saco Valley Land Trust had acquired 44 conservation easements and 9 lands in fee permanently protecting 7,945 acres. Our participation in fundraising for Perley Mills and the Green Hills expansion has protected another 2,900 acres. Please see [www.usvlt.org](http://www.usvlt.org) for more detailed location information about these easements and preserves.