

# House Committee on Natural Resources, Fish and Wildlife

## Land Conservation and Water Quality

April 18, 2019



## Rossetti Beach Natural Area, Colchester

Using Capital Bill funds in 1997, the Lake Champlain Land Trust purchased and saved this ecological and public access gem when it was slated for 44 homes. Its 47 acres feature free access to a rare sandy beach on Lake Champlain. In addition, the natural area preserves a button-bush wetland filtering the local stormwater. This natural area also protects critical habitat for two endangered plant species.



# Protecting Vermont Waters



Photo by Paul Richardson

“... the protection of lands for multiple conservation purposes, including the protection of surface waters and associated natural resources.

10 VSA §303

# VHCB and Water Quality

VHCB pledged \$5 million in matching funds to secure a \$16 million federal Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) award for the state from NRCS: 20 farms funded with 16 closed

Conservation easements permanently protect surface waters.

From FY17-19:

- 54 miles of 50-foot riparian buffer protections
- 776 acres of wetlands protected on agricultural lands and natural areas

Management (ALE) plans are required to address soil health and water quality prior to closing on a farm easement

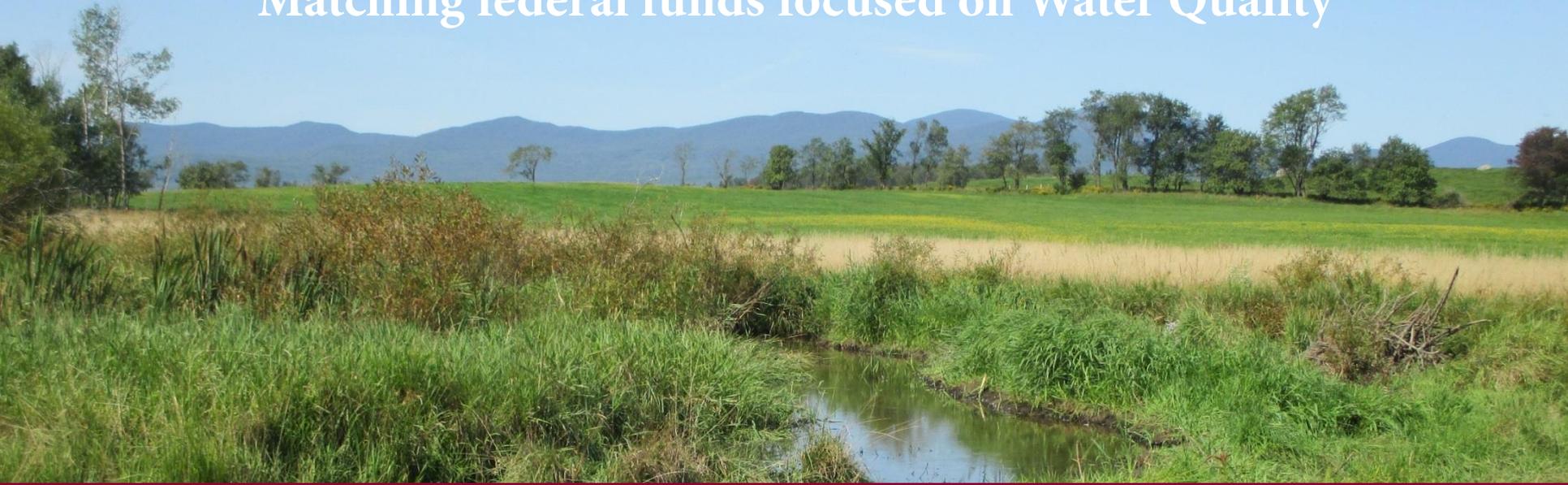
In FY18, the VHCB Farm & Forest Viability Program awarded \$881,099 in capital bill funds to 29 farms resulting in nearly \$8M for water quality infrastructure investments.



## Choiniere Family Farm, Highgate Mississquoi Bay Watershed

The Choinieres implemented numerous conservation practices, installing buffers along the river, cattle lanes and fencing, and keeping manure under cover using bedded pack barns. The farm now produces milk without feeding grain. The Choinieres purchased a neighboring conserved farm last year and sold river corridor restrictions along the Rock River.

# Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) Matching federal funds focused on Water Quality



## **Marc and Tiffany Marquis Farm, Newport Center**

- 90-cow grass-based organic dairy
- 124-acre parcel conserved in 2015; 122-acre home farm conserved in 2017
- Located in Mississquoi watershed (critical source area for phosphorous loading)
- Buffers in easement for small streams protect surface water
- Farm needed manure pit, barnyard, ditching, pasture watering system—all installed in 2017 with NRCS cost share

- Grass-based dairy conserved in 2018
- Easement includes surface water protections
- VLT project developer connected farmer to Conservation District and Ag Agency to address WQ issues
- BMP contract and other funding secured for barnyard improvement, stormwater diversion, livestock exclusion fencing
- DEC has baseline WQ sampling data above and below farm prior to conservation and installing practices and will continue to monitor

# Morin Farm, Holland

## Lake Memphremagog Watershed



# Agricultural Conservation and Water Quality



“By using a concrete barnyard with runoff collection rather than old barnyards with old curbs or animal access to frozen and muddy fields, we will improve water quality in the Dead Creek watershed.”

- Patrick & Melanie Harrison

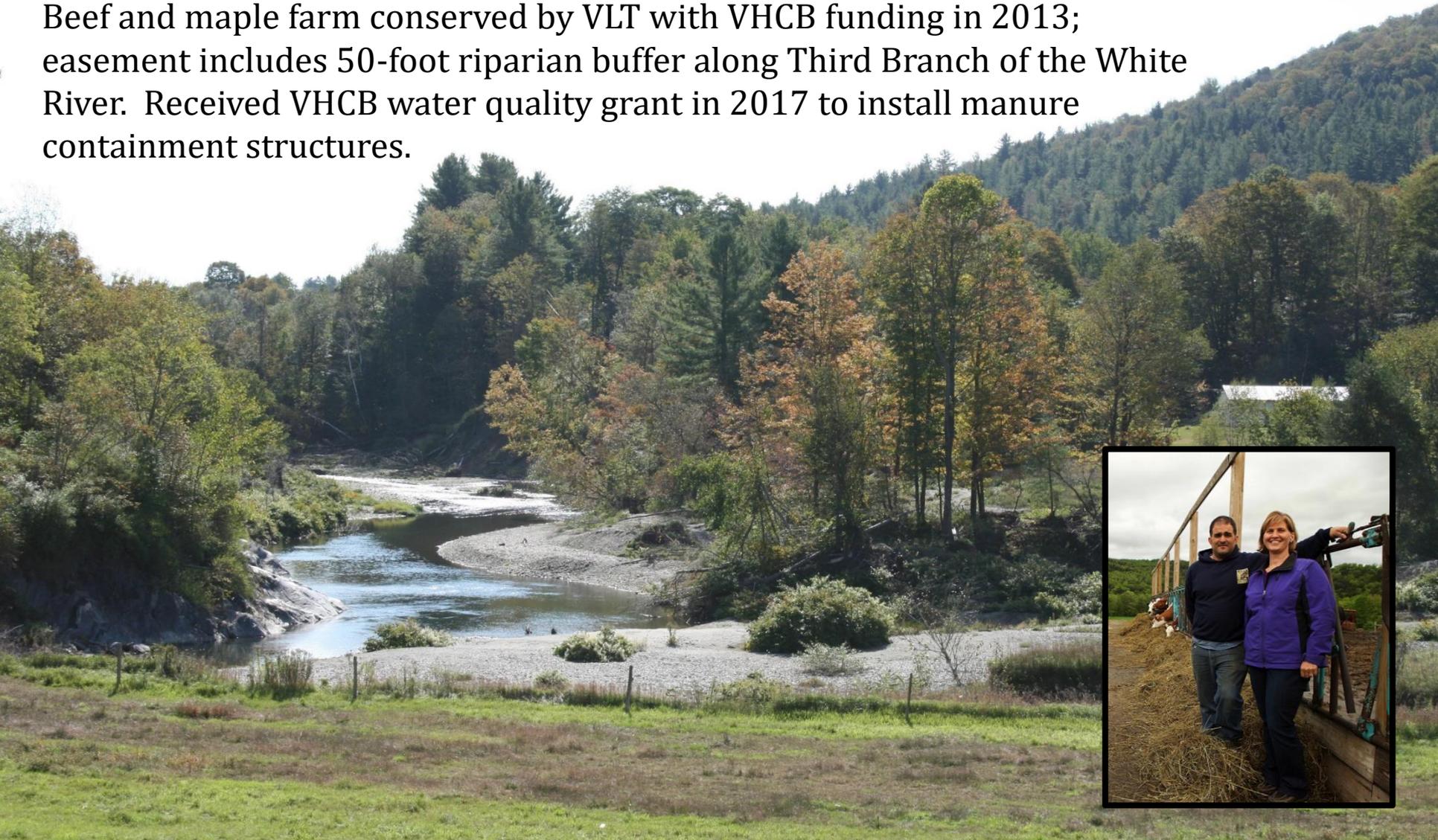
## Harrison's Homegrown - Addison

- 432 acres of pasture and hayland for 200-head organic dairy conserved in 2016
- Conservation funds reinvested in barn expansion and improved manure management system; working with NRCS on EQIP-funded projects
- Tributaries flowing to Dead Creek WMA have riparian buffers and are enrolled in CREP. All waterways are fenced to exclude livestock

# Agricultural Conservation and Water Quality

## **Poulin and Daughters Family Farm, Randolph**

Beef and maple farm conserved by VLT with VHCB funding in 2013; easement includes 50-foot riparian buffer along Third Branch of the White River. Received VHCB water quality grant in 2017 to install manure containment structures.

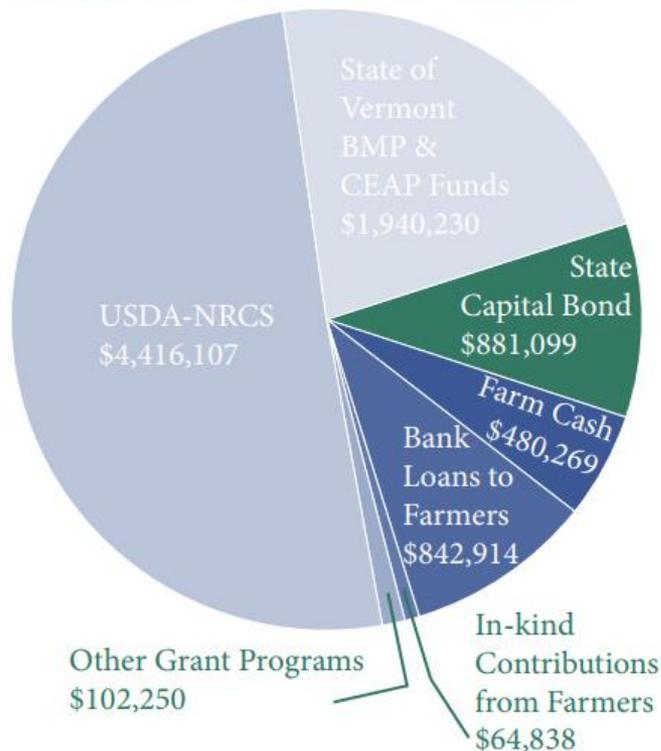


# Water Quality Grants to Farmers

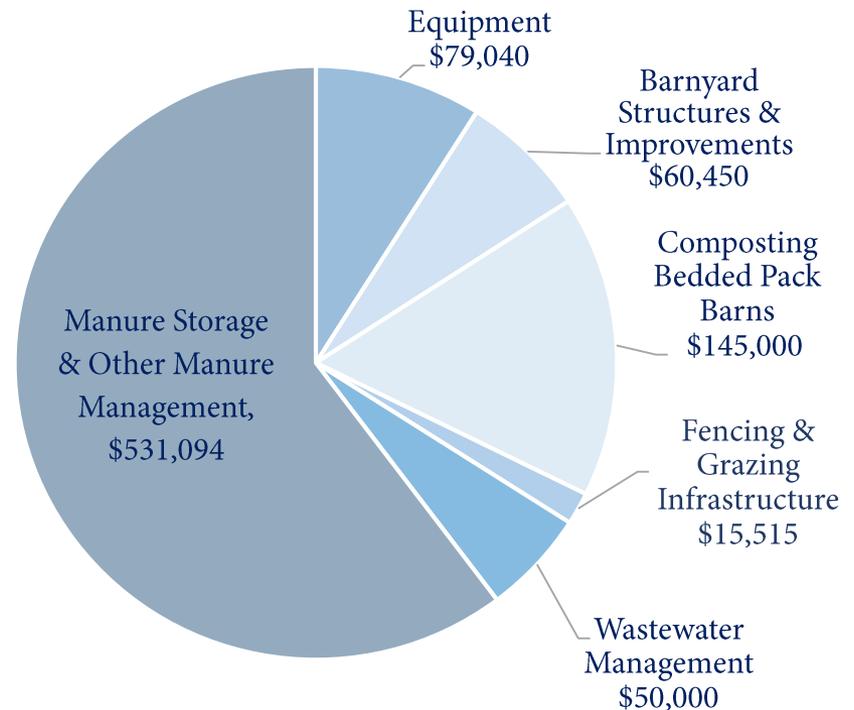
From July 2017 to December 2018, the Viability Program made awards to 29 farms totaling \$881,099. These grants leveraged an additional \$7,846,609 investments, nearly 9:1.

## Total funding of all projects

\$8,727,708 of VHCB & leveraged funds



## Uses of Water Quality Grant Funds





## Meeting Place Pastures - Cornwall

Land previously engineered and appraised for 8-lot subdivision. Now conserved with focus on soil health, carbon sequestration, animal well-being. WQ Grant from VHCB for expanded bedded pack and barnyard with improved animal trails to reduce erosion and runoff.



**Natural Resource Conservation and Water Quality**  
**Morgan Street Wetlands - Bennington**

# Conservation of Natural & Recreational Areas

## Ascutney Mountain, West Windsor



Jim Lyall photo

Acquisition and conservation of 469 acres that were added to the town forest creating a 4,730 acre block of protected land. Added 11 miles of trails to an existing network following the loss of the local ski area. Values of the land include wildlife habitat, natural resource protection, sustainable forest management, water quality protection.



Willoughby Peaks  
Westmore

**Gus Seelig**  
Executive Director

