

Senate Committee on Institutions

Land Conservation and Water Quality

April 12, 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.





VHCB and Water Quality

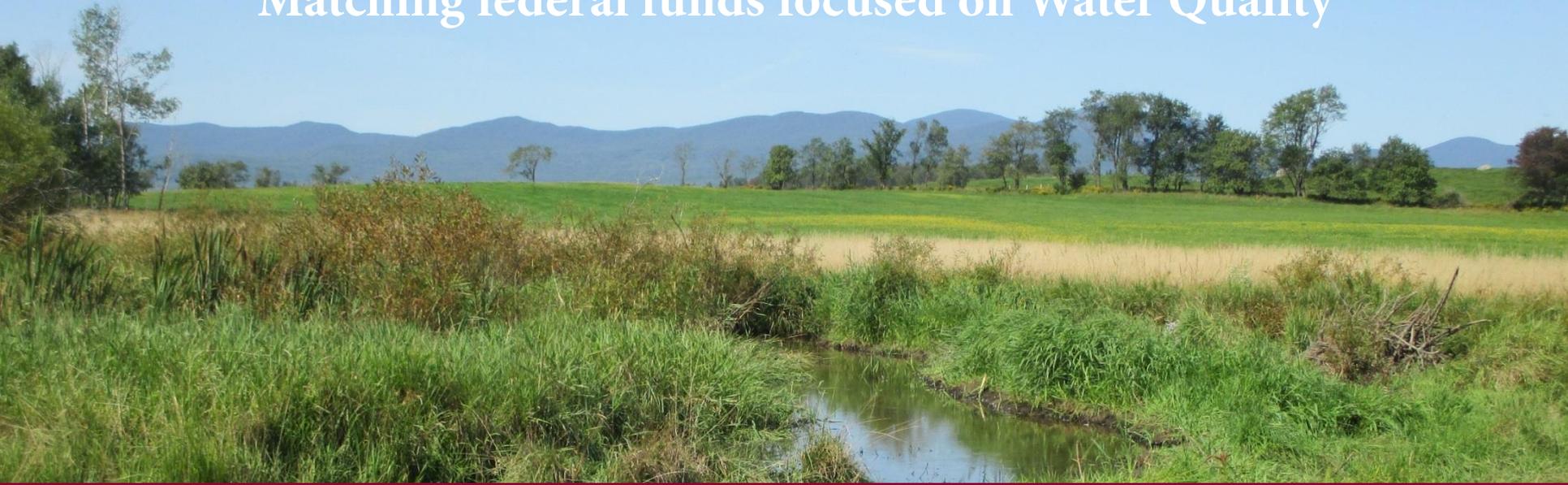
- VHCB pledged \$5 million in matching funds to Vermont's \$16 million Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) award from NRCS: 20 farms funded with 16 closed
- Easement language protects surface waters. Approximately 24 miles of buffers protected just from July 2017 to December 2018.
- In FY18, 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.
- VHCB Water Quality and Flood Resilience Guidelines and Agricultural Land Conservation policy incorporate water quality/flood resilience attributes
- Management (ALE) plans are required to address soil health and water quality prior to closing on a farm easement



Choiniere Family Farm, Highgate Missisquoi Bay Watershed

The Choinieres implemented numerous conservation practices: installed buffers along the river, installed cattle lanes and fencing, and kept manure under cover using bedded pack barns. The farm now produces milk without feeding grain. The Choinieres are in the process of purchasing a neighboring conserved farm.

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

Pigasus Meats, South Hero



Adjacent to land conserved by the Lake Champlain Land Trust with a public trail, Phelan O'Connor and his wife Kelsey exemplify the energy and innovation of young farmers in Vermont right now. With business planning assistance from the Viability program, they are expanding into local and regional markets. They raise pigs and chickens and are ramping up production quickly since moving their business to the conserved farm in 2017.

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

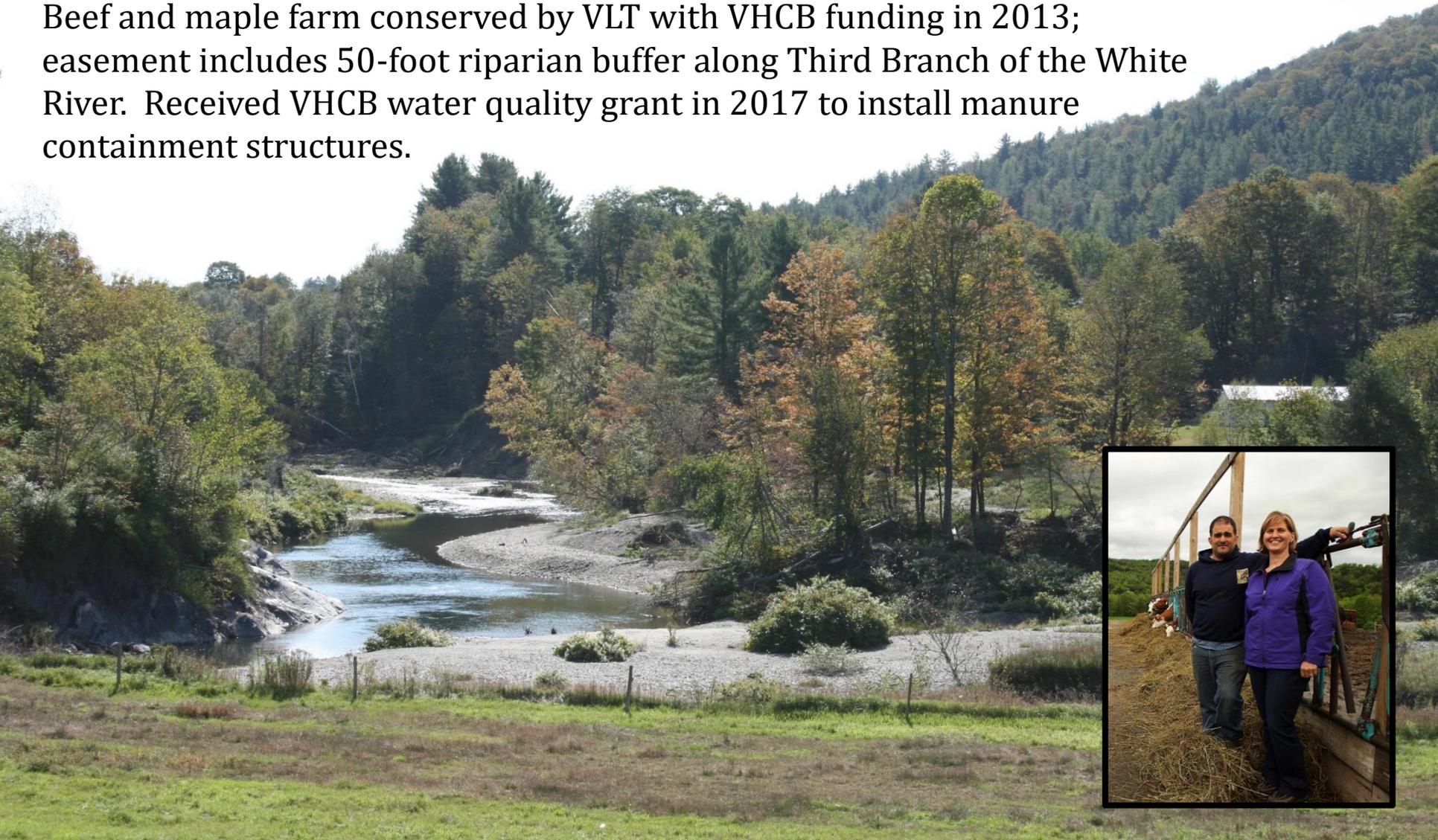
Harrison's Homegrown - Addison

- 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

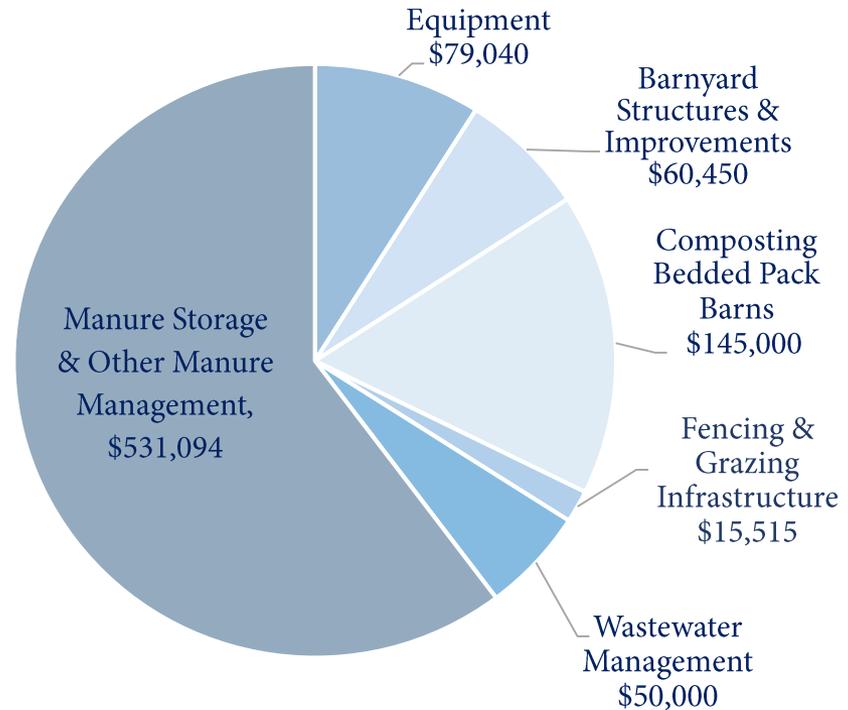
Poulin and Daughters Family Farm, Randolph

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 Improved and Protected

Uses of Water Quality Grant Funds



Between July 2017 and December 2018, VHCB's Farm & Forest Viability Program awarded \$881,099 to 29 farms for infrastructure projects to improve water quality. These grants leveraged an additional \$7,846,609 in investments, nearly 9:1. The grants fill gaps in other state and federal programs and advance priority projects.

Willoughby Peaks Westmore



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