



United States Department of Agriculture

## JOINT CHIEFS' LANDSCAPE RESTORATION PARTNERSHIP

# Poultney-Mettowee Watershed Restoration Project



Green Mountain National Forest, USDA Forest Service Photo

Vermont is the sixth smallest state in the country, yet it harbors much of Lake Champlain — the sixth largest freshwater lake in North America. Its tributaries and surrounding public lands draw tourists year-round. The Green Mountain National Forest is within a day's drive for 70 million people. In the fall, outdoor enthusiasts camp and hike among trees blazing with red, orange and yellow leaves. In the winter, visitors and residents alike take in snowy mountain views and ski among beech, birch, maple and hemlock trees.

Anglers trek to the cool, clear waters to land prized, colorful brook trout. The Joint Chiefs' project removed barriers for fish, including brook trout, improving their access to the remote and healthy Mettowee River headwaters in the National Forest. Through improved outreach, local landowners adopted land management practices designed to reduce erosion and improve flood resiliency for local communities. Landowner collaboration with Federal agencies, local organizations and community leaders also led to protected habitat for iconic wildlife, offering incredible opportunities to visitors and supporting the local economy and culture in southwest Vermont.

## Poultney-Mettowee Watershed Restoration Project RESULTS



Brook trout © ECHO, Leahy Center for Lake Champlain



**Enhanced wildlife habitat:** By working closely with partners and the town of Dorset, this Joint Chiefs' project installed two new bridges, replacing culverts that were vulnerable to flooding and unnavigable for fish. This allowed brook trout access to 1.5 miles of prime waterways in the Green Mountain National Forest and protected nearby homes from potential flooding.



**Improve water quality:** Thirty-seven forest management plans were developed with private landowners. And on-farm conservation practices like cover crops were implemented to help reduce erosion on more than 500 acres of land. These efforts empowered landowners in the watershed to be natural stewards and minimize their impact on water flowing downstream.

### PROJECT IMPACT

**\$5.5 Billion**  
CONSUMPTION

An estimated one in seven jobs rely on Vermont's outdoor recreation, accounting for \$5.5 billion in annual consumer spending. By installing more than 26,000 feet of heavy use area protection, this project helped improve habitat for prized game fish species.

Total awarded through the Joint Chiefs' from 2015-17: \$1.48 million

USDA's Forest Service and Natural Resources Conservation Service are working together to improve the health of forests where public forests and grasslands connect to privately owned lands. Through the Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership, the two USDA agencies are restoring landscapes by reducing wildfire threats to communities and landowners, protecting water quality and enhancing wildlife habitat.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.



New bridge © Poultney Mettowee NRCD

## Bridging A Safer Passage for Trout and People

Katherine Wallace is the very definition of a good neighbor. The Joint Chiefs' project in southwest Vermont enabled the construction of two bridges to improve fish passage, and Wallace was involved every step of the way.

"Katherine owns the land under much of the construction areas for both new bridges," said Hilary Solomon, District Manager with the Poultney Mettowee Natural Resources Conservation District. "She graciously coordinated throughout the planning, design and construction process, allowing neighbors to cross her property to access their land when the bridge was under construction."

Supporting conservation and local heritage comes naturally to Wallace. "Her family and a group of their peers bought Dorset Hollow, a treasured local property, in the 1960s to save it from being converted to a ski resort," Solomon said. "The land is now managed by a non-profit and retains the natural values that make it special!"

Dorset Hollow offers the most stunning views of mountain peaks like Netop Mountain and Owl's Head. The property also hosts an abundance of forestland, open green space and large estates. It's an ideal place for locals to walk, jog, take a drive or just live.

That legacy is important to Wallace. "I appreciated that the Joint Chiefs' project shared a similar land ethic to that of my father, who worked so hard to conserve Dorset Hollow and the Mettowee River headwaters, and who applied a conservation ethic ahead of his time to these lands, with wildlife corridors and a sensitivity to the river."



Katherine Wallace ©  
Poultney Mettowee NRCD

### Key Partners

Bennington County Natural Resources Conservation District

Poultney Mettowee Natural Resources Conservation District

Town of Dorset

Trout Unlimited, New England Culvert Project

Trout Unlimited, Southwest Vermont Chapter

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

VT DEC River Management

Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife