

Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)

Partnering for Conservation Solutions in Vermont



RCPP Project Overviews

2018

Connecting the Connecticut River Watershed

Lead Partner: The Nature Conservancy

Number of Initial Partners: 14

*Participating States: Connecticut,
Massachusetts (Lead State), New
Hampshire and Vermont*

This project addresses habitat for fish and wildlife, water quality and climate resilience in high priority aquatic and terrestrial sites across the four-state Connecticut River Watershed. Partners will work with land owners to improve and connect aquatic and riparian habitat; reduce sedimentation and nutrients; and identify and prioritize parcels of land that will safeguard water quality, protect riparian or wetland resources, and increase resiliency to climate change. This multi-state national project includes funding totaling \$4,980,000.

Nutrient Management Planning for Soil and Water

*Lead Partner: Vermont Association of
Conservation Districts*

Number of Initial Partners: 11

Participating States: Vermont (Lead State)

The Vermont Association of Conservation Districts (VACD) and its partners will extend

its successful RCPP Nutrient Management Planning (NMP) program to help an additional 80 small farm operators enhance soil health, protect water quality, and improve farm viability. The program will primarily focus in the Lake Champlain Basin, where 35 percent of phosphorus loading has been attributed to cropland in the Lake Memphremagog and Long Island Sound watersheds. Livestock farmers will develop their own NMPs through the “Digging In” Nutrient Management Planning course offered by UVM Extension, utilizing the innovative *goCrop* software also developed by UVM. Approximately 16,000 acres will be treated with NMP, resulting in an estimated 12,210-ton reduction in sediment and 12,848-pound reduction in phosphorus loading to Vermont’s surface waters over four years. This is a state RCPP project totaling \$800,000. **This project has helped accomplish--**

Resource Assessments: 138

Land Treatment Plans: 138

Nutrient Management Plans Certified: 113

Acres in Nutrient Management Plans: 25,296

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2017

Cold Hollow to Canada (CHC) Woodlots Program

This regional conservation partnership, operating in seven towns along the western spine of the Green Mountains, will expand an existing cross boundary management initiative. The *Cold Hollow Woodlots Program* initially engaged twelve landowners spanning over 2,000 acres in the town of Enosburg. RCPP will help expand this work to 50 landowners and 8,000 acres by adding woodlots in Richford and Montgomery, as well as serving the existing woodlot group in Enosburg. The effort will encourage Vermont's private forest owners to manage wildlife habitat, find solutions for the effects of climate change, and develop ways to help forests adapt to changing conditions. By securing resources for conservation practice implementation for the pilot group in Enosburg and two new groups in the towns of Richford and Montgomery, the project seeks to expand the base of engaged landowners in this target region and foster the stewardship of forest health, integrity and resiliency into the future. This is a state RCPP project with funding of \$640,000. Speaking engagements about the Woodlots Program were hosted at a Vermont Community Foundation event on Forest Economies, at the New England Regional Conservation Partnership meeting, and at the Stowe Land Trust event.

2016

Memphremagog Long-term Water Quality Partnership

With an emphasis on target sub-watersheds where water quality sampling indicates significant contributions of phosphorus loading from agricultural lands to the phosphorus-impaired **Lake Memphremagog and a nutrient-impaired stream within the Tomifobia River watershed**, partners will plan and implement key conservation practices on agricultural land to improve water quality. The project will implement NRCS-approved practices on farms, focusing on Nutrient Management Practices (NMPs), smaller Best Management Practice (BMP) production area practices and field and pasture practices to address water quality, soil erosion and soil quality decline. Success will be evaluated using multiple performance measures including: water sampling results, NMPs completed, practices installed, phosphorus reductions per practice, acreage treated and social measures, such as changes in farmer behavior and establishment of an ongoing farmer workgroup. This state RCPP project is spearheaded by the Orleans County Natural Resources Conservation District with funds totaling \$674,000.



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2016 *continued*

Young Forest Initiative for At-Risk Species

This project will help increase technical and financial assistance to non-industrial private forestland owners who implement practices outlined in the Environmental Quality Incentives Program that result in an increase in the quantity and quality of young forest habitats. This support is critical, since young forest habitat is necessary to meet the critical needs of several recognized at-risk species. This is part of a multi-state RCPP project and includes Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maine, New Hampshire (lead state), New York, Rhode Island, and **Vermont**. The lead partner of this nationally funded RCPP project is the Wildlife Management Institute with local leadership through VT Department of Fish and Wildlife. The total amount of support is \$5.2 million, with \$550,000 dedicated to Vermont.

2015

Nutrient Management Planning Training Program for Farmers and Conservation Practice Implementation Follow-Up

The Vermont Association of Conservation Districts (VACD) in partnership with the fourteen Natural Resource Conservation Districts, University of Vermont Extension and VT NRCS will assist small farm operators in the development of nutrient management plans (NMPs). The purpose of

this program is to improve water quality by reducing phosphorus and other nutrient loading from small livestock farm operations in the Lake Champlain Basin and beyond. The program will be supported through an agreement with NRCS, as well as through partner contributions provided by VACD, UVM Extension and Conservation Districts. The primary deliverable of this program is 190 nutrient management plans certified to NRCS standards. This state RCPP project is led by VACD and funded with \$800,000.

Accelerated Implementation of Ag and Forestry Conservation Practices in the Lake Champlain Watershed of Vermont and New York

The project will provide financial and technical assistance to agricultural and forest landowners for five years, to help with development and implementation of site-specific farm and forest projects that will directly improve water quality in streams and rivers that flow towards Lake Champlain. RCPP funds will also help conserve important and environmentally critical agricultural lands, and restore and protect wetlands that are crucial to absorbing runoff and slowing floodwaters. The lead partner is the VT Agency of Natural Resources-Dept. of Environmental Conservation and this national RCPP project is funded with \$16 million.

This \$16 million RCPP project has..
-secured 85 EQIP contracts at a value of \$4.7 million in financial assistance to farmers.

-enrolled 23 Agricultural Land Easements (ALE's) at \$3.6 million.

-enrolled 3 wetland parcels at \$3.6 million.

-developed a small farm certification program and the VT Environmental Stewardship Program (VESP).

-developed 25 farm viability plans.

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2015 *continued*

Long Island Sound Watershed- Development of Whole-Farm Management Certainty Program

This RCPP project is led by the Connecticut Council on Soil and Water Conservation. The focus is on excess nutrients which were identified as the primary driver of hypoxic conditions in Long Island Sound and are also impacting upland water resources within the watershed, which encompasses areas of Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Rhode Island, and **Vermont**. This project will explore a comprehensive, whole-farm management certainty program for farmers in the area and use both working lands and easement programs to improve soil health and nutrient management, establish community resiliency areas with a focus on enhancing riparian areas, and institute a land protection program to protect agricultural and forestry areas. This nationally funded RCPP project is funded with \$10 million. The deliverables include:

- **Nutrient management planning**-on small farms, led by VT Association of Conservation Districts.
- **Advanced technical assistance**-to implement agronomic and grazing practices, led by UVM Extension.
- **Enhanced flood resiliency and stream stabilization**, led by Connecticut River Watershed Council.
- **Land protection through easement acquisition**, led by Highstead Foundation.

