

Conserving Vermont's Natural Heritage

*A Guide to Community-Based Planning
for the Conservation of Vermont's
Fish, Wildlife, and Biological Diversity*



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Note to the Reader:

The Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department is pleased to present you with a copy of *Conserving Vermont's Natural Heritage – A Guide to Community-Based Planning for the Conservation of Fish, Wildlife and Biological Diversity*. The Department recognizes the strong commitment from citizens involved in land use planning throughout Vermont and the role they play in the conservation of fish, wildlife, and habitats. This commitment from many dedicated Vermonters is essential for the successful long-term conservation of our marvelous natural heritage including our wildlife and all our connections to the land including hunting, fishing, viewing, hiking and the many ways in which people enjoy Vermont's wildlife.

This manual is designed to offer technical guidance for identifying important wildlife and natural heritage resources in your communities or areas of interest, and understanding information related to the conservation of those resources. It also provides ideas, options, and opportunities for communities and others to consider when planning for the long-term conservation of wildlife in Vermont.

This document is not regulatory in nature, nor does it intend to direct land use regulation as the primary tool for wildlife and habitat conservation. Rather, it offers choices and opportunities that may prove useful in implementing your conservation goals and objectives.

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The image people have of Vermont is not beyond its reality. The descriptions of wild beauty interspersed with the purity of northern New England villages need not be exaggerated. Residents of the state have always been proud of these attributes and are protective of their territory, and for outsiders who visit at any time of year, Vermont is a release from the intensity and sameness that grip many other parts of America.

~ Charles Johnson, *The Nature of Vermont*

Preface and Acknowledgments

The Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department (VFWD) developed this manual to offer a new source of information and technical guidance on conservation planning in Vermont. Experience and research has taught us a great deal in recent years about how to conserve fish, wildlife, and the natural environment that supports them. Among the many lessons learned is that citizens of Vermont care a great deal about the fish, wildlife, habitats, and lands in their state and are eager to learn more about how to effectively conserve them.

There is a growing interest in local, community-based conservation efforts. Town planning and conservation commissions, watershed groups, regional planning commissions, state agencies, land trusts, and many others are becoming more active in conservation planning. Whether these organizations and groups are motivated by increased risks to their interests in land, wildlife, and outdoor pursuits, or whether they are motivated by a greater understanding of conservation needs, they are increasingly important partners in the future of fish and wildlife conservation in Vermont. We wish to foster and encourage this enthusiasm for conservation of fish, wildlife, and natural landscapes.

This manual offers choices and opportunities to Vermont communities and others who engage in land use and conservation planning efforts. It provides a process, information, and ideas for how to incorporate fish, wildlife, habitat, natural communities, the landscape, hunting, fishing, wildlife watching, and working lands into local and regional planning documents, zoning regulations, and other conservation instruments. There are many processes and methods for addressing natural resource conservation through land use and conservation planning, and the reader is encouraged to consider other ideas and options beyond those presented in this manual. This manual will enable Vermont communities and planners to consider several natural resource elements in a realistic, pragmatic fashion so that this and future generations of citizens and visitors can enjoy the wealth and grandeur of Vermont's natural resources.

The Department and in particular the authors of this manual wish to thank all those who have contributed to the development and refinement of this manual, including: The Vermont League of Cities and Towns (Jon Groveman and Karen Horn) who authored Chapter 7; Elizabeth Thompson, consulting ecologist, who authored Chapter 6 and many other parts of the manual, as well as invested countless hours editing and revising the document; Wayne Laroche, commissioner, Department of Fish and Wildlife; Jonathan Wood, commissioner, Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation; Alan Quackenbush; Cathy Kashanski; Eric Sorenson; Mark Ferguson; Gina Campoli; Faith Ingulsrud; Andrew Flagg; Susan Morse; Kim Royar; Rod Wentworth; Bill Rossmassler; Doug Blodgett; Dave Capen; Terri Donovan; Bob Popp; Bill Leopold; Debra Brighton; Kevin Behm; Marty Illack; Virginia Rasche; Kevin Viani; and all the others who have offered support and inspiration for this project.

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