

THE ASSOCIATION OF VERMONT CONSERVATION COMMISSIONS (AVCC) 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

Board Members

Bill Dell'Isola
Caitlin Drasher
Greta Hasler
Justin Marsh
Marian Wolz
Mark Nelson
Nancy Jones
Rebecca Roman
Suma Lashof

How To Reach Us

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vtconservation@gmail.com

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11 Baldwin Street
Montpelier, VT 05602

Dear Members, Supporters and Friends,

Can local Conservation Commissions really make a difference? The answer is “Yes - most definitely!” Just ask the Conservation Commissions that presented at the 2023 AVCC Virtual Summit. The theme of our 2023 AVCC Virtual Summit was “Elevating Local Conservation Successes.” Seven Conservation Commissions that received Tiny Grants presented their project success stories.

Their stories were educational and inspirational. They shared about their projects’ successes, challenges, and lessons learned. But most importantly, they shared how their efforts at the local level were successful in helping to protect Vermont’s natural resources. It reminds me of the somewhat old saying “think globally, act locally.” You can see their presentations here: https://vtconservation.com/conservation_summit-2023/.

Supporting Vermont’s Statewide Conservation Goals

And speaking of thinking globally, but acting locally, we will have an opportunity to help Vermont support the national goal to conserve at least 30 percent of U.S. lands and freshwater and 30 percent of U.S. ocean areas by 2030. This year, Vermont passed the Community Resilience and Biodiversity Protection Act (Act 59), which states that “... 30 percent of Vermont’s total land area shall be conserved by 2030, and 50 percent of the State’s total land area shall be conserved by 2050.” The exact details of how this will be achieved are being developed. Conservation Commissions across the state have worked hard to identify areas that needed protection and implemented plans to protect those areas. We think that there will be opportunities for Conservation Commissions to be engaged in Vermont’s 30x30 and 50x50 initiative. We will be sharing more information about this via the AVCC listserv as it becomes available.

Recognizing Nancy Jones’ 20+ Years of Service on the AVCC Board

As part of my letter, I would like to recognize and thank one of our Board Members for her years of work. Nancy Jones has served on the AVCC Board for over 20 years. She is also the Chair of the Bradford Conservation Commission and is Co-Chair on Bradford’s Conservation Fund Committee. Nancy has been a very active member of the AVCC Board and has filled the role of Secretary for as many years as I can remember. Nancy has been with the AVCC through many changes and has provided the “corporate memory” so to speak for all of us that are relatively new to the Board. Nancy is dedicated to conservation and shows it with action as well as words. We are sorry that Nancy has decided to step down, we will miss her, and we wish her all the best in her future endeavors.

Recruiting New Board Members

The AVCC Board is made up of 9 individuals – 5 that are appointed by Vermont Natural Resources Council and 4 that are volunteer members. This year, Board members Rebecca Roman and Caitlin Drasher both announced their departures from the Board as well. We are so thankful to them for their work and service to conservation in Vermont. This is an active and hard working Board. We meet monthly for 1 to 1.5 hours via Zoom and we have 1 in-person retreat each year. At this time, we have two open seats on the board for a “volunteer member.” If you are interested in becoming a Board member, feel free to reach out by sending an email to vtconservation@gmail.com.

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2024 Tiny Grants for Conservation Commissions

As always, information about applying for Tiny Grants is included in this Annual Report. The deadline for applying for a Tiny Grant is April 5, 2024. Over the years, AVCC has awarded many Tiny Grants to Conservation Commissions across the state. These funds have been used to help with land conservation, education and outreach, stewardship and managements, and planning. Start thinking about important projects for your town and submit them via the Tiny Grant application process.

Tiny Grants are one of many benefits of being an AVCC Member. Tiny Grants are funded from Membership dues and from our sponsors. The AVCC operates on a tight margin. We thank towns and individuals across the state for their annual membership dues and hope that they will continue in 2023. If your Conservation Commission is not an AVCC member, please see our website <https://vtconservation.com/join-us/> for membership information.

In closing, I want to thank all of you for your commitment, time, and work to protect Vermont’s natural resources. Each of you make a difference in your towns and across the state. With the increasing threats to nature from climate change, development and pollution, conservation commissions can play a vital role in grassroots efforts. Please keep up the great work and I hope too hear more success stories in the future.

Mark Nelson
Board Chair
Association of Vermont Conservation Commissions

AVCC 2023 VIRTUAL SUMMIT

CELEBRATING LOCAL CONSERVATION SUCCESSES

AVCC’s 2023 virtual summit and annual meeting was held on Thursday, October 19th. During the meeting, we recognized and appreciated Nancy Jones’ over 20 years of dedicated service to the Board, and announced that she is not seeking another term. After a brief financial snapshot of AVCC, we heard an overview of the recently passed 30×30 law in Vermont and the work that lies ahead in its implementation. It was wonderful to hear from members of Conservation Commissions in 7 communities across Vermont who have received AVCC Tiny Grants to support their work in the past. Thank you to the Conservation Commission members from Bolton, Hartford, Jericho, Johnson, Monkton, Richford, and Shrewsbury, who shared their important work with us. Stay tuned for more information about a Vermont statewide Conservation Summit this year!



Bolton	Hartford	Jericho	Johnson	Monkton	Richford	Shrewsbury
Building a raised walkway to avoid degradation of a trail in the Town Forest	Training and data analysis for an amphibian road crossing project	Creating a pollinator garden on the Town Green with educational signage	Updating their Emerald Ash Borer education videos	Purchasing tools to remove buck-thorn from school property	Hosting a pollinator awareness campaign	Purchasing game cameras for monitoring roadside wildlife crossings

TINY GRANT SUCCESS STORIES

AN UPDATE FROM 2023 AVCC TINY GRANT PROJECTS

Jericho Pollinator Garden and Tree Care Education



The **Jericho Conservation Commission** expanded the pollinator garden in front of the Town Hall by planting a section of pollinator plants in the beds surrounding existing trees and conducted an educational campaign to highlight the importance of wildlife habitat. Using Heather Holms’ “soft landings” model of habitat creation, shade tolerant native plants were planted to create an understory under trees, and decorative fencing was installed around the trees to deter foot traffic and soil compaction. Educational signs were installed and used during the Town’s Green Tree Celebration to educate visitors about the ecological importance of trees in the life cycle of insects, birds, and other animals.

Mount Holly Star Lake Aquatic Plants Event

The **Mount Holly Conservation Commission** hosted a public event at the Old Fellows Hall located at the south end of Star Lake, which featured a lecture on aquatic plants and communities that exist in Start Lake and surrounding lakes and ponds. The event was jointly sponsored by the Conservation Commission and the Farm & Wilderness Conservation, included refreshments, and was attended by approximately 30 town residents.



Putney Buckthorn Removal on Trails



The **Putney Conservation Commission** used their tiny grant funds to purchase special girdling knives and uprooter tools to remove buckthorn from trails in the East Putney Forest Block, an important wildlife habitat and corridor connecting forested land on either side of Route 5. Once the trail is restored and reconstructed, the commission plans to offer informative nature walks to the community to highlight the conservation value of this 50-acre parcel of land, which includes a stream and small wetland. The tools will be available to the commission for future use at other conservation sites in Putney.

TINY GRANT SUCCESS STORIES

AN UPDATE FROM 2023 AVCC TINY GRANT PROJECTS

Richford Pollinator Garden

The **Richford Conservation Commission** partnered with the Richford Elementary School to plant a pollinator garden and host a pollinator awareness campaign, distributing free wildflower seed packets to the public. Members and children from the school worked together to plan and plant a pollinator garden, resulting in varied habitat and food sources for pollinators, and enhanced awareness and education on the benefits of wildlife-friendly native plants.



Bolton Boardwalk in Town Forest

The **Bolton Conservation Commission** constructed a raised boardwalk on the primary access trail to the Preston Pond Conservation Area, or Bolton Town Forest, that allows visitors access to the trails and abates degradation to the trail and supports core beaver habitat. Members and community volunteers constructed the boardwalk over several workdays.



AVCC'S ANNUAL TINY GRANTS

provide seed money and/or matching funds for specific conservation projects at the local level, in the broad categories of land conservation, education and outreach, stewardship and management, and planning. To learn more, visit <http://vtconservation.com>

Basic Information

Grant range: \$250 - \$600

Grant application due: April 5, 2024 **Grant award announcement:** May 10, 2024

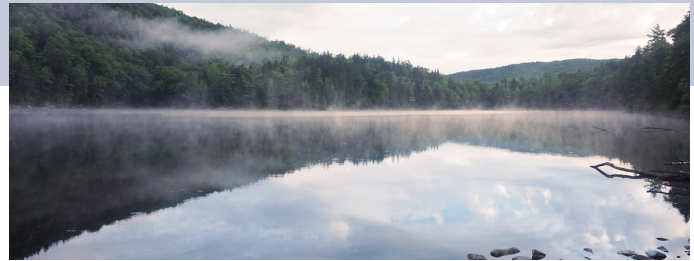
Evaluation Criteria: Demonstrated need; Evidence of matching funds and/or in-kind services; Closely aligns with grant goals; Project readiness; Local support and volunteer involvement

How to apply: Please email ALL completed applications to vtconservation@gmail.com (AVCC Board). We are strongly discouraging mailed applications, but if is not possible for you to email your application, our mailing address is on the front page of this Annual Report.

2024 Application

In a separate document, please provide the following information:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| -Contact Person | 1. Brief description of the project (300 words max) |
| -Organization | 2. Total budget for this project |
| -Mailing Address | 3. Amount of grant money requested (min. \$250 – max. \$600) |
| -Email | 4. Other funds, if any, for this project |
| -Phone | 5. List the source(s) and amounts of other funds and/or in-kind contributions |
| -Fiscal Sponsor, if any (legal name) | 6. Explain how these funds will make a difference to the success of your project (600 words max) |
| -Fiscal Sponsor contact information | 7. Explain how you will measure the success of your project (300 words max) |



To be eligible for an AVCC Tiny Grant, groups must be: Vermont conservation commissions or local committees/groups that are working towards becoming a conservation commission **AND** paid members of AVCC. To check your membership status, please email vtconservation@gmail.com.

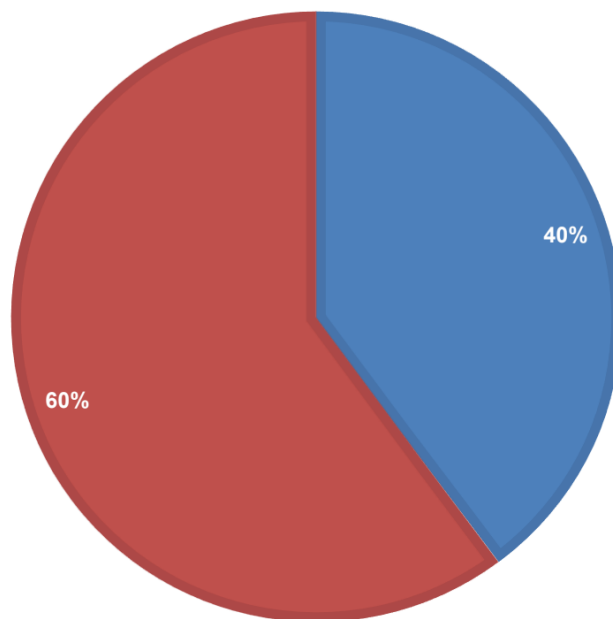
Other Stipulations: Groups must be a municipality or IRS certified 501(c)(3) public charity, or have fiscal sponsorship by a municipality or IRS certified 501(c)(3) public charity. Prior recipients of grants from AVCC must have completed those grants and closed them out. Grants cannot be used for general funds, dues or subscriptions. Grantees will be required to submit a Conservation Success Story online using the AVCC website (vtconservation.com/success-stories), presenting evidence of grant completion with photographs and text detailing outcomes and challenges.

Timetable: Applications must be submitted (or postmarked if sent by mail) on or before **April 5, 2024**. Grantees will be notified of funding approval by **May 10, 2024**. Projects must be completed and a final report submitted **May 1, 2025**. The funds awarded under this grant will be available approximately a month after the awards are announced. Checks will be issued by the Vermont Community Foundation.

2023 FINANCIAL YEAR IN REVIEW

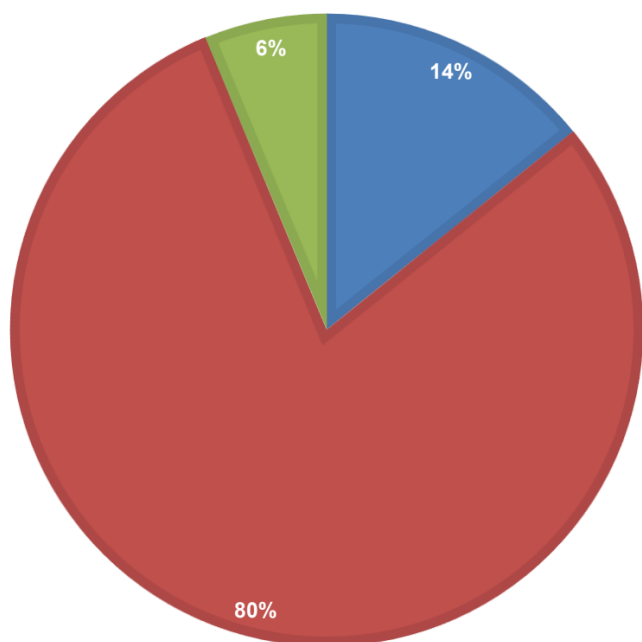
2023 OVERVIEW

■ Revenues \$1,924 ■ Expenses \$2,909



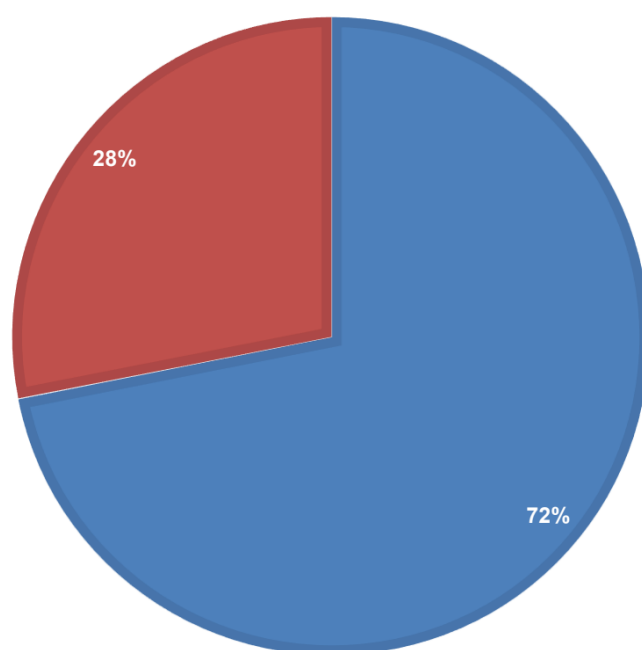
REVENUE

■ Fundraising \$274 ■ Membership \$1,530 ■ Sponsorship \$120



EXPENSES

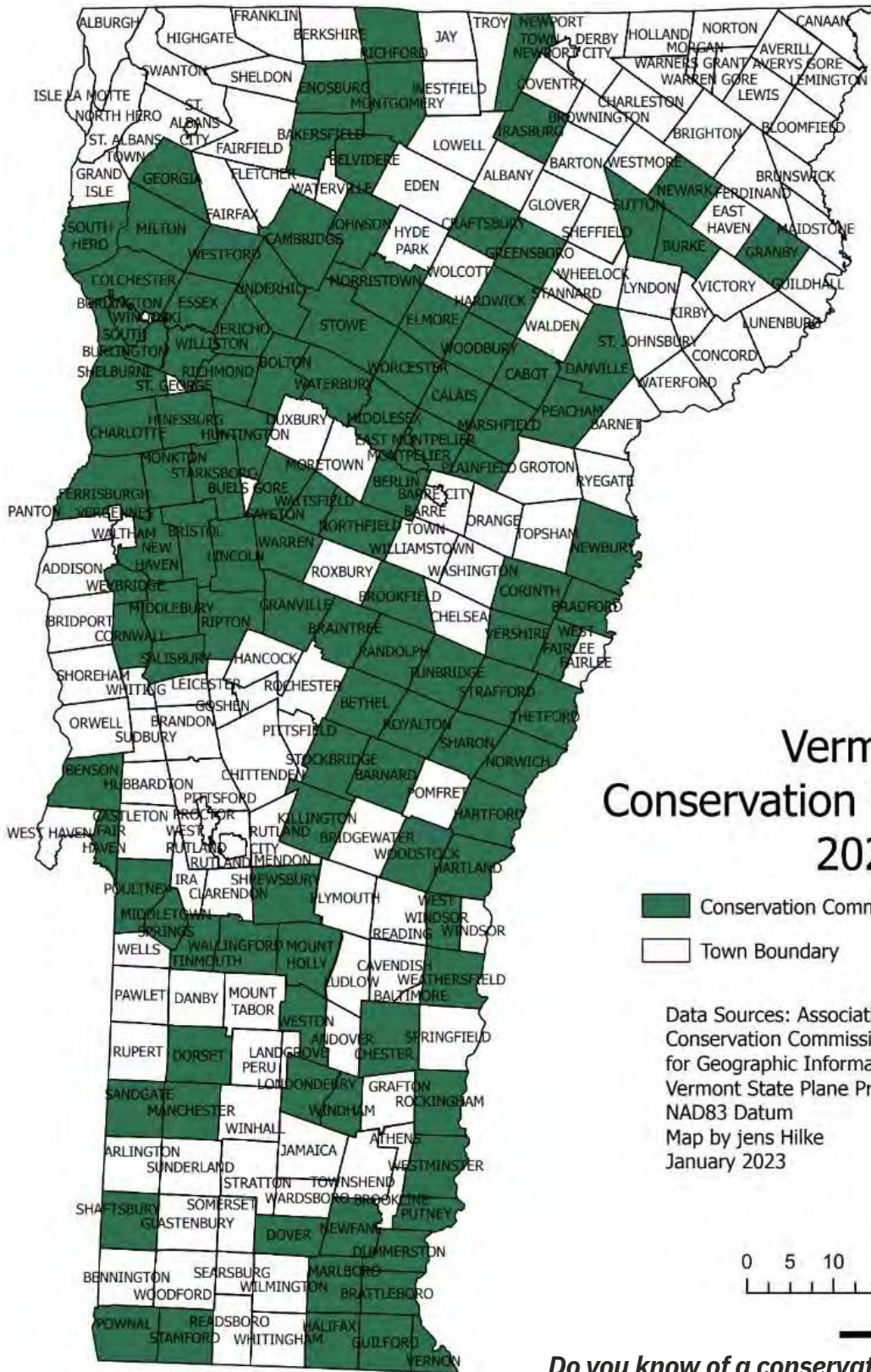
■ Tiny Grants \$2,091 ■ Operating \$818



We are a volunteer-run organization that relies on individual and conservation commission memberships.

If you or your conservation commission are not AVCC members, we encourage you to join. If you are members, thanks for your support!

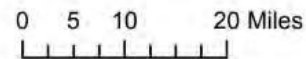
MAP OF VERMONT CONSERVATION COMMISSIONS



Vermont Conservation Commissions 2023

- Conservation Commission
- Town Boundary

Data Sources: Association Of Vermont Conservation Commissions, Vermont Center for Geographic Information
 Vermont State Plane Projection
 NAD83 Datum
 Map by jens Hilke
 January 2023



Do you know of a conservation commission that is missing from the map? Please let us know! Email us at vtconservation@gmail.com

INTERESTED IN JOINING AVCC?

We offer two types of AVCC membership: organizational (\$50) and individual (\$20). Memberships are effective through the calendar year. Members receive discounted admission to our annual summit. Renew or join today if you haven't already!

To become a member, renew your membership, or check on your membership status, visit vtconservation.com/join-us/

You can pay online or mail a check to:

**AVCC c/o VNRC
11 Baldwin Street
Montpelier, VT 05602**

To join our listserv, send an email to: vtconservation+subscribe@googlegroups.com

THANKS FOR READING THE
2023 AVCC ANNUAL REPORT

