



CASE STUDY

ALYSSA BENNETT

BOLTON, VT

The Bennett property is an important wildlife resource that connects to almost 50,000 acres of unfragmented forest. Its variety of fruit-bearing trees are prime sources of forage for wildlife that pass through the land. The forest contains important habitat for bats and flying squirrels, along with warblers and other migratory songbirds.

MEET THE LANDOWNER

As a wildlife biologist, Alyssa Bennett long wanted to put into practice the advice she often gave to private landowners. She grew up with her parents on 100 acres in Belvidere, VT and dreamed of buying her own land to manage and give back. After years of hard work, she was able to achieve her goal a few years ago, buying just over 40 acres in Bolton where she now lives with her daughters. Just before she bought her land, she had helped convert a private landowner's parcel into a State Park. She was inspired by the landowner's commitment to sharing his land with the public and wanted to do the same. Today, a former portion of the Long Trail crosses Alyssa's property. She aims to manage recreation with supporting wildlife and restoring the forest that previous owners had heavily logged. She also harvests the firewood needed to heat her home from the land (which she cuts, bucks, and splits on her own!).



Alyssa's daughters, Cece (left) and Bella (right), are growing up exploring the forest and helping their mom manage the land.

AT A GLANCE

PROPERTY / PROJECT ACREAGE

40.9 acres (7 managed in project)

LOCATION

Bolton, VT

FOREST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Crop tree release with canopy gap formation
Woods road rehabilitation

PARTNERS

North Woods Forestry
Natural Resources Conservation Service
Lake Champlain Regional Conservation Partnership Program
Vermont's Women and Our Woods
Vermont Youth Conservation Corps

WOMEN & OUR WOODS

Vermont's Women & Our Woods (WOW-VT) is a collaborative women-centered community that shares information, resources, and support for people who care about and steward Vermont's forests. WOW-VT has developed a series of case studies to highlight a variety of management activities being conducted on women-owned or women-managed woodlands to highlight successes, share lessons learned, and identify resources available.

To learn more visit wowvt.org.

HOW HAS THIS LAND BEEN MANAGED?

Alyssa started actively managing her land within months of buying it. Developed in partnership with Charlie Hancock of North Woods Forestry, Alyssa's forest management plan identifies her goals of managing for wildlife, forest health, sustainable timber production, and responsible public use. Alyssa secured funding through the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) to pay for her management plan. Once the plan was finished, her first focus was to improve the woods roads that run through the property. Significant erosion on the main road was impacting water quality. She received funding through NRCS and the Lake Champlain Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) to restore these roads.



On the left, the girls build fairy houses in the woods. On the right, Bella helps pull the invasive Japanese Knotweed.

Alyssa was excited to learn about the opportunity for a demonstration project with Vermont Youth Conservation Corps (VYCC) and WOW-VT. As a youth member of VYCC, she knows the impact that on-the-ground training can have on students interested in forestry careers. The VYCC crew completed a crop tree release in a seven-acre area. Crop trees grow food that supports local wildlife and humans as well as provide timber and other forest products.

Charlie Hancock identified high-quality trees to retain and selected competing trees for harvest. He also selected small groups of trees to create gaps in the canopy. These gaps allow young trees and shrubs to grow. Several trees were girdled, meaning they will slowly decline. Girdling creates cavities and peeling bark that bats and flying squirrels need to raise their young.

WHAT COMES NEXT?

Alyssa is looking ahead to her next challenge: invasives. Japanese knotweed has become established on the property and she aims to control it. When she thinks about her land in the future, she wants to see a diverse forest ecosystem that supports many kinds of wildlife. She wants it to be resistant to disease while managing for old growth characteristics, where possible. She wants to find the right balance between public recreation and wilderness. And most of all, she wants to continue to set an example for her daughters of how to live with and from the land. She wants to see them appreciate the wildlife around them and the opportunities to spend time out in nature every day.

PROJECT PARTNERS

North Woods Forestry

Charlie Hancock from North Woods Forestry developed Alyssa's Forest Management Plan and is helping her implement it.

Vermont Youth Conservation Corps (VYCC)

A crew from VYCC completed the crop tree release and canopy gap formation on the property in partnership with WOW-VT.

Vermont's Women and Our Woods (WOW-VT)

WOW-VT secured funding from the US Forest Service to pay for VYCC to complete demonstration projects on women-owned and women-managed land.

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

Alyssa received funding from NRCS's EQIP program to restore the woods road.

Lake Champlain Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)

Alyssa received funding from the RCPP to restore the woods road.