



# CASE STUDY

## BUTTON FARM, VLT

### COLCHESTER, VT

A fourth-generation family farm is now managed by the Vermont Land Trust (VLT) to ensure the land will be conserved for generations to come. A portion of the land is still actively farmed, and VLT has worked to control invasives and improve the health of the forest and wetlands.

## UNDERSTAND THE LAND

Button Farm is on both sides of Route 7 in Colchester. The farm has been in current owner Gene Button's family for four generations, since 1895. Gene cares about keeping the land undeveloped and healthy, so he worked with VLT to conserve it in 2002. VLT is a statewide conservation organization, committed to protecting farmland, forestland, and community land from development. In 2012 Gene conveyed a remainder life interest for the 97 acres east of Rt 7 to VLT. This means that VLT and Gene jointly own the land until Gene's passing, at which point VLT becomes the sole owner. Since 2020 VLT ecologist Allaire Diamond has been working to restore the streams and wetlands on the property to improve water quality and protect against flood damage. The agricultural land is leased to a New American farmer growing nthori (African eggplant.) Most of the remainder of the land is forested and managed by VLT forester Caitlin Cusack. Unfortunately, invasive plants have established throughout much of the forest and along the field edges. Invasive species outcompete native plants for space and resources and typically provide low quality food and habitat for native wildlife and insects. They can even harm humans directly. For example, poison parsnip causes a painful rash.



An aerial view of Button Farm and the surrounding forest.

## AT A GLANCE

### PROPERTY / PROJECT ACREAGE

130 acres (77 managed in project)

### LOCATION

Colchester, VT

### FOREST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Invasives species management

### PARTNERS

Vermont Youth Conservation Corps

Vermont's Women and Our Woods

Redstart Forestry

Natural Resources Conservation Service

## 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](http://wowvt.org).

# TAKING A MULTI-PRONGED APPROACH TO INVASIVES

**In 2022, VLT completed an inventory of invasive species found at**

**Button Farm.** The inventory found eleven species present on the property, ranging from established populations to sparse occurrences. Caitlin is following an integrated pest management strategy, which uses manual, mechanical, and chemical options where appropriate. The plan helps ensure that new invasives won't be introduced to the property and requires ongoing monitoring to ensure management is working. The plan relies on two commonly used methods to treat the invasives, cut-stump and foliar applications. The cut-stump method involves sawing the plant off at the base of the stem and chemically treating the stump with herbicide. The foliar treatment involves spraying the entire leaf surface area of the plant with an herbicide.



Button Farm showing invasives (brown stems) that had been chemically treated in 2023.

**In August 2022, a Vermont Youth Conservation Corps (VYCC) crew**

**came to the property for a week to help manage invasives in four distinct areas.** They used the cut-stump method in areas far from wetlands and farm fields. Near the wetland, they manually removed individual plants and dug up poison parsnip in the hayfield. The crew dried the parsnip plants in the sun before disposing of them, to prevent any spread. In 2023, VLT signed a contract with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) for funding to continue managing invasives on the property. VLT brought in Redstart Forestry to complete the work, which includes managing invasives on 77 acres over 3 years. During the first year, 40 acres will be treated using the two application methods described above. Additionally, Redstart will mechanically remove 3-acres of densely infested barberry, buckthorn, honeysuckle, and bittersweet. To do this, they will use a brontosaurus, which is a large piece of machinery that mulches plants. In the second year, they will return to treat any plants that have re-sprouted in this area and will begin the initial treatment of invasives on an additional 37 acres. The final year will involve treating any plants that have re-sprouted.

## WHAT COMES NEXT?

**The work of managing invasives is never complete.** Once Redstart's work is complete we will assess the success of treatment and determine how to move forward. Even when a species appears to be gone, land managers should monitor the land annually to ensure it doesn't reappear. Regular monitoring and removal of plants can help keep invasive populations in check over the long run.

## PROJECT PARTNERS

### Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

VLT received funding from NRCS's Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) to pay for invasive management work from 2023-2025.

### Vermont Youth Conservation Corps (VYCC)

A crew from VYCC completed invasive management work 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.

### Redstart Forestry

Redstart Forestry is helping manage invasives on the Button Farm over a three-year period.

Thanks to the US Forest Service who made this project possible through the award of a Landscape Scale Restoration Grant.