

Humans and wildlife have the chance to interact on this Rochester woodlot with a surprising family history. A VAST Trail and a Velomont mountain bike trail cross a small part of the land, passing alongside a bird-filled meadow. A farmer mows the meadow at the end of summer, allowing grassland birds, like bobolinks, to thrive. A small pond provides a habitat for water birds and other local wildlife.

MEET THE LANDOWNER

When Doreen and her husband Bruce bought the property in 2018, they had no idea that it carried family history. Both Doreen and Bruce had lived in Vermont, but had been living in southern California for over 20 years. They wanted to be back in a place where getting out into nature didn't require a car trip. As they were looking for land in the Rochester, they both knew Bruce's family had been in the area for generations, but they didn't realize how close. Only after they closed on the land did they realize that Bruce's great-great-grandfather had owned and farmed the same land they now owned. Both Doreen and Bruce took the three-day intensive land management training with Vermont Coverts, a course Doreen recommends any landowner take. The training helped them understand the different approaches to active land management and define what their own approach would be. They view a lot of forestry work as long-term and know that they'll never see the full results. But their goals are to better understand the land and help foster a balance between recreation, agriculture, forestry, and the needs of local wildlife.



Doreen's property features a pond that hosts local waterfowl.

AT A GLANCE

PROPERTY / PROJECT ACREAGE

257.95 acres (209.65 actively managed)

LOCATION

Rochester, VT

FOREST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Invasive Management (entire property)

Thinning (60 acres)

Single-tree selection (79 acres)

Pre-commercial thinning (11 acres)

PARTNERS

New England Forestry Consultants

Vermont Youth Conservation Corps

Women and Our Woods Vermont

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?

One of the first steps the couple took was to enroll the land in the Use Value Appraisal Program. They engaged New England Forestry Consultants to craft a forest management plan to guide them through the next decade of managing the land. Their forester, John McClain, recommended a harvest in 2019. Working with logger Sam Lincoln, they thinned a little over 60 acres to remove poor-quality trees and harvest some mature spruce trees. In other areas totaling about 79 acres, they used the single-tree selection method to harvest mature trees for lumber and firewood. They also selected additional poor-quality, diseased, or pest-infected trees for removal.

In 2023, Doreen brought in the Vermont Youth Conservation Corps (VYCC) in partnership with WOW-VT and McClain to complete a demonstration project on the land. The crew completed pre-commercial thinning on 11 acres in a crowded stand of forest. This style of management removed trees that aren't large enough or of a sufficient quality to use for lumber to allow the remaining trees to thrive with more space to grow. Doreen was excited at the chance to give young Vermonters a way to develop their skills and understand how this new management practice would impact the woods. She was also excited that cut trees were left to decompose on-site to add nutrients to the soil and habitat for small mammals and amphibians.



The land shortly after VYCC completed the WOW-VT demonstration project.

WHAT COMES NEXT?

Doreen and Bruce spent their first few years on the property trying to tackle invasive species that had become established on the land.

This proved to be a never-ending and thankless job. The management of invasive species requires consistent attention over multiple years and long-term monitoring. Doreen gets emotional when she thinks about the future of her land. She wants to be able to do more, but she also wants the woods to be its “wild self”. Her future vision for the land is fewer invasives and healthy, resilient trees that can withstand the changing climate and incoming pests. She hopes that the work they are doing today is laying the groundwork for that future.

PROJECT PARTNERS

New England Forestry Consultants

Doreen and Bruce contracted with John McClain (now retired) of New England Forestry Consultants to create and implement their forest management plan.

Vermont Youth Conservation Corps (VYCC)

VYCC is a non-profit organization that provides young people with skills and experience implementing conservation and restoration practices. A crew from VYCC completed pre-commercial thinning on the property as part of a 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 land.