



CASE STUDY

ESTHER LICHTI

MONTGOMERY, VT

Esther describes her property as a refuge for wildlife. She has spotted deer, wild turkeys, coyotes, foxes, bears, and bobcats throughout the forest, a mix of northern hardwoods, red pines, spruce and hemlocks.

MEET THE LANDOWNER

Esther Lichti and her husband Roger enjoy hiking and observing wildlife and plants on their land in Montgomery, VT. The regular presence of wildlife give Esther hope for the land as a refuge from the changes and stresses of climate change. Esther grew up in Montreal, vacationing at the property that is now her permanent home. Esther's father purchased the land, a former dairy farm, in 1957. The farmers had cleared most of the forest for use as pasture. He planted most of the property as a pine plantation and enrolled the property in Vermont's Use Value Appraisal Program (UVA). Enrolling a property in UVA allows eligible private landowners in VT who practice forestry or agriculture to have their land appraised based on the property's value of production of wood or food rather than residential or commercial development. When Esther's father passed away, Esther and Roger inherited the land. Their goals are to preserve and create habitat for birds and other wildlife while maintaining the health of the forest and quality of timber.

AT A GLANCE

PROPERTY / PROJECT ACREAGE

72 acres (9.8 managed in projects)

LOCATION

Montgomery, VT

FOREST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Group selection

Apple tree release

Tree and shrub planting

PARTNERS

North Woods Forestry

Cold Hollow to Canada

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. For more information visit wowvt.org.

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HOW HAS THIS LAND BEEN MANAGED?

The Use Value Appraisal Program requires that landowners to work with a forester to create a forest management plan containing a schedule of forest management activities. Esther and Roger have been working with local forester Charlie Hancock of North Woods Forestry since 2008 to update and implement their management plans. In 2022, Charlie recommended a harvest known as group selection in one of the red pine stands, which removes groups of trees to create small openings. Removing mature red pine allows the forest to regenerate with more diverse tree species. Esther and Roger worked with volunteers from the Cold Hollow to Canada (CHC) Woodlots Program to plant nut-producing trees in the openings, such as oak and chestnut blight-resistant chestnut trees. CHC engages landowners from forested properties in the Cold Hollow Mountains to focus their management strategies on the landscape scale.

Later that same year, the CHC crew planted small shrubby, food-producing plants such as elderberry in the meadows that surround Esther and Roger's house. These plants provide food for birds and other wildlife, increasing the value of the meadow ecosystem for wildlife. In 2023, Esther and Roger began to release apple trees with funding from the Natural Resources Conservation Service. Cutting back competing trees "releases" the apple trees to allow their fruit production to increase. If competing trees or shrubs grow too close together, it can stunt their growth and food production by restricting sunlight. Apple trees are popular habitat for woodcock and other songbirds like blue birds, flycatchers, robins, and orioles as well as mice, deer and other mammals.

WHAT COMES NEXT?

Esther's recommendation to other women landowners looking to engage in forest management is to seek professional guidance from a trusted source. Charlie, their forester, has helped them identify a logger and connect with other resources. The CHC Woodlots Program has helped them complete projects and understand other landowners' approaches to stewardship. Esther worries about maintaining the property as she and Roger age, but she's simultaneously excited to watch life thrive on her property as they continue to invest in the forest and create habitat for local wildlife.

PROJECT COSTS

ACTIVITY	ACRES	COST OR REVENUE
Group selection	9.8	\$3,600 in timber revenue
Tree planting	4	\$600-\$700 from CHC, \$900 from NRCS

PROJECT PARTNERS

North Woods Forestry

Esther and Roger have worked with Charlie Hancock from North Woods Forestry to create and implement their forest management plan.

Cold Hollow to Canada (CHC)

Esther and Roger are members of CHC's Woodlots Program, which provided a volunteer crew and funding for their forest projects. CHC utilizes sustainable stewardship, forestland conservation, and community empowerment to further their vision of a more resilient and connected ecosystem.

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

Esther and Roger have a contract with NRCS to obtain funding to complete some of the management projects.