



CASE STUDY

JULIE MESSERVY

WESTMINSTER, VT

Julie and her husband Steve call their land “grandchild paradise.” A beaver pond and a swimming pond create havens for humans and wildlife amidst the 270 acres of mixed hardwood and softwood trees and forested wetlands.

MEET THE LANDOWNERS

Julie and Steve make a strong land management team. Julie is the visionary and Steve is the implementer. She manages two businesses around landscape architecture and design. She sees the possibilities in the land and helps identify strategies to implement. Steve puts those ideas into action. A leadership training and team development consultant by trade, he loves getting out on the land whenever he's home. Whether he's hiking, skiing, doing trail work, or running the chainsaw, the woods are where he spends his free time. The couple bought the property together almost 20 years ago. Despite looking for a 5-acre parcel, they fell in love with a 206-acre parcel of land on a perfect autumn day. They added on a second parcel recently, bringing their total property to 270 acres.



Julie & Steve's property is used year-round by humans and wildlife.

AT A GLANCE

PROPERTY / PROJECT ACREAGE

270 acres (all actively managed)

LOCATION

Westminster, VT

FOREST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Single tree and group selection (112.3 acres)
Invasives management (3 acres)

PARTNERS

Long View Forest Management
Vermont Youth Conservation Corps
Vermont's Women and Our Woods

WOMEN & OUR WOODS

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

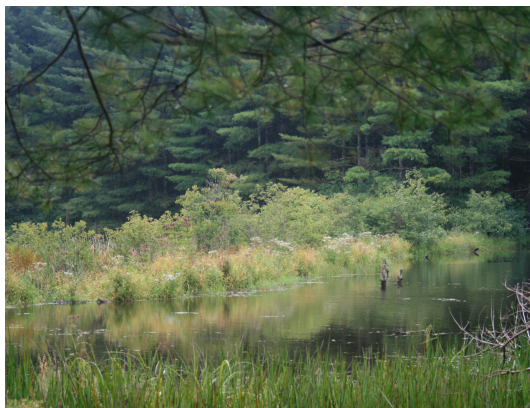
is a collaborative women-centered community that shares information, resources, and support for people who care about and steward Vermont's forests. WOW-VT has developed a series of case studies to highlight a variety of management activities being conducted on women-owned or women-managed woodlands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

To learn more visit wowvt.org.

HOW HAS THIS LAND BEEN MANAGED?

The couple enrolled the land in the Current Use program. Since 2010, they've worked with Andrew Sheere and Dan Healey at Long View Forest Management to create and implement their forest management plans. They learned a lot from their first harvest, a single and group tree selection in 2013. They found that logging changed the nature of the forest. They chose to leave the treetops and non-profitable logs in the forest rather than having the crews take them away. This saved money, provided shelter for wildlife, and protected saplings from browsing deer. But the wood and brush made it difficult for Julie and Steve to access their land. In some places, they wished the team had taken fewer trees. Julie likes having areas of dense forest to provide aesthetic balance and act as a carbon sink. On the positive side, Julie now sees wildlife coming back into the woods. And she can see the bones of the land better. Understanding the land's structure better helped the couple develop new trails across the property.

Unfortunately, the harvest also worsened an existing problem with glossy buckthorn, an invasive species spreading across Vermont. The buckthorn took advantage of the newly sunlit areas to spread and multiply. Honeysuckle, another invasive plant, has also established on the property. As a result, managing those invasives is one of their biggest priorities for the coming years. In 2023, in partnership with WOW-VT, the Vermont Youth Conservation Corps completed a demonstration project on the land. They picked one small area that buckthorn, and some honeysuckle, had overrun. Over approximately three acres, they treated cut stumps with a wetland-approved pesticide and pulled other plants out manually.



The beaver pond (below) and the swimming pond (above) offer beauty and habitat for wildlife passing through the property.

WHAT COMES NEXT?

Now Julie and Steve want to listen to the land and watch what happens. They are worried about the invasives problem and realize they will need to follow-up next year. They're reluctant to use too much pesticide since their land is upstream of many other properties and waterways. They're also thinking about how they can conduct future harvests to avoid making the problem worse in the future. At the end of the day, they want to maintain their goal of keeping the land protected and used as a family haven for generations to come.

PROJECT PARTNERS

Long View Forest Management

The foresters at Long View Forest Management worked with Julie and Steve to create and implement their forest management plan.

Vermont Youth Conservation Corps

A crew from VYCC completed a demonstration project at the property in partnership with WOW-VT. Over a week, the crew worked to remove buckthorn from a three-acre patch.

Vermont's Women and Our Woods

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