

Old agricultural land has regrown into woodland dotted with apple trees in the hills of Wolcott.
Trails meander across the land, passing by wetlands through hemlock and mixed hardwood forests.

MEET THE LANDOWNERS

Julie and Sheila define their approach as “slow forestry.”

They prefer to spend time learning and understanding the land, cultivating it slowly according to their goals and its needs. Several years after they bought the woodland, Julie took the three-day VT Coverts training. That sparked her interest in actively managing the land. The pair, a retired teacher and a retired school counselor, now spend their days enjoying and maintaining their woods. But they don't do it alone. Their property sits a mile down the road from Dave Holton's woodland. They credit some of their philosophy to Dave, who has harvested firewood for the couple from their woodland since they first bought the land. He walks the woods with them to explain which trees he chooses and which trees he'll leave behind. It's a collaboration: between themselves, their forester, their neighbor, and the woods themselves.



Julie watches barred owls nesting in the snag on their property in May 2020.

AT A GLANCE

PROPERTY / PROJECT ACREAGE

74.99 acres (70.29 actively managed)

LOCATION

Wolcott, VT

FOREST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Patch Cut - <1 acre

Single Tree Selection - 31.91 acres

**Tree release (Crop, Mast, and Apple) -
20.82 acres**

PARTNERS

Northern Stewards

Dave Holton

Vermont Youth

Vermont's Women

Conservation Corps

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?

Julie and Sheila work with Allan Thompson of Northern Stewards, LLC.

Allan also works with another local neighbor, which helps support a continuous stretch of managed woodland between the two properties. Their Forest Management Plan identifies two primary productive stands in the forest. Stands are areas of the forest where trees are grouped by shared characteristics. The first stand contains a mature mix of large eastern hemlock sprinkled with red maple, birch, and spruce. Allan recommended harvesting individual trees (single tree selection) to encourage trees more tolerant of shade to establish. The second stand is old pastureland that has regrown a mix of hardwoods and softwoods with apples and hawthorns nestled throughout. In this stand, Allan recommended harvesting trees to “release” (or provide more space for) valuable trees like high-quality hardwoods and wildlife food trees (apples, hawthorns, and serviceberries).

Julie and Sheila do most of the work in the woodland themselves. They also trust that when Dave comes in to harvest firewood, he’s selecting trees that support their goals and the management plan. In 2023, they partnered with WOW-VT and the Vermont Youth Conservation Corps to complete a small patch cut along one side of a forested wetland and plant 16 trees in the 0.7 acre opening. This patch cut was prescribed in their forest management plan. Wetlands are sensitive areas that are important habitats for wildlife. A patch cut – clearing most or all the trees in a small area – promotes new forest growth, including dense brush and berries. The young forest next to the wetland creates shelter for animals who rely on the wetland for survival. This work was funded by the US Forest Service as a WOW-VT Demonstration Project.



The VYCC crew rests in between work on the patch cut on Julie & Sheila’s land.



A section of the patch cut shortly after it was completed.

WHAT COMES NEXT?

Sheila and Julie think a lot about how their woodland will fare in a changing climate. They’re working to plant trees, like red oak and mockernut hickory trees, that may be more resilient to coming changes. Their goal is to build a resilient woodland that will remain beautiful for their grandchildren. But they’re okay thinking one day at a time – they prefer to take it slow.

PROJECT PARTNERS

Northern Stewards

Consulting Forester and Certified Wildlife Biologist Allan Thompson works with Julie and Sheila to create their Forest Management Plans and answer questions.

Dave Holton

The couple’s neighbor is a farmer who has helped harvest firewood and informed their management philosophy.

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 a small patch cut on the property as part of a partnership with WOW-VT.

Women and Our Woods-VT (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.