



FARM & WILDERNESS  
**CONSERVATION**  
Born from the Ninevah Foundation



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## 2023 Year In Review

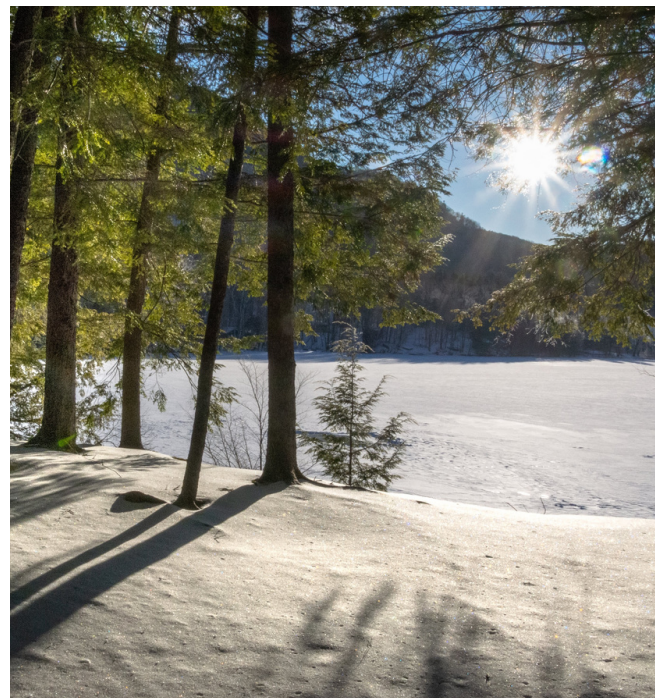
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### Celebrating one year as Farm & Wilderness Conservation!

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Last year we announced the consolidation of Ninevah Foundation and Farm & Wilderness lands, with the new name Farm & Wilderness Conservation. It's been a year filled with encouraging growth and exciting new opportunities. We have already begun to see the impact of our conservation initiatives and programs!

This year we secured public and private funding for critical projects, increased our impact by working in partnership with other organizations, and expanded our hands-on educational programming at Farm & Wilderness Camps as well as for the local community.





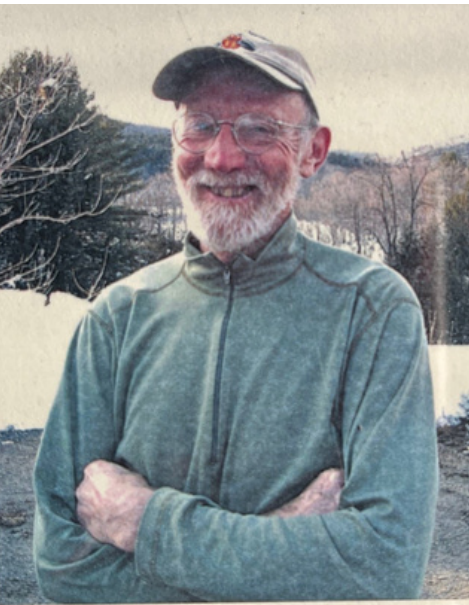
## Meet the person behind decades of FWC forest management!



It takes a significant amount of work and dedication to successfully manage thousands of acres of conserved forest lands. For over 25 years, Silos Roberts has been the person on the ground planning and doing this important work.

Silos has had a strong connection to Farm & Wilderness Foundation for many years. He first came to F&W in 1992 as the farm supervisor with his wife Camilla. In 1996 Silos transitioned to work as a licensed forester for both Farm & Wilderness and the Ninevah Foundation. In 2023, almost three decades and many trees later, Silos will be retiring as our forester. We are incredibly grateful to have such a knowledgeable person stewarding our forests for so long.

Silos has built a legacy of sustainable forest management prioritizing practices and activities that enhance the resilience and biodiversity of our forested lands. He has measured and inventoried thousands of trees, marked hundreds of feet of forest stand boundaries, and spent countless hours ensuring our management plans support healthy forests for the future. Although 2023 marks Silos' last year as our forester, the legacy of his work is evident in the diversity of wildlife, emergent old-growth characteristics, and sustainable forest products such as maple syrup and local timber.



Thank you Silos for your 27 years of dedication and commitment to our conserved lands. We wish you all the best in your retirement!



## Welcoming Elisabeth to the Conservation Team!

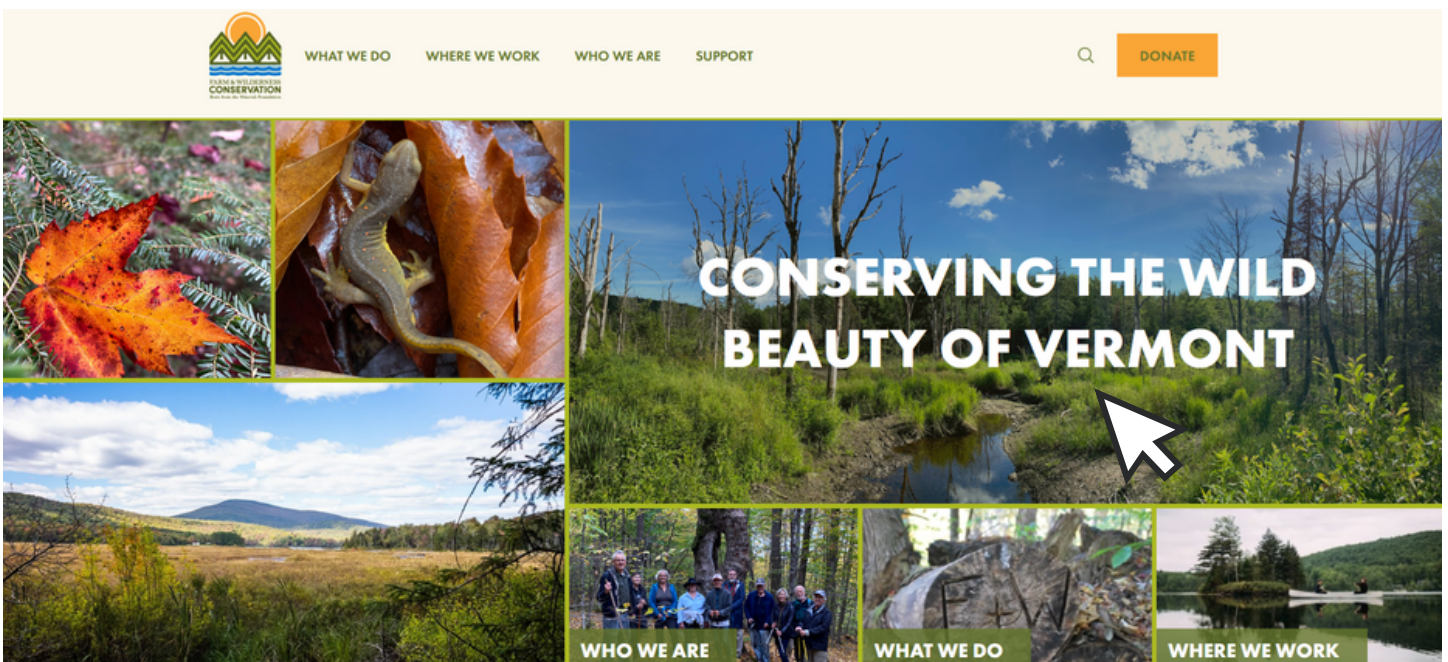


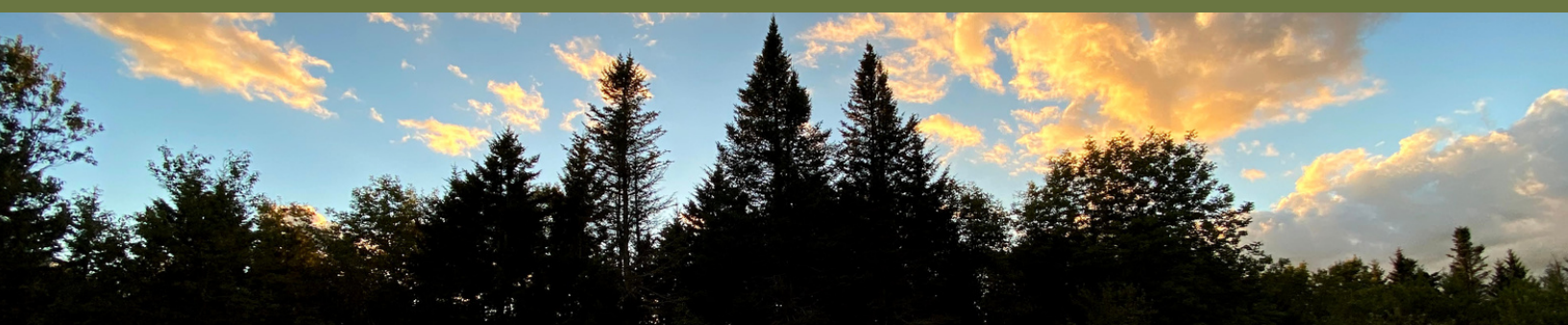
We are excited to introduce Elisabeth Rondinone to the Farm & Wilderness team as our intern for this year. Elisabeth came to us in June of 2023 and supports camp programming, invasive species monitoring, communications, and much more. In just a few short months, Elisabeth has been able to significantly increase the quality and scope of our invasive species monitoring for hundreds of FWC acres. She has also been instrumental in developing and organizing engaging programming for our camps and afterschool programming. Her passion for the outdoors, particularly for forest plants, really shows through her identification skills and ecological knowledge of our area. We are thrilled that Elisabeth will be continuing her work with FWC in 2024 as our Conservation Coordinator!

## FWC has a new online space!

Just this past fall, we announced the launch of our brand-new website – [www.fwcvt.org](http://www.fwcvt.org). It has been a project we have been working on since early last year and we are proud to share this new site as a central online hub for information, resources, donations, and events that support our work in this special region of the Green Mountains. We are thankful to Breezy Hill Marketing for supporting us in this project and developing

a beautiful design for all of our information photos to live. As of the launch, this site offers more information about who we are, what we do, and where we work. Visitors can access news from our blog, view maps of our conserved lands, learn about our watershed, register for events, and easily make an online donation. There is also a place to stay in touch by signing up for our monthly newsletter as well as accessing our contact information.





## FORESTS

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Forest management is a large part of our work as a landowning conservation organization. For us to achieve our goal of sustainable forest management practices, we have a diversity of tools and work that support caring for our woods. In 2023, we continued our participation in several cost-share programs in partnership with the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service. These programs allow us to work in collaboration with experts to coordinate practices that promote open wildlife areas, increase forest bird habitat, create healthy wild apple tree areas, and implement best practices for water quality.

We also continue the collaborative work of monitoring of our lands with Vermont Forests – Parks & Recreation which ensures our conserved lands are being managed in accordance with the requirements of our Forest Legacy Program Easements. These easements prioritize ecological health, sustainable forest management and forest product production, and responsible public access to our wonderful natural areas. This year, while working with our state partners, we identified areas in our woods that need specific management planning to meet future goals. This collaborative work between our organization and state agency staff is critical to achieving larger state goals around land conservation.

Finally, 2023 was a big year for us, as we expanded our efforts monitoring and managing invasive plant species across our 4,800 acres of land. In 2017 we started developing our annual monitoring to better understand the scope of the problem and the risks invasive species pose to the biodiversity of our forests. In 2022 our first Conservation Interns were hired and expanded the work of monitoring and documenting, which increased our understanding of the impact. This work uncovered that there are over 20 terrestrial species at well over 150 recorded locations on our 4,800 acres of land.

We recognize that the actual number of sites is likely much higher. Unfortunately the majority of identified sites are well established due to decades of changing land use and disturbance. However, with increased monitoring, maps that document locations, and enhanced management plans, we are seeing great results in experimental areas. We are focused on increasing annual hand pulling and cutting for species like Garlic Mustard, Phragmites, and Japanese Knotweed. Although the work seems like a monumental task, we realize how vital it is to mitigate the harmful impact of these plants on our forests, especially with a changing climate. Our approach will be consistency in our work over the long-term to minimize the impact and spread of invasive plants.



## WATERSHED

### Lake Wise Award

In April, we received shoreline assessments from the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation. These shoreline assessments recognize landowners for and support them in cultivating a lake-friendly shoreline through a set of best management practices. Our camp waterfront access areas were assessed along with all the FWC managed shoreline along Woodward Reservoir and Lake Ninevah. These assessments provide expertise, technical assistance, and recommendations for landowners who want to improve shoreline health.



The shoreline of the south end of Lake Ninevah with our Saltash Mountain Camp waterfront area was awarded a Lake Wise Award this year for the ways it is managed and protected. Having a healthy vegetated shoreline improves water quality which benefits humans along with wildlife and plants that call the lake their home. This is the first Lake Wise award for Lake Ninevah! We hope that other shoreline owners will join in participating in this wonderful program and resource.

### Rockefeller Dam Removal Project

The Rockefeller Dam, also known as Peggy's Pond, is a human-made structure that has long outlived its useful life. In 2023 we received a \$50,000 Clean Water Initiative Program grant (CWIP) for the site restoration and permitting required for its removal. We worked with State and Federal agencies to acquire the five separate permits required. We also sought guidance from Judy Dow Indigenous Educator and Executive Director of Gedakina, in developing the list of native plant and tree species that will be incorporated to enhance restoration



Rockefeller Dam Wetland Restoration Site

We have moved out of the project's design/permitting phase and are now planning for the execution of this work in late summer of 2024. We received another CWIP grant for up to \$180,000 to assist with the estimated \$230,000 removal and restoration costs.

Dam removal projects such as this one are designed to improve water quality by reducing nutrient and sediment pollution, as well as restoring the floodplain and providing habitat connectivity. Once the dam removal is complete, we will be able to focus funds and efforts towards landscape restoration and welcoming the beavers back to their home.



## Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention Program

We continued the aquatic invasive species prevention program for both Lake Ninevah and Woodward Reservoir to promote awareness of the Clean Drain Dry initiative. Our team of greeters this year put in over 2,000 hours checking boats for invasive plants and providing education to boaters about the program. We saw a dip in the number of boaters this year due to the amount of rain last summer coupled with severe flooding. Both brought access challenges and decreased water quality. Overall, Vermont saw a decrease of about 14% of boaters interacting with this program.

Woodward Reservoir and Lake Ninevah are two of 40 greeter inspection stations for 34 lakes and ponds across the state of Vermont. In 2023, our combined program for Woodward and Ninevah collected data from over 3,028 boaters! Farm & Wilderness Conservation funds these important programs at 75% while state grants cover about 25% of the cost. To continue these important programs into the future, we need community donations and additional grant support.

Waterbody	Town	Number of Boaters Greeted	Number of Boats Inspected	Number of Decontaminations
Lake Ninevah	Mount Holly, VT	1,256 Boaters	1,059 Boats	3 Boats
Woodward Reservoir	Plymouth, VT	1,772 Boaters	801 Boats	15 Boats
Totals		3,028 Boaters	1,860 Boats	18 Boats

## COMMUNITY

Since 2019, we have been working with the Two Rivers Supervisory Union to provide after school programming to all 4 of their elementary schools. This year, we expanded our reach to include the Mill River Unified School District elementary schools. We are thrilled to add 4 more schools to the program, which now serves approximately 150 elementary students in grades K-6th. The purpose of these programs is to provide engaging and fun activities with a mixture of topics centered around conservation and agriculture. Programming topics for the past year included building beaver dams, making apple cider, creating garden collages, and of course meeting two of our adorable baby goats from the farm!







## FARM

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The farm at Farm and Wilderness rotationally grazes cows, sheep, and goats in the hillside pastures along Woodward Reservoir. The affectionately know “fherds” were out on grass for 188 days (about 6 months) of this past year. As these livestock harvest their own food, and spread their manure, they also impact the plants and soil in many beneficial ways. The small hoof track in the dirt stirs up sleeping seeds from a bank in the soil that has been accepting deposits for hundreds of years. Small paddocks that are moved every three days mean the grass has the opportunity to rest between animal activities which leads to more plant species making a home there. This long rest also leads to taller plants, which shade the ground, and that's good news for the microbes living in the soil as they love cool, moist conditions. The fertility cycle of a deep-rooted perennial pasture benefits from the trampled stems that lay down onto the soil. The soil is teeming with life and decomposition breaks the carbon down and sinks it into the ground.

Rotationally grazing reduces the use of heavy machinery and in turn farmers have their feet on the ground and ears attuned to the natural world around them. To aid the farm in continuing this great work, new perimeter fencing will be implemented around a handful of pastures in 2024. F&W was awarded a Regional Conservation grant from the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP), which funds projects such as this to increase the good agricultural practices that strengthen ecosystems and protect watersheds in Vermont.

## CONCLUSION

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In our inaugural year as Farm & Wilderness Conservation (FWC), we've seen remarkable growth and impactful strides in Vermont's conservation landscape. The people of FWC are the foundation of our work and we are grateful for what they bring to our vision and mission!

Our newly launched website serves as a comprehensive hub, offering insights, resources, and avenues for support through donations and event participation. Our collaboration with state agencies, vigilant monitoring, and our Lake Wise accolade underscore our commitment to responsible land and water stewardship in a changing climate. Our afterschool programs are nurturing a generation of environmental stewards. This year's achievements reflect our team's dedication and community support. Looking ahead, your continued support will be instrumental to sustaining these efforts. Let's stride forward united, preserving Vermont's natural beauty, and empowering future stewards. Thank you for being part of this journey with Farm & Wilderness Conservation!



