

Vermont's return on investment in land conservation

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The Trust for Public Land conducted an economic analysis and found that every \$1 invested in land conservation by the state returns \$9 in economic value in natural goods and services, such as water quality protection, flood mitigation, and food production, to the Vermont economy.

State investment in land conservation also supports critical industries in Vermont that depend on the availability of high-quality protected land and water such as forestry, farming, outdoor recreation, and tourism. Conservation investments support jobs in these important industries and reinforce Vermonters' strong sense of place.

Diverse and productive landscapes including forests, farmland, mountains, and river valleys have been protected by the state through the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board, River Corridor Easement Program, Duck Stamp Fund, and Long Trail Fund. These conservation lands provide natural goods and services, bolster forestry and farming, stimulate tourism and outdoor recreation, propel economic development, support fiscal health, enhance human health, and leverage non-state dollars.

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Sustaining working forests

Land conservation supports forestry in Vermont by helping to maintain the intact working landscapes on which this industry depend. The forest products industry supports 10,600 employees and generates \$1.48 billion in economic output.

Bolstering the farming industry

Conserving land is a key component of Vermont's farming future. The state's farms annually produce \$786 million in agricultural commodities, including \$468 million in dairy products and \$59.7 million in maple syrup. Vermont also leads the country in farm stands, direct-to-consumer sales, farmers' markets per capita, as well as maple syrup production.

Stimulating tourism and outdoor recreation

Conservation lands are critical to the state's tourism and outdoor recreation industries. Each year, tourists spend \$2.61 billion in Vermont. The state's scenery, world-renowned foliage, local foods, and opportunities for outdoor recreation play an important role in attracting visitors. In addition, 72 percent of Vermont residents participate in outdoor recreation each year. Together, tourists and residents generate \$5.5 billion in annual consumer spending related to outdoor recreation, which supports 51,000 jobs with an associated \$1.5 billion in wages and salaries.

Realizing a valuable return on investment in natural goods and services

Lands conserved in Vermont provide valuable natural goods and services such as water quality protection, food production, and flood control. The Trust for Public Land analyzed the economic value of natural goods and services provided by lands conserved by Vermont between 1988 and 2016. For every \$1 invested in land conservation, \$9 in benefits is returned to the state.

Enhancing human health

Increased access to public outdoor spaces encourages people to exercise and reduces health care costs related to obesity and associated chronic diseases such as

diabetes, which cost the state over \$200 million per year. Increased exposure to the outdoors can lead to long-term mental health improvements and new research is finding that conservation can decrease the risk of Lyme disease.

Leveraging federal, private, and nonprofit funds

Vermont's land conservation programs maximize the impact of state investments by leveraging funding from non-state sources. For example, every conservation acquisition that received state funding in the last 10 years was matched at least dollar for dollar by non-state funding.

Propelling economic development

Land conservation fuels a working and natural landscape and enhances the scenic beauty that is essential to Vermont's identity and sense of place. This improves quality of life for residents and helps retain and attract workers. These spaces also enable a wide range of recreation opportunities, which generate economic activity, support recreation related businesses, and provide jobs.

Supporting fiscal health

Land conservation saves Vermonters money through avoided costs on expensive infrastructure and other municipal services required by residential property owners, such as schools, police, and fire protection. Research in Vermont has found that, on average, property tax bills are lower – not higher – in the towns with the most conserved lands.

Source: The Trust for Public Land, Vermont's Return on Investment in Land Conservation. San Francisco, CA: The Trust for Public Land, 2018.

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land for people, ensuring
healthy, livable communities for
generations to come.

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FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Shelby Semmes
Vermont and New Hampshire State Director
The Trust for Public Land
3 Shipman Place
Montpelier, Vermont 05602
802-223-1373
shelby.semmes@tpl.org

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