

Vermont Housing and Conservation Board  
**Guidelines for  
Ecological Assessments**

VHCB reserves the right, on a case-by-case basis, to require a more thorough ecological assessment of lands proposed for VHCB funding. The purpose of an ecological assessment is to further assess significant natural resources across a project area and provide for informed land use management and planning. VHCB seeks a collaborative process that works to mitigate potential negative impacts to ecological functions at the landscape, natural community, and species scales.

VHCB will notify applicants upon review of the proposal if an ecological assessment will be required, and may be able to provide additional funding for an ecological assessment. Funding to perform ecological assessments is also available through application for VHCB conservation feasibility funds during project pre-development.

- All ecological assessments must be completed by a professional ecologist, or a qualified professional approved by VHCB. Ecological assessments must include a desk review, and a field visit may be required. The ecological assessment should include a written report and relevant map(s).
- Ecological assessments will be required to be completed and reviewed by VHCB staff prior to the project's review by the VHCB Board.
- Dependent on conditions subject to VHCB approval relating to the implementation of the ecological assessment, ecological assessments may be completed after review by the VHCB Board. Conditional exceptions will be considered on a case-by-case basis
- Information resulting from ecological assessments may be utilized to inform protection mechanisms including buffers, special protection zones, and or any suitable management practices, subject to VHCB approval.

**Ecological Assessment Requirements**

At a minimum, ecological assessments will assemble information and identify the following features present on the project area:

- i. an assessment of the landscape-scale ecological context of the property, considering forest blocks, local, regional, and statewide ecological connectivity, contributions to physical landscape diversity, and other large-scale ecological functions;
- ii. S1-S3 State-significant natural communities;
- iii. water resources including vernal pools, wetlands, and riparian areas;
- iv. significant wildlife habitat, including mast stands, cliff outcrops, deer wintering areas, waterfowl breeding areas, denning sites, hibernaculum sites, etc.; and,
- v. an assessment of documented or potential occurrence of, and or habitat for any State and or Federal, at-risk, rare, threatened, endangered plant, animal, or invertebrate species, including Vermont SGCN. If applicable VHCB may request information and associated data and or mapping files be shared with VHCB and the Vermont Natural Heritage Inventory in the Vermont Department of Fish & Wildlife.

Applicants are encouraged to contact VHCB for help interpreting these guidelines or with any other questions.