

Agenda Summary

March 13, 2024

Agenda Item C-3

Stowe Land Trust Letter of Support for Conservation of Bouchard Farm Lot #5

Summary: Enclosed is an email from Carolyn Loeb, SLT Stewardship Director, requesting a letter of support for a land conservation project in Stowe. The project is 85 acres of highest priority forestland with an active sugarbush and recreational value to the Stowe community located off Brook Road. Their intent is to “create a new multi-use recreational connector trail through the easement that runs from Adams Camp down to the conserved Bouchard Farm and on to the Stowe Rec Path – i.e. a biker, walker, or skier could then travel from the Mt. Mansfield State Forest to town center on uninterrupted trails.”

Town Plan Impact: Conforms with and implements the following adopted Environmental Quality policy: *The Town will continue to support the efforts of land conservation organizations, including Stowe Land Trust, Vermont Land Trust, the Sterling Falls Gorge Natural Area Trust and the Vermont Housing & Conservation Board, to identify and conserve lands of ecological, recreational, agricultural and scenic significance.*

Fiscal Impact: No Town funding is being requested.

Recommendation: If agreeable, move to approve the enclosed letter of support for the Stowe Land Trust Bouchard Farm Lot #5 conservation project.

From: [Carolyn Loeb](#)
To: [Sarah McShane](#); [Charles Safford](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Requesting SCC and Selectboard Letters of Support for a New SLT Lot 5 Conservation Project
Date: Thursday, February 29, 2024 12:19:56 PM
Attachments: [SLT Lot 5 Project Map.pdf](#)
[SLT Memo to ToS Letter of Support Request - Bouchard Lot 5.pdf](#)
[ToS SCC- Lot 5 Project Draft Letter of Support.docx](#)
[ToS Selectboard- Lot 5 Project Draft Letter of Support.docx](#)

Hi Charles and Sarah,

I'm writing with some exciting news—as you both may already know, SLT is working on a new land acquisition project in Stowe.

The project in question (“Bouchard Farm Lot 5”) is 85 acres of highest priority forestland with an active sugarbush and outstanding recreational value to the Stowe area community located off Brook Road. Assuming SLT successfully purchases a conservation easement on the property, we will be creating a new multi-use recreational connector trail through the easement that runs from Adams Camp down to the conserved Bouchard Farm and on to the Stowe Rec Path—i.e. a biker, walker, or skier could then travel from Mt. Mansfield State Forest to town center on uninterrupted trails. The Catamount Trail Association is interested in rerouting the Catamount Trail onto the new multi-use path to permanently secure the trail in this area, and we also have support from Stowe Nordic, Stowe Trails Partnership, and the Stowe Derby for the project and new connector trail.

SLT is applying for VHCB funding to help with the purchase of a conservation easement on the property, and we would love to obtain two letters of support from the Town—one from the Stowe Selectboard and one from the Stowe Conservation Commission—to support our request.

I am attaching a memo describing the importance of the property addressed to both the SCC and Selectboard, as well as including a property map and two draft letters of support for the SCC and Selectboard’s consideration. I would also be happy to attend an upcoming SCC and/or Selectboard meeting to answer any questions either group might have.

SLT’s application deadline with VHCB to apply for funding for this project is **April 10**, so we would like to have letters of support ready by the end of March, if possible. Just let me know if that will present any hurdles on your end, assuming that the Town and SCC agree to provide letters of support for the project. The Town’s written support of the project does make a difference in how VHCB views our funding request.

With thanks,
Carolyn

Carolyn Loeb

Stewardship Director

Stowe Land Trust | PO Box 284 | Stowe, VT 05672 | 802-253-7221 | www.stowelandtrust.org

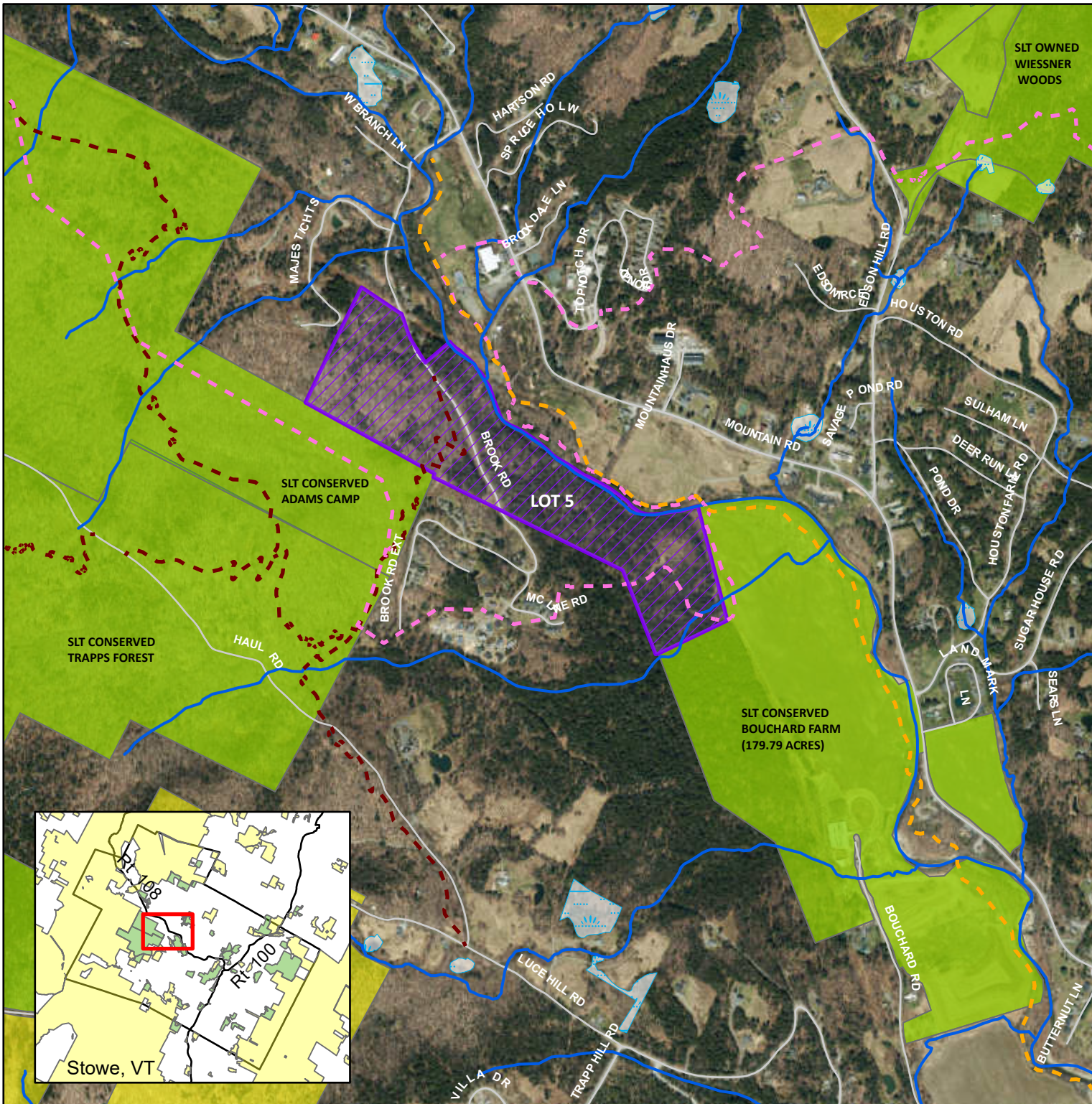
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**** WARNING ****









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Proposed Conservation Easement on Lot 5

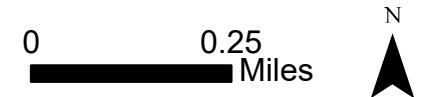
Property of Paul Percy



Legend

-  Lot 5 (+/- 85 acres)
-  Stowe Rec Path
-  Catamount Trail
-  STP Trails
-  SLT Conserved Lands
-  Other Conserved & Public Lands
-  Waterways
-  Roads

STOWE LAND TRUST



Map created by Carolyn Loeb
Date: 1/16/2024
Stowe Land Trust
info@stowelandtrust.org | 802 253 7221
www.stowelandtrust.org
Data: VCGI, SLT, State of Vermont
THIS MAP IS NOT A SURVEY

March 8, 2024

Vermont Housing & Conservation Board
58 East State Street
Montpelier, VT 05602

Dear Vermont Housing & Conservation Board:

On behalf of the Stowe Selectboard, this letter is in support of Stowe Land Trust's (SLT's) application for VHCB funding to help conserve an 85-acre parcel ("Bouchard Farm Lot 5") located off Brook Road in Stowe that contains important recreational, economic, and natural features.

SLT's aim to purchase a conservation easement on the property clearly supports the Town of Stowe's goals and objectives because:

- The easement would provide for the creation of a multi-use recreational trail connecting Adams Camp to the Stowe Rec Path via Bouchard Farm—securing the Catamount Trail in this area, protecting the popular Haulapalooza mountain bike trail, and strengthening overall connectivity of the Stowe recreational network as set out as an objective in [Stowe's 2018 Town Plan](#).
- The project would protect an active sugarbush and working forestland, in support of the Town Plan's goal to *"preserve and enhance Stowe's rural character, cultural heritage, scenic landscape and working farms, managed forestlands and maple sugaring operations."*
- The parcel contains Vermont Agency of Natural Resources-mapped deer wintering area, highest priority forest and connectivity block, and a riparian zone—all listed as targets for protection in the Town Plan.
- Mitigating flood risk is becoming increasingly important to our community's well-being as Vermont's climate changes. Lot 5 abuts the Little River and falls within the [2007 West Branch Corridor Management Plan](#) area as well as overlaps with the Town's Fluvial Erosion District. The Town Plan and West Branch Corridor Management Plan both recommend permanent protection of undeveloped lands along the West Branch of the Little River via easement acquisition, which this project would help to achieve.

In short, we urge you to provide Stowe Land Trust with the requested funds for this important conservation effort.

Sincerely,

Charles Safford

Town Manager

Cc:



Conserving land for our community.

Conservation Commission and Office of the Selectboard
Town of Stowe
P.O. Box 730
Stowe, VT 05672

Memo: Background for Lot 5 Conservation Easement Letters of Support Request

February 29, 2024

Dear Stowe Conservation Commission and Stowe Selectboard,

Stowe Land Trust (SLT) is requesting letters of support from you to be included with our grant funding application to the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB) for the conservation of 85 acres ("Bouchard Farm Lot 5") off Brook Road in Stowe. Your letters of support are important in strengthening our request and making it more likely that we will receive VHCB funding to help purchase a conservation easement on the property.

This conservation project is a high priority for both Stowe Land Trust and the Town of Stowe because:

- An easement on Lot 5 would provide for the creation of a new, multi-use recreational trail connecting Adams Camp to the Stowe Rec Path via Bouchard Farm—allowing hikers, bikers, and skiers to travel from Mt. Mansfield State Forest to Stowe center on uninterrupted trails and strengthening the overall connectivity of the Stowe recreational network. [Stowe's 2018 Town Plan](#) states, *"The Town will continue to support opportunities for trail-based recreation, including the development of mountain biking and cross country skiing, to enhance Stowe's position as a four season recreation destination."* The new trail would also host the Catamount Trail—currently unsecured in this area—as it passes through Lot 5. The Catamount Trail Association, Stowe Trails Partnership, Stowe Nordic, and the Stowe Derby organizers are all very supportive of the project and will be involved with the new connector trail on Lot 5 if SLT successfully obtains an easement. Lot 5 is also home to the popular Haulapalooza mountain bike trail.
- The project would permanently protect an active sugarbush and Stowe Farmer's Contract-enrolled working forestland. The Town Plan's Working Landscape Goal is *"To preserve and enhance Stowe's rural character, cultural heritage, scenic landscape and working farms, managed forestlands and maple sugaring operations"* and calls for the Town to collaborate with SLT and other partners on the permanent conservation of significant productive farm and forestland.
- The Lot 5 parcel contains Vermont Agency of Natural Resources-mapped deer wintering area, highest priority forest and connectivity block, and a riparian zone—all listed as targets for protection in the Town Plan (Environmental Policies 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 8, and 9).
- The parcel abuts the Little River and falls within the [2007 West Branch Corridor Management Plan](#) area of interest as well as overlaps with the Town's Fluvial Erosion District. The Town Plan states that the Town should *"continue to prioritize and implement the recommendations of the 2007 West Branch Corridor Management Plan"* (Environmental Task 1) as well as *"to restrict development in the Fluvial Erosion Hazard district primarily to recreation and agricultural land uses"*. Both plans recommend

STOWE LAND TRUST

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permanent protection of undeveloped lands along the West Branch of the Little River via easement acquisition.

The Stowe Town Plan's overarching environmental goal is *"to preserve and enhance Stowe's natural resources, scenic landscape and environmental quality for the benefit of current and future residents and visitors"* and names Stowe Land Trust as its primary partner in open space and conservation planning. Stowe Land Trust has identified this as a high priority project and only has until December 2024 to raise necessary funds and to purchase the conservation easement on Lot 5, so we are asking for your written support regarding this time-sensitive opportunity.

I am enclosing a map of the property's location for your reference. Thank you for your support and ongoing partnership.

Sincerely,



Metzi Anderson
Interim Executive Director

March 8, 2024

Vermont Housing & Conservation Board
58 East State Street
Montpelier, VT 05602

Dear Vermont Housing & Conservation Board:

On behalf of the Stowe Conservation Commission, I offer the Commission's support for Stowe Land Trust's (SLT's) grant application to VHCB to assist with the purchase a conservation easement on an eighty-five (85) acre parcel, "Bouchard Farm Lot 5", located off Brook Road in Stowe.

A conservation easement on the Lot 5 parcel would help to secure important long-term benefits important to the Town of Stowe and the Stowe Conservation Commission. [Stowe's 2018 Town Plan](#) tasks the Conservation Commission with involvement in strengthening our recreational network, protecting working forests and sugar woods, buffering our rivers sensitive to flooding and erosion from future development, and protecting special natural features such as deer wintering areas—all of which are found on the Bouchard Farm Lot 5 parcel. The easement would also create a permanent home for the Catamount Trail in this area, which is currently unsecured.

The Stowe Conservation Commission assisted SLT with the creation of SLT's Strategic Conservation Plan, which names this parcel as a highest priority target for protection. A conservation easement on Lot 5 would also strengthen Stowe's network of conserved lands, protect important forestland and wildlife habitat, and ensure long-term public recreational access for the Stowe area community. For these reasons we offer our full support for SLT's request for conservation funding from VHCB.

Sincerely,

Stowe Conservation Commission

Cc: