

Agenda Summary
September 25, 2024

Agenda Item B-3
State Land Conservation Project

Summary: Enclosed is a letter from Gunnar Nurme, Land Acquisition Coordinator, stating in part, “The Vermont Division of Forest, Parks and Recreation is working to acquire 15+/- acres of land in Stowe as an addition to Mount Mansfield State Forest. The property to be acquired is a 15-acre inholding within Mount Mansfield State Forest, located near Nebraska Valley Road (the “Bocklet” parcel)...Conservation of the property would protect high priority forestland within the staying Connected Initiative’s Norther Greens to Canada key wildlife linkage area, an important corridor facilitating north-south wildlife travel...FPR respectfully asks for your support of this project...”

Also included is a letter of support from Stowe Land Trust.

Town Plan Impact: Consistent with the following Environmental Quality policy of the 2018 Stowe Town Plan “*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: According to the FPR Land Acquisition Coordinator, “FPR does not pay property taxes for land under its ownership, but it does make an annual PILOT that is designed to pay towns the same amount of municipal taxes they would have received in the year of acquisition had the parcel remained in private ownership.”

Recommendation: Move to approve the enclosed letter of support.

Town of Stowe Selectboard
PO Box 730
Stowe, VT 05672

September 25, 2024

Gunnar Nurme
Land Acquisition Coordinator
Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation
1 National Life Drive, Davis 2
Montpelier, VT 05602

RE: Land Conservation Project in the Town of Stowe

Dear Mr. Nurme,

The Town of Stowe Selectboard reviewed the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation's (FPR) proposed acquisition of the Bocklet parcel as an addition to Mount Mansfield State Forest at our meeting on September 25, 2024. We sign this letter to offer our support for FPR's acquisition of the Bocklet parcel in the Town of Stowe.

Sincerely,

Print Name and Title:
Stowe Selectboard

State of Vermont
Department of Forests, Parks & Recreation
1 National Life Drive, Dewey 2
Montpelier, VT 05620-3801

Agency of Natural Resources

<http://fpr.vermont.gov>

September 17, 2024

Town of Stowe Selectboard
PO Box 730
Stowe, VT 05672

RE: Land Conservation Project in the Town of Stowe

Members of the Stowe Selectboard:

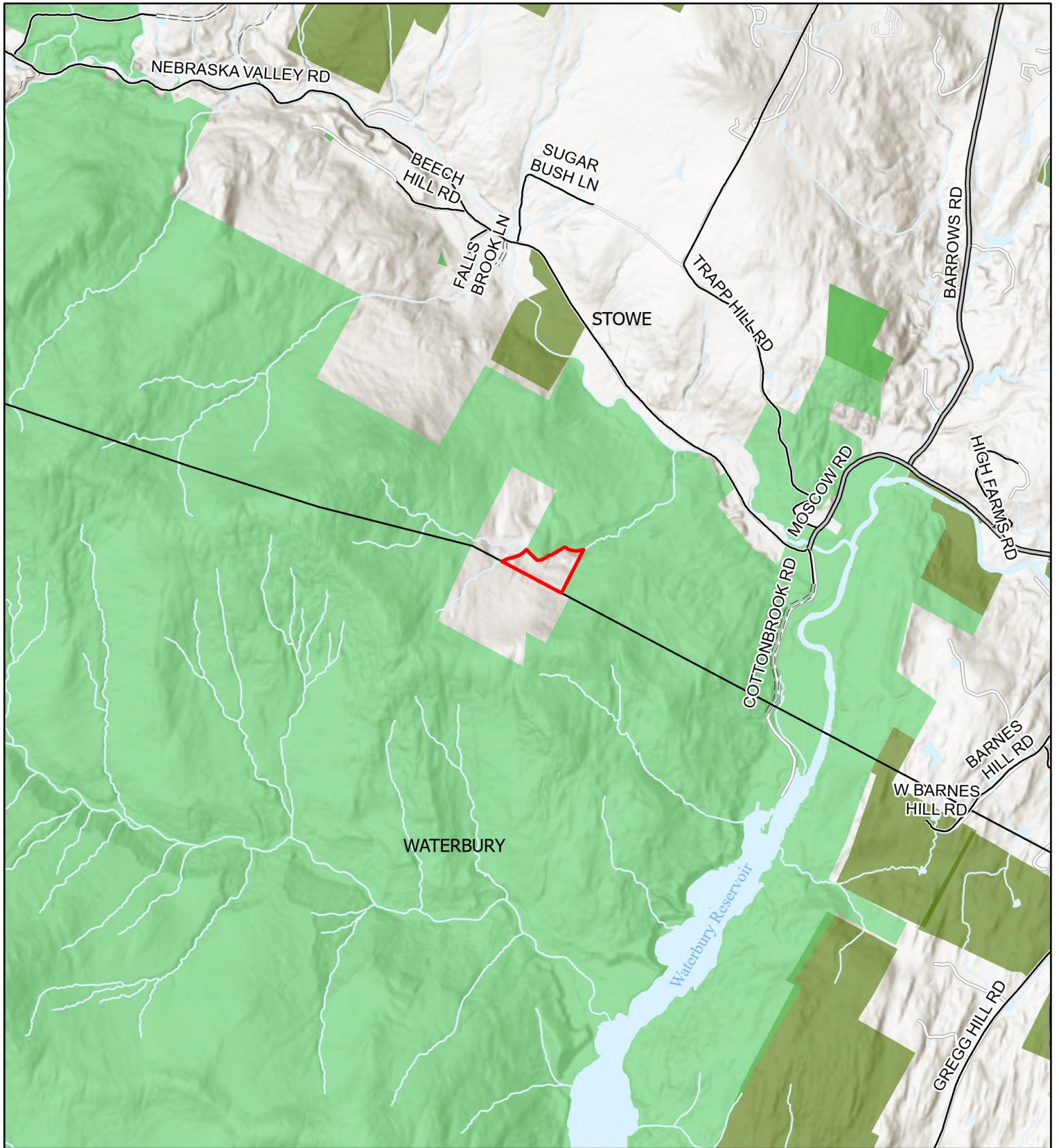
The Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation (FPR) is working to acquire 15± acres of land in Stowe as an addition to Mount Mansfield State Forest. The property to be acquired is a 15-acre inholding within Mount Mansfield State Forest, located near Nebraska Valley Road (the “Bocklet” parcel). The property is abutted by two other privately owned parcels on two sides and shares its southern border with the Waterbury town line. Otherwise, it is bordered by Mount Mansfield State Forest. The parcel is currently owned privately by Charlene and Joseph Bocklet, who have left the property undeveloped and unmanaged. For more detail about the location of the property, see the attached map. FPR is asking for the Town of Stowe’s support for this acquisition at your upcoming selectboard meeting on September 25, 2024.

Conservation of the property would protect high priority forestland within the Staying Connected Initiative's Northern Greens to Canada key wildlife linkage area, an important corridor facilitating north-south wildlife travel. A stream on the property flows east and drains into the Little River. Acquiring inholdings in State lands is a conservation priority for FPR, as it prevents forest fragmentation, conversion to non-forest uses, and future stewardship concerns. A new camp on one of the adjacent inholding demonstrates the potential conversion that could occur on the Bocklet parcel if not protected. Acquisition of the Bocklet parcel would be an important step towards filling in one of the few gaps in Mount Mansfield State Forest, a 44,000-acre block of protected forestland along the spine of the Green Mountains. Acquisition of this parcel would also ease stewardship burdens for FPR staff now and in the future. If acquired by FPR, the property would be open to the public for dispersed recreation and would be managed as part of Mount Mansfield State Forest.

FPR respectfully asks for your support of this project. For your convenience, I have attached a brief letter to offer your support. Should you see fit to support the project, we use this letter to show town support as the project advances. If acquired, the property will be managed under an Interim Stewardship Plan until the Long Range Management Plan for Mount Mansfield State Forest is amended or updated to include the parcel through a public process. Also, please find attached a letter regarding FPR’s Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) program. Essentially, FPR does not pay property taxes for land under its ownership, but it does make an annual PILOT that is designed to pay towns the same amount of municipal taxes they would have received in the year of acquisition had the parcel remained in private ownership.

Thank you and please feel free to reach out with thoughts or questions at any time.

Gunnar Nurme, Land Acquisition Coordinator



Roads and Surrounding Lands Map
Nebraska Valley Inholding
 Cartographer: Gunnar Nurme, July 2024

Scale: 1:30,000

	Nebraska Valley Inholding		Roads
	Mount Mansfield State Forest		State Highway
	Other Protected Lands		Class 2 Town Road
	Streams		Class 3 Town Road
			Class 4 Town Road
			Legal Trail



Orthophoto Map
 Nebraska Valley Inholding
 Cartographer: Gunnar Nurme, July 2024

Scale: 1:10,000

- Nebraska Valley Inholding
- Mount Mansfield State Forest
- Town Boundaries

State of Vermont
Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation
1 National Life Drive, Davis 2
Montpelier VT 05620-3801
www.vtforest.org

Agency of Natural Resources

[tdd] 800-253-0191

Town of Stowe Select Board
c/o Penny Davis, Town Clerk
67 Main Street
Stowe, Vermont 05672
townclerk@stowevt.gov

July 10, 2024

RE: PILOT Payment for Charlene and Joseph Bocklet, Stowe, Vermont
SPAN 621-195-10383

Dear Select Board Members,

I have been asked to estimate the tax implications of the proposed acquisition by the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation (FPR) of a parcel in the Town of Stowe. The parcel covers 15 acres and is listed under the ownership of Charlene and Joseph Bocklet, located on Nebraska Valley Road. FPR is proposing to acquire all 15 acres.

The State does not pay property taxes, but it does make a payment in lieu of taxes (PILOT) on land it acquires that is equivalent to the amount the Town would receive for property taxes in the year of acquisition, if the land was privately owned. ANR creates the PILOT with the same equation that the Town uses to derive property taxes with the municipal tax rate and the Town's assessed value for the property, at the time of acquisition. Please see https://fpr.vermont.gov/state_land/acquisition/pilot-program for a discussion of the PILOT process including periodic adjustments to increase the annual PILOT amounts paid to each town. The Legislature provides about 80 percent of the funding for the PILOT program, with the remaining 20 percent of the funding coming from the Vermont Department of Fish & Wildlife.

The table below lists the PILOT payments that the Town of Stowe would receive annually from the Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) for the parcel. Calculations are based on the Town of Stowe's municipal tax rate in 2022 and the land value as published in the most recent grand list (2022). Please note that ANR would apply the land value and municipal rate as set at the time of acquisition and so may produce a total slightly different from the total derived as of July 10, 2024.

PILOT Calculation Based on FY2022 Values				
SPAN	Assessed Value	Municipal Tax Rate	Equation	PILOT Due
621-195-10383	\$15,000 for 15.00 acres	0.4579	\$15,000/100 (0.4579)	\$68.69

Because the non-residential tax rate is set Statewide, and because the non-residential school tax is paid into the State Education Fund, the loss of the school tax on this parcel would be made up by all property taxpayers in the State, and not by Stowe taxpayers alone. As such, the education funds received by the Town from the State Education Fund are not impacted and the impact on individual taxpayers is minuscule, totaling less than 1/10th of a cent for Stowe taxpayers.

Sincerely,



Niels Rinehart

STOWE LAND TRUST

Conserving land for our community.

September 20, 2024

Town of Stowe Selectboard
PO Box 730
Stowe, VT 05672

Dear Members of the Stowe Selectboard,

I am writing to express Stowe Land Trust's complete support of the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks, & Recreation (FPR)'s proposal to acquire and conserve 15 acres of private land in Nebraska Valley. Mount Mansfield State Forest is an important piece of Stowe's economic, scenic, and cultural heritage. Conserving this parcel is an important step in preventing the further fragmentation of this forest while also protecting this area for the benefits to recreation, flood mitigation, and wildlife habitat.

Conservation is most effective when conserved areas are larger and more connected. As conserved lands are chopped into smaller parcels and become disconnected, there are decreasing benefits to wildlife, and the health of the overall forest becomes more difficult to maintain. By conserving this small inholding, there is a significant benefit to the larger forest block.

Stowe is certainly struggling with its challenges around housing, but this parcel is not an appropriate site to address those challenges. It is not suitable for workforce housing, as it is far from town center, town water and sewer, businesses, and public transportation. Additionally, placing additional housing so far from town center places an additional burden on our public infrastructure to expand and maintain roads and electric/phone lines in a remote corner of Stowe.

The Vermont Department of Forests, Parks, & Recreation is the entity best suited to acquire and steward this property, as it is an inholding in Mount Mansfield State Forest and is contiguous with a large area of land that FPR already owns and manages. As such, FPR will be able to steward this property as part of the larger state forest, making integrated decisions for the health of the forest as a whole.

We would have liked to express our support for this project to the Selectboard in-person, but the Stowe Land Trust staff is attending a conference in Rhode Island on the night of your meeting. However, I am happy to speak to the Selectboard as a group on a future date, or meet with any of you individually, to answer any questions you may have about our support of this project.

Sincerely,



Tom Rogers
Executive Director