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Hazen's Notch: Protecting Recreation and Wilderness in Vermont's Green Mountains

Application Date	6/3/2024		
Applying Organization	Trust for Public Land	Grant Type	Member Directed
Requested Amount	\$50,000.00	Project Name	Hazen's Notch: Protecting Recreation and Wilderness in Vermont's Green Mountains
Contact Name	Michael Giammusso	Project Location (State or Territory)	VT
Contact Title	Institutional Giving Director	Project State/Province	VT
Contact Email Address	michael.giammusso@tpl.org	Project Multiple Locations	
Notes		Status	Submitted
		Created By	Erin Clifford, 5/30/2024, 5:21 PM

Organization Details

Organization Name	Trust for Public Land	Annual Operating Budget	\$151,981,000.00
Applying Contact	Erin Clifford	Tax Status/Organization Type	501c3 Organization
Staff Size	365	Main Phone	802-223-1373
Total Membership		Website Address	https://www.tpl.org
BIPOC-led	Yes	Address	3 Shipman Place Montpelier, Vermont 05602 United States
C-Suite Staff	21% of TPL's leadership team and 41% of TPL's National Board identifies as historically racially excluded.		

Proposal Questions

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| <p>1. Purpose/History Of Organization</p> <p>TPL was founded in 1972 on the conviction that all people need access to nature and the outdoors, close to home, in the communities where they live. We work with communities to create parks and protect public land where they're needed most, as a matter of health, equity, and justice.</p> | <p>2. Final Success</p> <p>Permanent protection of 2,315 acres of strategic forestland will protect 2.1 miles of the popular Catamount Trail, a ski trail traversing the length of Vermont, and expand the conserved buffer around 13.3 miles of the Long Trail, securing the wilderness experience along the nation's oldest long-distance hiking path, while also expanding public access to hiking,</p> |
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3. Location Details

The Northern Green Mountains are one of the wildest and largest forested landscapes remaining in New England. The region spans over 800,000 acres and features sweeping forests that are critical for regional wildlife movement. It's a magnet for outdoor enthusiasts, particularly those drawn by the Long Trail, the nation's oldest long-distance hiking path, and the Catamount Trail, a skiing trail traversing the length of Vermont. A recent explosion of development pressure has made this a "now or never" moment to conserve key landscapes in this important habitat and recreation area.

TPL is conserving four properties totaling 2,315 acres to expand protection of the Northern Green Mountains and leverage past federal, state and private investments. No legal protections currently exist on any of these properties and local zoning allows for unbridled development potential. Connected to a staggering 88,335 acres of conserved land, this project will permanently protect 371 acres of riparian areas, 227.2 acres of wetlands, and 17.1 miles of rivers and headwater streams which flow into the only Wild & Scenic designated rivers in Vermont.

Situated at elevations ranging from 1,050 to 2,350 feet within the internationally significant Green Mountain Wildlife Linkage, the largest north-south wildlife linkage in Vermont, these properties complement adjacent state lands and ensure connectivity across elevation gradients, aiding species adaptation to climate change and substantially enhancing landscape-level connectivity in three of the top 10% of priority habitat blocks in Vermont. Protection of these properties will also help facilitate wildlife movement to the Sutton Range in Quebec, the Cold Hollow Mountains to the west and Lowell Mountains to the east. With 99% of acreage identified as "Highest Priority" land for protection by Vermont Conservation Design, the project supports the VT Wildlife Action Plan, which calls for large, connected habitat blocks and regional linkages, and responds to the Plan's top threats, like habitat conversion. The properties contain 17 documented Species of Greatest Conservation Need, all of which depend on the unfragmented northern hardwood and spruce-fir forests, wetlands, and riparian areas. The

4. Strategy & Timeline For Final Success

backcountry skiing, hunting, and mountain biking in Vermont's Northern Green Mountain Range, one of the wildest and largest forested landscapes remaining in all of New England that is particularly vulnerable to impending development.

TPL is partnering with the State of Vermont, Cold Hollow to Canada, and Catamount Trail Association to permanently protect 2,315 acres of Green Mountain forestland in Westfield, Montgomery, Eden, and Lowell, Vermont. The project involves the acquisition of four conservation easements to be held by the State of Vermont (one co-held with Vermont Housing & Conservation Board), protecting these forests in perpetuity. Protection of these four properties will preserve a landscape that helps define the Vermont quality of life as the Green Mountain range is critical to Vermont's recreation economy, climate resiliency, and outdoor traditions. A successful conservation outcome will have a lasting positive impact on the land, water, wildlife, forest health, local communities and visitors, including:

- Protecting 2,315 acres of forest designated as Highest Priority Connectivity Blocks, 1,070 acres of forest designated as Highest Priority Forest Blocks and 1,264 acres of forest designated as Priority Interior Forest Blocks.
- Protecting state-significant natural communities, 38 rare species, state-threatened plants, habitat for federally-endangered bats and wildlife habitat in one of the top seven wildlife linkages identified in the Northern Appalachians.
- Benefiting hunters and wildlife-watchers, as the properties contain significant breeding bear habitat, as well as moose, deer, turkey, grouse and other game birds.
- Generating economic benefits for local communities through outdoor recreation and tourism, sustainable sugaring and timber harvesting, and flood mitigation.
- Permanently protecting more than 2 miles of the Catamount Trail.
- Protecting the viewshed and soundscape of the Long Trail and providing a much larger buffer of protected lands on either side.

The Green Mountain range is critical to Vermont's recreation economy and outdoor traditions. With enhanced public access to adjacent State lands, the project will ensure access for popular activities like hunting, fishing, skiing, and hiking, contributing to Vermont's robust \$5.5 billion forest-related recreation and tourism economy which brings 13 million Americans and 4 million foreign visitors to the state annually and supports

properties also host 38 rare species including the very rare Four-toothed moss, never previously documented in Vermont, state-threatened plants and habitat for federally-endangered bats.

32,000 jobs, representing 10% of Vermont's workforce. The project includes 13 miles of trail, including 2 miles of unprotected Catamount Trail. Permanent protection of the Catamount Trail will benefit the 12,500 annual users that bring \$8.8 million to local Vermont economies.

Currently, recreational access to public lands (Long Trail State Forest and Jay State Forest) in Montgomery, Westfield and Lowell is limited to just 3 trailheads. This project will ensure permanent public access to 2,315 acres of lower-elevation forest, providing opportunities for snowshoeing, bird-watching, hiking, fishing, swimming, hunting, snowmobiling, and backcountry skiing, and 13 miles of existing woods roads can provide future public access and enhance access to the adjacent state land. One of the parcels has a small mountain bike trail network, that could connect to Jay trails to the north. The landowner welcomes backcountry skiers and is interested in engaging the landowner of the adjoining conserved land family in putting in a trail network on adjacent land to the west. As highlighted above, this project will also protect the viewshed and soundscape of the Long Trail and the Catamount Trail and includes 2 miles of the Catamount Trail. Permission to ski on the Catamount Trail and allowing snowmobiling, hiking, hunting, and fishing are all currently at the discretion of the landowners.

The Hazen's Notch project was initiated in Spring 2023. Since then, Hazen's Notch ranked 3rd in the country for the FY25 Forest Legacy Program, securing the federal capital funding needed for the project. TPL secured the remaining capital costs from the Vermont Housing & Conservation Board, which will serve as match toward the federal funding. TPL has the project under contract with the landowners and has town selectboard and federal support, and our team is currently completing due diligence, including finalizing the title, survey, environmental phase I, and private fundraising for the remaining costs. We do not foresee any issues that cannot be solved or would place project completion at risk.

With both federal and state public funding, individual due diligence across four properties and multiple landowners, the project will likely close in phases. We aim to close the entire project in 2026, with the first closing as early as summer 2025.

5. Key Decision Makers TPL's Senior Project Manager, Kate Wanner, is leading this effort and has

6. Elevate Voices The project has support from 16 local, regional and statewide organizations and

been extremely successful in securing support from the key decision makers of this project, outlined below:

Trust for Public Land (TPL) is the Project Manager of this effort and is leading the real estate transactions, including agreements with landowners, due diligence (title, ecological analysis, environmental phase I), and fundraising efforts.

Vermont Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation (FPR) was the primary applicant for Forest Legacy Program funding and coordinates with U.S. Forest Service on appraisals, timber valuations, and federal review of the project. They will also provide surveying assistance and are responsible for completion of Baseline Documentation and review of all due diligence and closing materials. FPR will hold easements on three of the parcels and co-hold the fourth easement with Vermont Housing and Conservation Board.

United States Forest Service, Forest Legacy Program (FLP) will be the project’s public funding source for FY2025 FLP funds and will review all due diligence and closing documents.

Cold Hollow to Canada (CHC) is assisting with local support and relationships, as well as private fundraising.

Vermont Housing & Conservation Board (VHCB) will be the public funding source for one of the four parcels. VHCB and FPR will co-hold the conservation easement on one parcel with VHCB acting as the primary steward of the easement.

groups including Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, Grateful Treads (local mountain biking club), Green Mountain Club (who manages the Long Trail), Missisquoi River Basin Association, and Audubon Vermont. Members of these groups can assist with private fundraising, trail maintenance and planning for future trails, and expand public awareness and support of the conservation project.

One of the landowners involved in the project has hosted black ash pounding workshops on their property, in partnership with the non-profit organization Cold Hollow to Canada and the Abenaki Nation of Missisquoi, gathering to share cultural history, art, and the origin story of the State-recognized Abenaki Tribe. Moreover, two of the project’s four properties are located in Westfield and Montgomery, both in the 95th percentile for annual energy costs and considered Disadvantaged Communities by the Justice40 Initiative. Keeping these properties as working forest can help with the supply of firewood, whose prices have increased 27% over the past two years, causing economic strain in homes warmed by wood.

7. Measurable On-Ground Outcomes

- Permanent conservation of the Eden Forest Phase II property
- Completion of all title work, ecological analyses and environmental phase I analyses on all four properties
- Finalization of all four conservation easements in preparation for appraisals in 2025
- Engagement and involvement of local communities around enhancement of public access on these properties

8. Evaluate Your Progress

- Trust for Public Land measures the success of our conservation efforts in the following ways:
- The number of acres protected
 - The number of people who gain or retain access to the conserved lands
 - The number of acres of significant habitat protected
 - Completion of land conservation activities within the project’s timeline, such as development of the land management plan, title work, appraisal, environmental assessment, and negotiation with landowners
 - Number of residents engaged in the community planning process
 - The amount of public and private funds leveraged for land conservation
 - Qualitative feedback from partners, the media, and the community.

9. TCA Funding Plan

The capital funding to acquire the conservation easements has been successfully secured from public

10. JEDI Efforts and Impact

It is one of TPL’s core beliefs that equity matters. We choose to work in places where lack of access to the benefits of

sources, such as the Federal Forest Legacy Program and the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board. A grant of \$50,000 from The Conservation Alliance would support staffing, due diligence costs (title, ecological analyses, environmental phase I analyses, legal), and operating project costs to enable our team to permanently protect these 2,315 acres within the project timeline.

nature contributes to broader disparities. As we engage people in the process of creating parks and protecting land, we seek to involve those who may face barriers to participation. We strive to ensure that our work serves the whole community.

Strategies to increase racial equity include our full-time Equity Director, hired in 2021, who has advanced our organization's DEI plan significantly in the last year. We've also embedded DEI work into staff performance goals and upheld our continued investment in our long-term commitment to help protect and return ancestral lands to Native Nations. We are also creating pathways to conservation careers for racially diverse young people through our Next Generation of Land Conservation Professionals Program and TPL's Black History and Culture Advisory Board.

11. Confidential Items N/A

**Other Relevant
Application Details**
