

South Hero Land Trust ANNUAL REPORT 2022

growing farms, building community, working together



OUR VISION

December 1, 2022

Dear Friends, Neighbors, and Partners,

As the days grow shorter and the nights grow longer, I am once again reflecting on a year full of joy, sorrow, challenge, and change. As this year marks South Hero Land Trust's 25th Anniversary, I'm also reflecting on the last two and a half decades. What a journey we have been on together! From our first conservation project at Allenholm Farm in 1997 to the opening of the Landon Community Trail in 2011 to settling the South Hero Community Gleaning Garden into its long-term home at Pigasus Meats in 2022... we have come so far. We have grown from a conservation organization into a community conservation organization, rooted in projects that build our relationships with the land and to each other.

South Hero Land Trust is a catalyst for and a result of the South Hero community's commitment to land protection. As a membership organization, we implement a community vision for conservation, using input and donations from community members to undertake projects.

But we also have a role to play in returning that responsibility for stewardship back to community members; providing resources and support for individuals developing their own vision, knowledge, and skills for stewardship. I'm really excited to be exploring how each of us is a steward of the earth, and how SHLT can be a part of this.

Whether you are volunteering to grow food at the South Hero Community Gleaning Garden, controlling invasive plants along a trail, planting a pollinator garden, or protecting a streambank in your backyard, you are stewarding the earth and waters that sustain us. I'm excited to be developing and expanding programs that allow SHLT to be a catalyst for conservation & stewardship by inspiring and empowering community members to connect with and care for the land.

Many of the programs we are taking on now are also grounded in creating access to the land for all people, from developing best practices for inclusive outdoor spaces, to creating a Farm to School curriculum that recognizes and celebrates the stories and contributions of people of all backgrounds in caring for the land. I hope you will enjoy reading more about our work over the last year in this report.

Thank you for making these projects and programs possible in our community.

With deep gratitude and warmest wishes,



Emily Alger
Executive Director

Board of Directors

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Bob Buermann

Bob Chutter

Chuck Hulse

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Lisa Pendolino

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South Hero Land Trust is a non-profit organization dedicated to protecting the farmland, woodland, natural and recreational areas, and open spaces which give South Hero its distinctive quality of life

OUR IMPACT

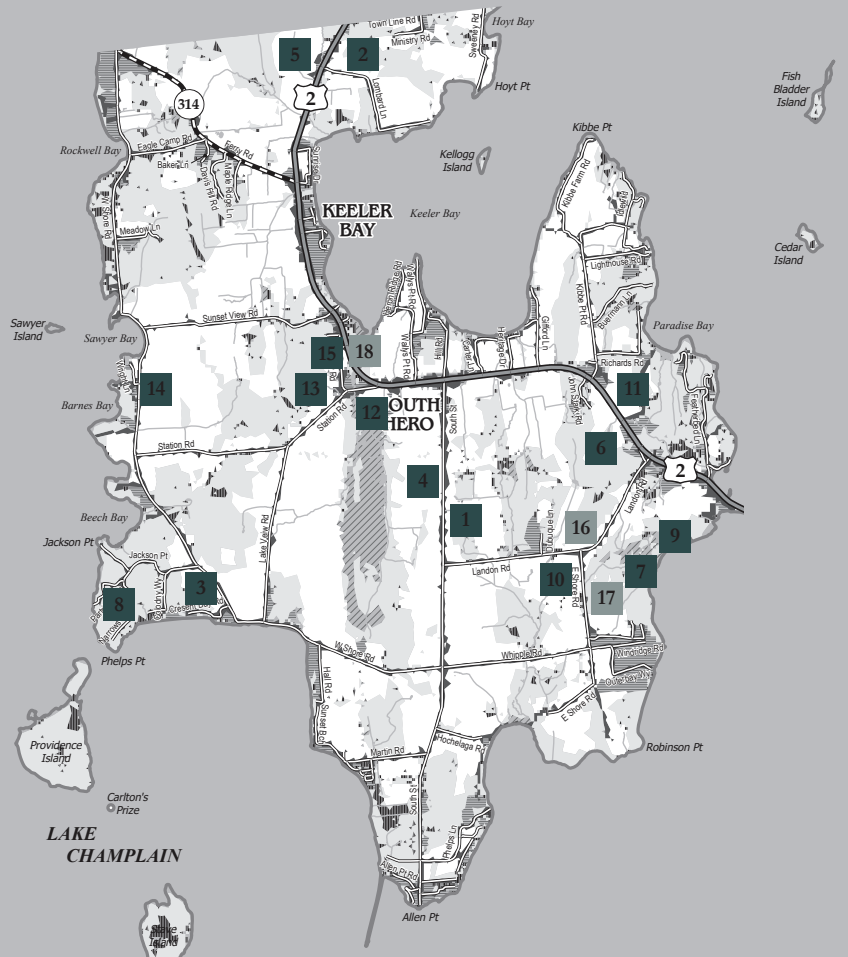


GLEANNING GARDEN IN NEW HOME

After a two year pilot, the South Hero Community Gleaning Garden has settled into its new long-term home at the Landon Farm (also home of Pigasus Meats). Adjacent to the Landon Community Trail and Round Pond State Park, this new site will allow access for volunteers and expanded educational programs. In addition to providing fresh vegetables to the Grand Isle Food Shelf, Food for Thought, and CIDER, we grew culturally relevant food for migrant farmworkers in Vermont, to be distributed through Bridges to Health and the Healthy Roots Collaborative. A new storage shed was built in September, which will support garden operations.

CONSERVED LANDS & TRAILS

1. Allenhalm Farm (1997)
2. Munson Property (1998 & 2001)
3. Crescent Bay Farm (1999)
4. Hackett's Orchard (1999)
5. Maxham Farm (1999)
6. Wright Property (1999)
7. Round Pond Natural Area (2001)
8. Jackson Point (2002)
9. Apple Island Wetland (2003)
10. Pigasus Meats (2003)
11. Buermann Hill (2006)
12. Islandacres Farm (2008)
13. Lakeside Jersey Farm (2008)
14. Health Hero Farm (2014)
15. Tracy Woods (2018)
16. Landon Community Trail
17. Round Pond Trails
18. Tracy Woods Community Trail



STUDENTS LEARN ABOUT TRADITIONAL FOODWAYS



For a second year in a row, students at Folsom Educational & Community Center participated in the Abenaki Land Link Program, growing True Cranberry beans, a traditional indigenous food. At the end of the growing season, the harvested dry beans are returned to the Abenaki for tribal food security and seed saving efforts. This is a partnership project of the Nulbegan Band of Coosuk - Abenaki and NOEA-VT.

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ACTION PLANNING FOR KEELER BAY

In a new partnership with the Grand Isle County Natural Resources Conservation District, we launched an Action Planning project for improving water quality in Keeler Bay. This project will identify opportunities for water quality improvements (like streamside tree plantings and shoreline buffers) in the Keeler Bay watershed, and work with local landowners to design and implement those improvements. This project is funded in part by the Lake Champlain Basin Program.



OUR IMPACT

As a community conservation organization, we ask one question every day: how can conservation help? As we confront challenges of affordability, racism, mental health, climate change, and more, how can conservation help? This question helps us prioritize land protection projects, motivates development of new trails and public access spaces, and guides the creations of educational programs. We do this work as a catalyst for community energy and by empowering individuals, and we are excited to dig deeper into the ways that we can all be a part of land conservation in South Hero.

In this Annual Report, we are exploring what we can do by coming together for collective action, and how each member of our community can be a steward of the land and waters that sustain us. I hope you'll find stories that inspire you as a member, and as a caretaker of our beautiful shared planet.

A Community Plan to Protect Keeler Bay Takes Shape

From the peaks of the Green Mountains and Adirondacks to the hills of the Islands, water flows across the land to Lake Champlain. Our home rests in the center of the Champlain Basin, and our ties to the lake are close. Challenges affecting the lake are particularly relevant to our community: climate change, flooding, invasive species, and high levels of phosphorus resulting from runoff. According to the Lake Champlain Basin Program's (LCBP) 2021 State of the Lake Report, phosphorus levels are particularly high in shallow bays like Keeler Bay.

In response to the challenges faced by the bay, the Grand Isle County Natural Resources Conservation District (GICNRCD) teamed up with South Hero Land Trust and local community members to develop a "Lake & Watershed Action Plan" for Keeler Bay, with funding and support from the LCBP. Working with Fitzgerald Environmental, the team is working with landowners to map the Keeler Bay watershed and identify opportunities for projects that will reduce phosphorus laden runoff into the bay.



Community members explore Keeler Bay from the shoreline.

We are all responsible for caring for the lake and GICNRCD and SHLT are excited to work with landowners and community members to take on projects identified in the plan that will improve the health of the Bay.

Community Gleaning Garden Puts Down New Roots

While we have been working to improve local food access in the Islands for almost 20 years, hunger and joblessness resulting from the pandemic spurred us to step up our efforts in 2020. We launched a gleaning garden with local residents to provide more fresh produce to local meal programs and food pantries. This garden has become core land trust program, thanks to local partners and volunteers. This year the garden moved to the Landon Farm, directly adjacent to the Landon Community Trail.

This new home (and a newly built toolshed) allows us to expand volunteer and learning opportunities in the garden, in partnership with our farm host, Pigasus Meats, our gleaning partners at the Healthy Roots Collaborative, and local community members.

Collaboration is one of our core values and the Gleaning Garden is a great place this in action. This December the garden team will be back to harvest the final rows of Brussels sprouts, bound for one or more of our partner food assistance



Volunteer Dave Hobbs and AmerCorps Service Member Anna Johnson harvest peppers and cabbage in the Gleaning Garden.

programs, which include the Champlain Islands Food Shelf, C.I.D.E.R., and Healthy Roots Collaborative. The new home for the garden and shed for tools are already making it possible for us to grow more food (and take better care of our trails). The garden may be only 60 square feet of land, but with the help of our partners and volunteers, it makes a difference in our community.

A New Conservation Leader Gets Her Feet Wet & A Community Plants Trees for the Future

In the fall of 2021 we brought on our first AmeriCorps service member at South Hero Land Trust. We wanted to participate in the AmeriCorps program for two reasons: to expand our capacity to serve South Hero, and to support the growth of the next generation of conservation leaders in Vermont. We are proud of and grateful for service member Eileen Fitzgerald, who opened her heart to South Hero and made a real impact on our community.

This was demonstrated particularly clearly on Arbor Day, when Eileen and 46 volunteers from the South Hero Congregational Church, Folsom, and South Burlington High School planted 122 native trees and shrubs along the creek that flows between the Worthen Library and the new Two Heroes brewery. This project came about as an independent service project. Passionate about water quality, and intrigued by her work on the Keeler Bay Action Plan, Eileen wanted to improve wildlife habitat, engage the community, and leave a space that would be enjoyed by the people living on, working at, and visiting Community Lane. There is an un-named stream running between the Fire & Rescue Station and the Two Heroes brewpub, running directly into Keeler Bay. Planting trees along its banks would help stabilize the banks, filter the water heading for the lake, and provide food and habitat for animals.

Eileen took on the planning, fundraising (with help from the SH Congregational Church Board of Mission), and coordination. On Arbor Day we took to the stream bank and planted trees, a step toward a cleaner Lake Champlain for our future. Thank you Eileen, for this great project, and your enthusiasm, warmth and passion for conservation. Best of luck in your new role as Education & Outreach Associate at the Lake Champlain Committee!



Eileen next to a newly planted native maple sapling.

Student Stewards Grow in the School Garden, on Local Farm, and in the Community

Over the past year, we have deepened our commitment to farm to school and nature-based education at Folsom Education & Community Center and expanded our relationships with the school community through a number of programs. 2022 was our 2nd year after-school and summer camps for local students and our 2nd growing season in the rebuilt Folsom Learning Garden. Using the Learning Garden and adjacent Recreation Park, as well as local farms and natural areas as our “classroom”, we have connected more students than ever before to the natural world and the people in our community who steward and grow food on the land. This year students visited local farms, planted and harvested the garden, learned about history of indigenous foods in our region, participated in summer camps and afterschool clubs, gleaned vegetables for local food pantries, and took on other service projects.



Students learning to identify insects in the garden at Nature Detectives Camp

Over the past two years, our farm to school work has also included a behind-the-scenes review of our programs from a diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice lens, led by a simple question: “Are the stories we tell and the perspectives we share representative of the people we serve, as well as the people who steward the land and provide us with food?” We’ve delved into available research and stories from others doing this work nationally, and connected with colleagues from partner organizations to share ideas and learn together. As part of this effort we have joined a collaborative team of representatives from Shelburne Farms, Green Mountain Farm to School, Food Connects, and Vital Communities to undertake an equity revision of the statewide Harvest of the Month curriculum. We’ve revised units on maple, squash, and dairy, and beta-tested them with students at Folsom.

Thank you to the staff at Folsom and the GISU for partnership, as well as the amazing community of teachers, parents, students, and partner organizations and funders who make these programs possible!

**This question was first asked of us by Judy Anderson of Community Consultants. Thank you Judy!*

OUR SUPPORTERS & PARTNERS

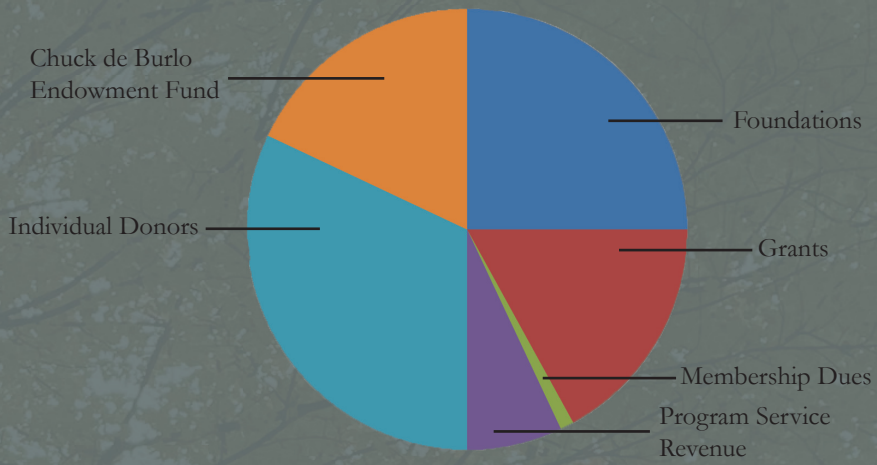
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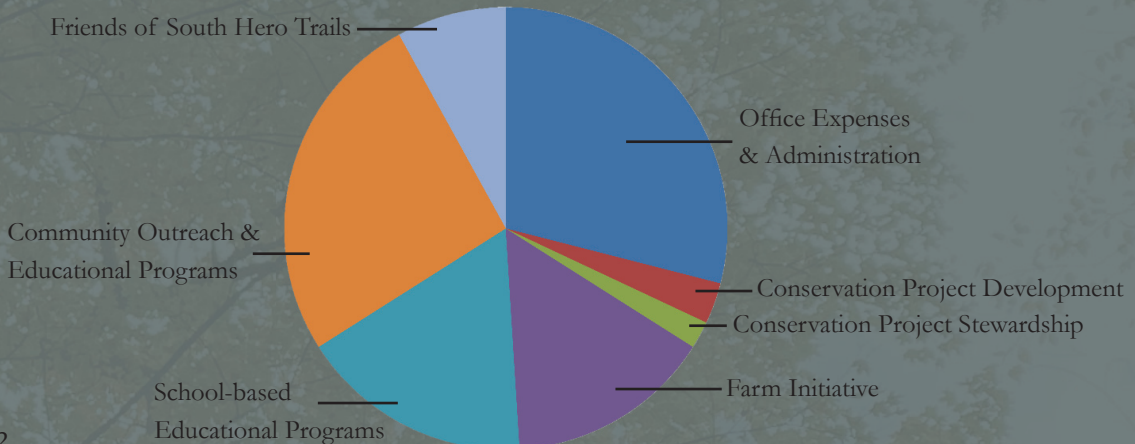
BY THE NUMBERS*

- 52 Community Hikes, Speaker Series Events & Workshops
- 226 Volunteers
- 466 Members
- 141 Students Engaged in Garden, Nature and Farm Programs
- 994 Educational and Community Program Attendees
- 122 Trees Planted

WHERE OUR FUNDING COMES FROM



WHERE YOUR SUPPORT GOES



*Numbers for July 2021-June 2022



THANK YOU

