



Project Impacts

NSRC-FUNDED RESEARCH FINAL REPORT

Training the Next Generation of Conservation Leaders in Local Communities



PROJECT AWARD YEAR AND TITLE:

2005

*Conservation Leaders in Action: Enabling
Community Engagement in the Northern Forest
Landscape*

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The value of working with communities to solve local environmental problems is particularly relevant to both universities and communities because of the growing realization of the importance of local ecological and social knowledge. Land conservation and management are changing. Threats, such as loss of habitat and open space to development, continue to grow and are compounded by challenges of global climate change, need for biofuels to replace fossil fuels, and more recently, economic uncertainty. To address these challenges, NSRC principal investigators created a land conservation and stewardship training program called LANDS for advanced students at the University of Vermont to prepare them as the next generation of conservation practitioners.

In cooperation with the Student Conservation Association in Vermont, LANDS students provide field research, service, and reports for local land trusts, towns, The Nature Conservancy, and the Green Mountain National Forest, among others. LANDS students inventory property resources, produce maps, write resource descriptions, and provide realistic prescriptions for managing trails, invasive plants, streambank erosion, and grassland bird habitat. In addition to LANDS projects, students developed a place-based analysis of a town nature trail, a report of vernal pools and wetlands for the Orange County Headwaters Project, and a community climate action guide of greenhouse gas accounting and management.

University of Vermont students are developing hands-on skills and a strong sense of how, through programs of civic engagement, they can provide formal, practical research to communities and local conservation organizations. At the same time, the program is increasing the capacity of the university to provide community service and understand real world issues.