



Shifting the Conversation: Building Shared Purpose Across Vermont's Landscape

Emilie Inoue - *Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets*

Pieter Van Loon - *Vermont Land Trust*

Noah Hoffman - *Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation*

A scenic landscape featuring rolling hills in shades of green and yellow, a large lake in the middle ground, and mountains in the background under a cloudy sky. The text is overlaid on the upper portion of the image.

Setting the stage to “Shift the conversation”: The power of language

Alison Adams, FEMC Director

A little about me (outside of FEMC)

- PhD in Natural Resources, focusing on non-material values of nature and equity/justice implications of environmental change
- Dissertation research in West Hawai'i with Native Hawaiians and non-Native Hawaiian residents
- Just a guest and a partner, not an expert – will do my best!



Language shapes how we see the world

More than 500 words for types/formations of clouds in Hawaiian, indicating physical characteristics, color, and what they signify for weather and events



Words have the power to shape sense of place: “*Smeuse* is an English dialect noun for “the gap in the base of a hedge made by the regular passage of a small animal”; now I know the word *smeuse*, I notice these signs of creaturely commute more often.”



Language shapes relations with nature: “There is no *it* for nature. Living beings are referred to as subjects, never as objects, and personhood is extended to all who breathe and some who don’t” –Robin Wall Kimmerer

What to expect:



Background on why we are here

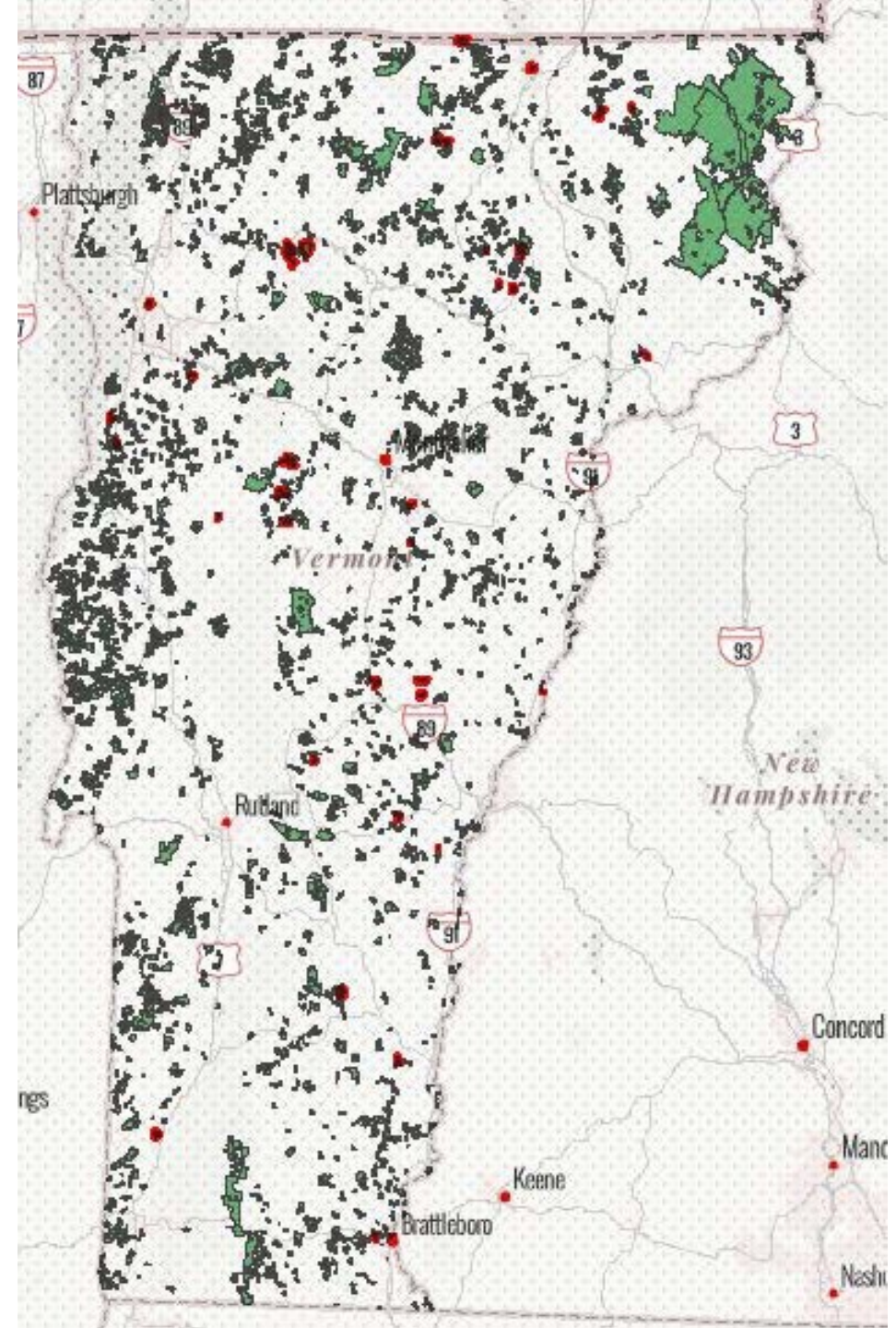
Stories of our personal journeys

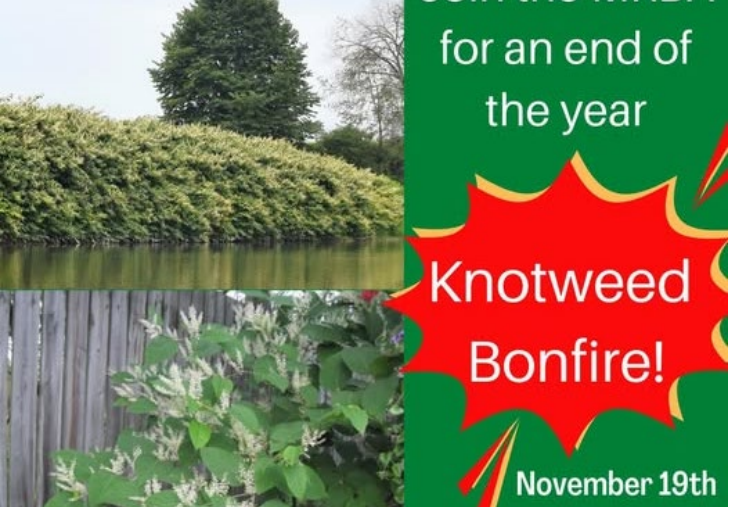
Small group discussion

~~Q&A~~ Whole group conversation

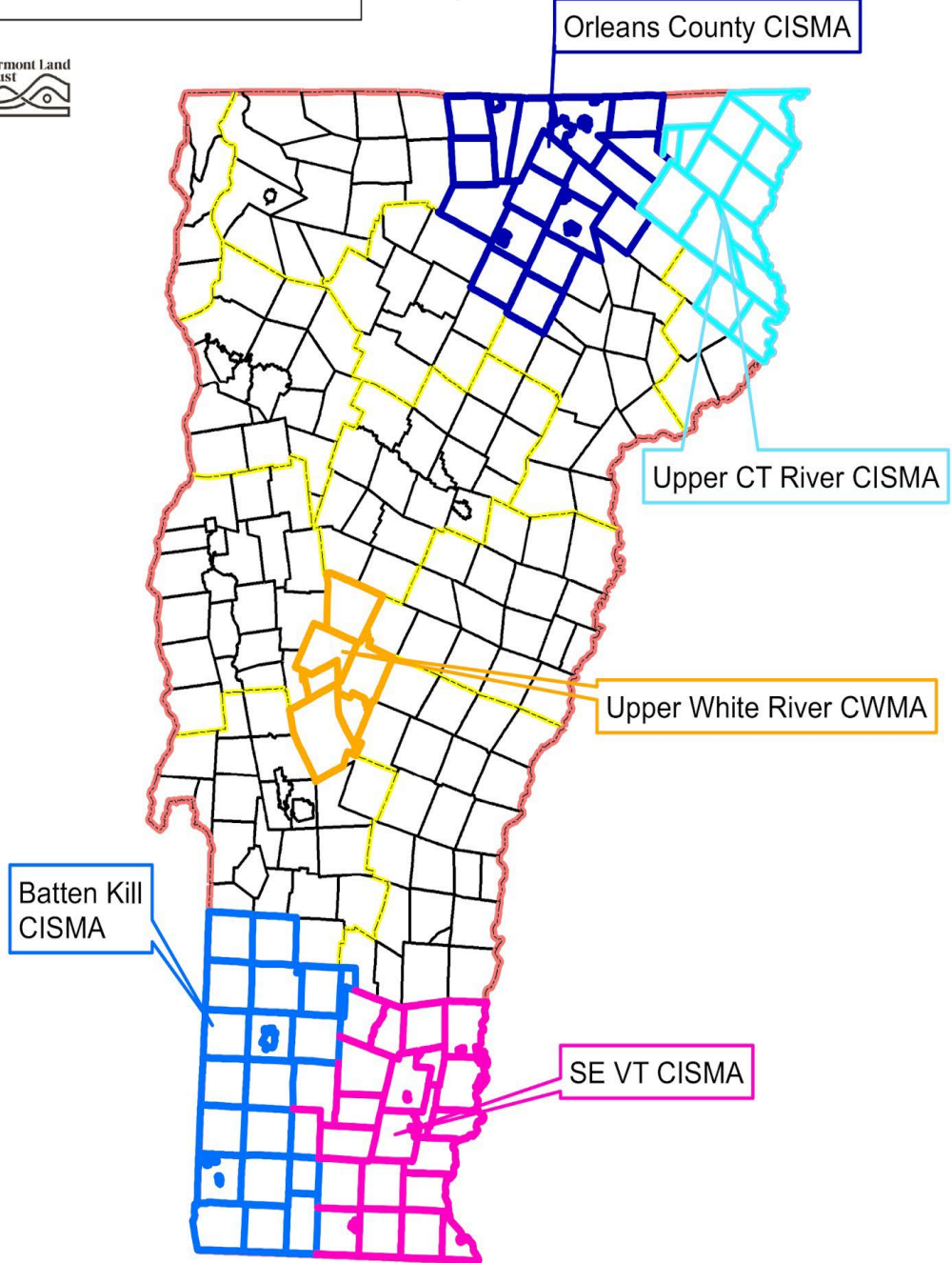
Quick Facts:

- Conserved 11% Vermont, nearly 650,000 acres
- (>450,000 ac. forest)
- Relationships with 2,300 LOs
- Own 44 properties





VT CISMA Map 2022



STILTGRASS MONITORING

11 AUGUST
10:00 AM



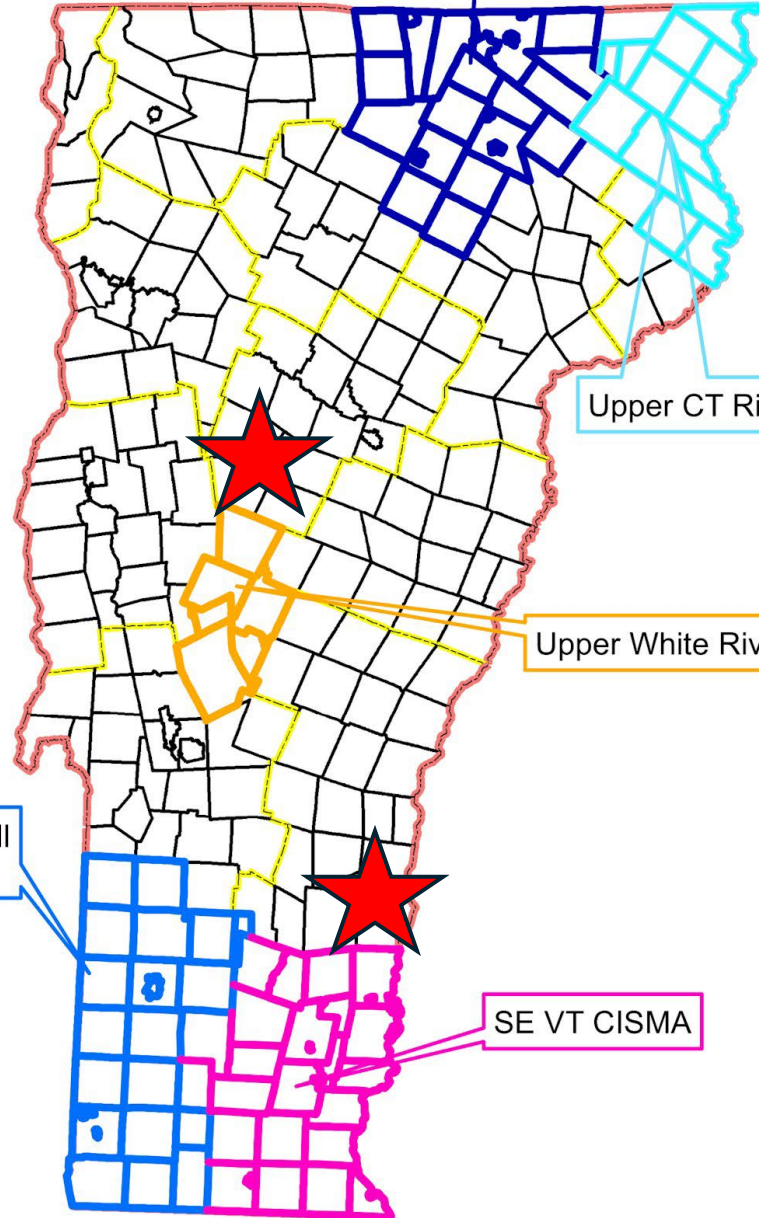
Southeast Vermont Cisma

A promotional graphic for a stiltgrass monitoring event. It features a green background with a circular inset showing a hand holding a plant stem. The text includes the event title, date, and time, and is associated with the Southeast Vermont Cisma.

VT CISMA Map 2024



Batten Kill
CISMA



Orleans County CISMA

Upper CT River CISMA

Upper White River CWMA

SE VT CISMA

VT Cisma Map 2025



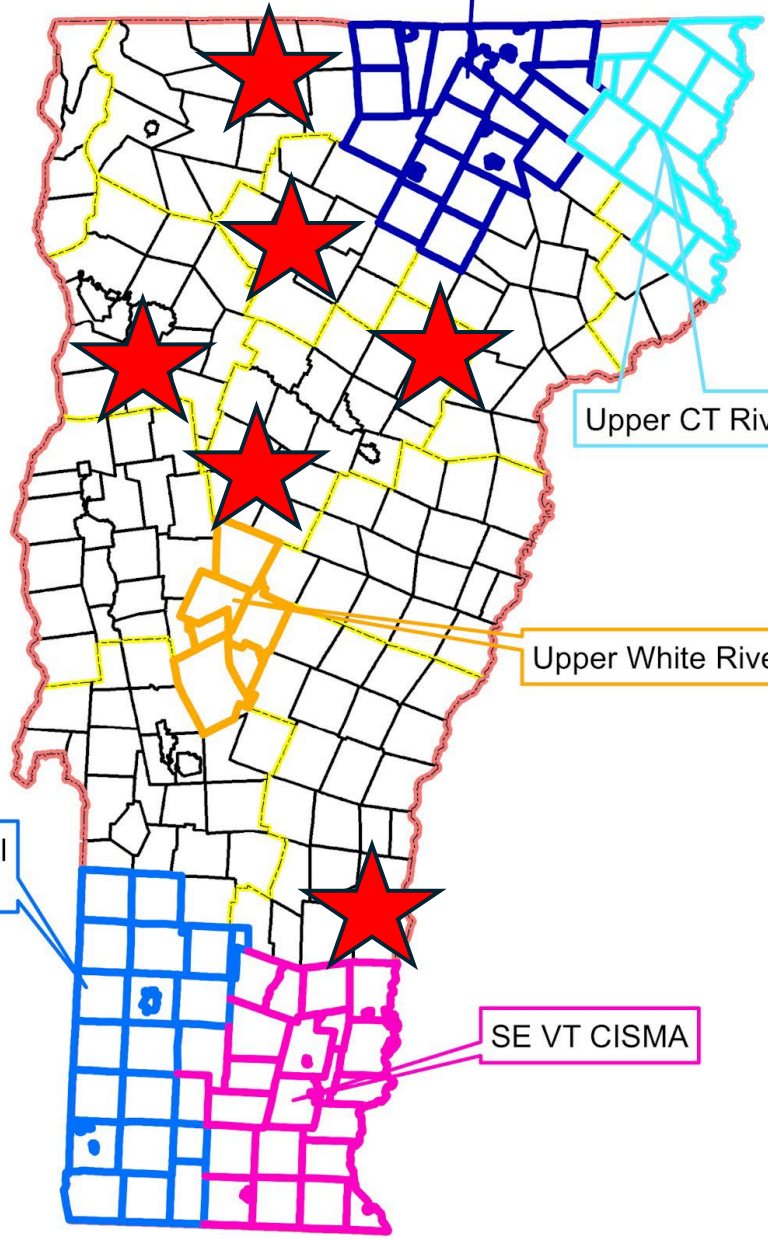
Batten Kill Cisma

Orleans County Cisma

Upper CT River Cisma

Upper White River CWMA

SE VT Cisma



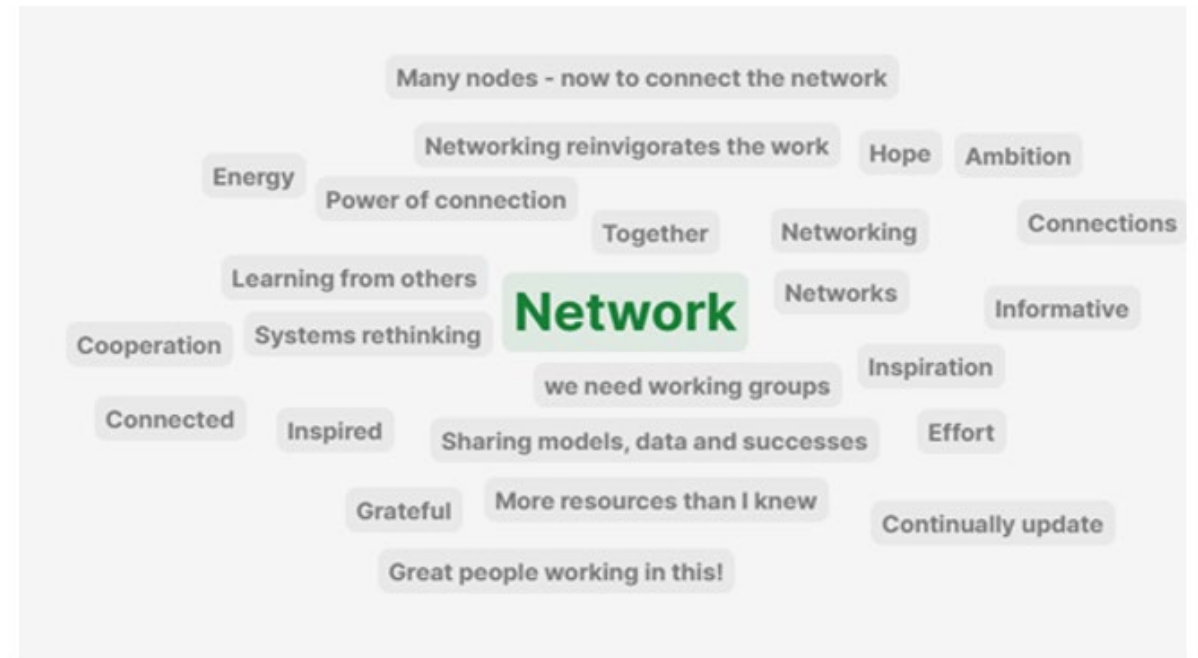


2025 Introduced Species Management Gathering – *Protecting What We Care About*

Baseline thoughts regarding the topic of invasive species at beginning of meeting (9:30am):



End of meeting thoughts regarding introduced invasive species work in VT (3:00pm):









**NO
NEW
TAXES\$**

**NO
NEW
illegals!**

**END THE INVASION
STOP IMMIGRATION**

**STOP
ILLEGAL
IMMIGRATION**

**GO BACK
TO YOUR
COUNTRY**

**RETURN
TO
BORDER**

**KEEP
REFUGEE
OUT!!!**



Framing shapes the way we see a problem before we even begin to solve it.

**DEPARTMENT
OF DEFENSE**

Orientation: Protect
guard • deter • contain

PURPOSE
Protect the nation and
secure its future.

**DEPARTMENT
OF WAR**

Orientation: Attack
destroy • dominate • win

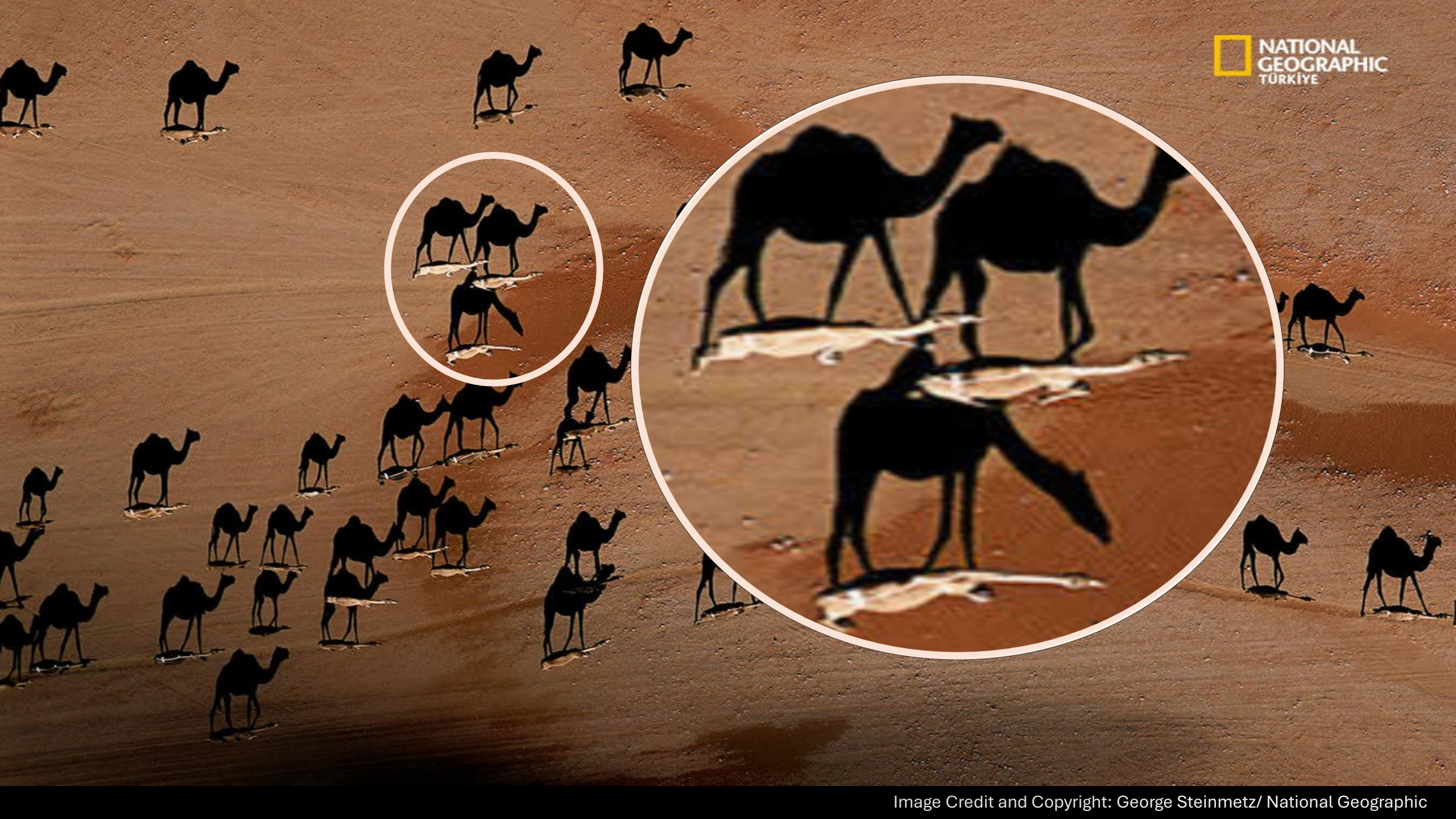
**DEPARTMENT
OF PEACE**

Orientation: Prevent
stabilize • reduce harm
transform

Power of framing:

It doesn't change the facts.

It changes our *orientation* to them -and that changes everything.



Our Role as Public Servants

Provide language that is non-biased, accurate, and scientifically grounded

Frame issues in ways that support understanding, inclusion and responsibility

Vermont Invasive and Exotic Plant Advisory Committee



Regulated Introduced Plant Species Advisory Committee

Remembering Our Part in the Story

Be willing to name and acknowledge our role in the introduction, spread, and management of introduced plant pest species.

Most introduced pests
did not arrive on their
own.

They came through **our**
movement, **our** trade, **our**
choices, **our** systems.



When we remove
ourselves from the
narrative, we remove
the possibility of real
change.

Words shape how we think and help us to:

cultivate curiosity

embrace complexity

drive meaningful, effective solutions.



Forest Health

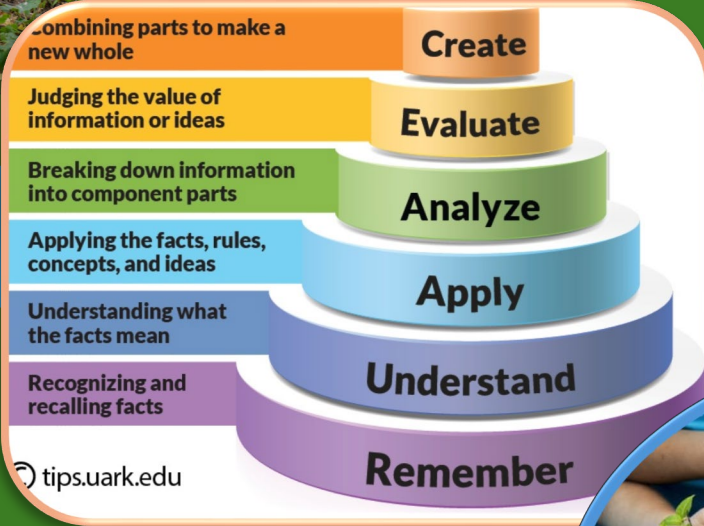
Statewide coordinator role...

- Implement management on state lands
- Monitor forest health
- Map forest pest distribution
- Manage VT Invasives website
- Lots of outreach and communication: municipalities, state agencies, schools, conservation orgs.





Nature-Based Education



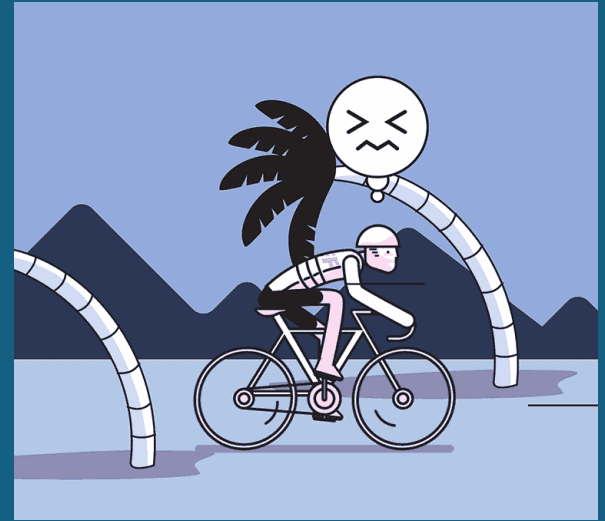
Inquiry into 'Deeper Learning'

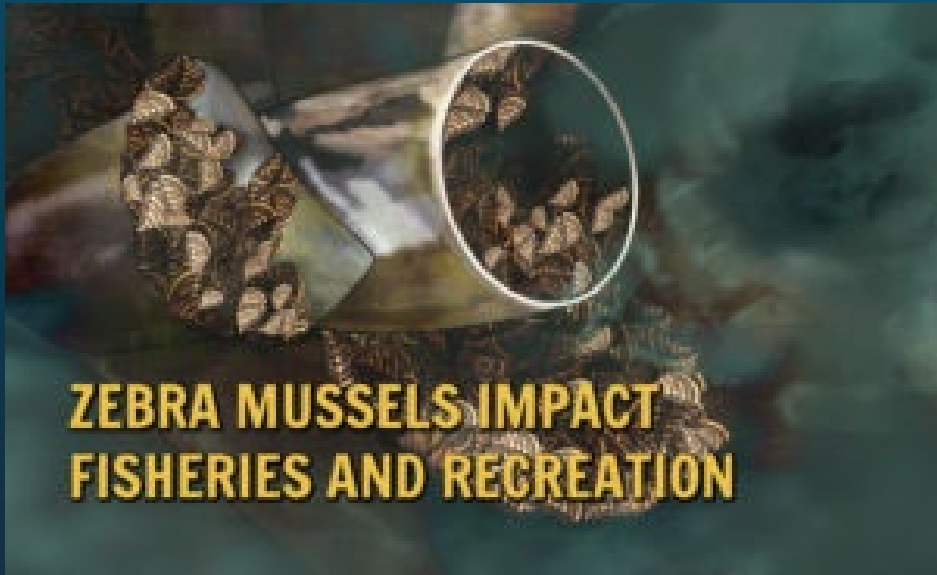


Sense of Belonging is Foundational

FPR Role – Forest Health, Forest Pests









STOP AQUATIC HITCHHIKERS!™
Be A Good Steward.
Clean. Drain. Dry.
StopAquaticHitchhikers.org

forest health depends on you

- buy local firewood
- buy certified, heat-treated firewood
- gather onsite when permitted



PONTIAC FIREWOOD.org (b)



We PlayCleanGo!

"We buy native plants and clean our tools between uses to keep our garden invasives free." (c)



Messaging strategies that promote understanding and trust

- Positive efficacy statements and nature-based value framing
- 'Passenger' metaphors that center the role of humans
- Apolitical language
- Co-creation with community stakeholders

WANTED
Orange Hawkweed
Alias: *Hieracium aurantiacum*



Member of the Aster Family

Description: Leaves are basal, club-shaped and both surfaces are covered with stiff hairs. Flowers are brilliant burnt orange in color. Many parts of plant contain black, bristly hairs.

Crimes committed: Colonies are dense, mat-forming patches with the ability to sustain 3,000 plants per square yard. Produces a chemical which inhibits pollination in other plants. Unpalatable as browse for wildlife. Extremely difficult to eradicate.



"YOUR STATE IS BEAUTIFUL! I COULD JUST EAT IT UP!"

Learn how to leave Hungry Pests behind.

VISIT HUNGRYPESTS.com



Flawed messaging strategies that cause confusion and mistrust

- Fear appeals
- Simplified 'invader' metaphors that downplay the role of humans
- Xenophobic and militaristic language



United States Department of Agriculture
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

Extending the conversation...

Find a partner sitting nearby and share about a topic of your choice. Take 3 minutes each.

03:00

What feelings or insights came up for you during the presentation?

How does public messaging and communication relate to your work?

How has your thinking shifted about the language used in 'invasion' ecology?

Thank you!

Link to a publication on
introduced (invasive)
species language, with
bibliography:

Emilie: Emilie.Inoue@vermont.gov

Pieter: Pieter@vlt.org

Noah: Noah.hoffman@vermont.gov

