

GREEN MOUNTAIN NATIONAL FOREST PROJECT PROTECTS 732 ACRES AND EXPANDS PUBLIC ACCESS IN VERMONT

VERMONT (May 20, 2026) — The Conservation Fund has protected 732 acres of forestland in Middlebury and Ripton within the Green Mountain National Forest (GMNF), advancing efforts to expand public access and conserve critical natural resources.

Originally acquired in 2014 at the request of the U.S. Forest Service, the property consists of key inholdings that will be added to the National Forest using Land and Water Conservation Fund support. The project secures permanent access to public lands and trail networks while helping protect wetlands, almost four miles of streams, cold water fisheries and other important wildlife habitat — including for the federally endangered northern long-eared bat and state-threatened plant Jacob’s Ladder.

“Knit into the mountainous landscape of the northern edge of the Green Mountain National Forest, protection of these acres will enhance the best of what public lands offer Vermont. Thanks to this new project, public trails will remain connected, wetlands and streams will remain intact, forestland habitats remain a home for diverse species, and the GMNF remains a destination for all. Conservation of these lands supported local priorities, and The Conservation Fund was honored to work with local leaders on this important acquisition,” said Sally Manikian, Vermont and New Hampshire state director at The Conservation Fund.

“The Ripton Conservation Commission is pleased that the transfer of several parcels of land in Ripton from The Conservation Fund to the US Forest Service has been completed. These parcels, and their special environmental features and functions, were protected by The Conservation Fund until the US Forest Service could take ownership. We appreciate The Conservation Fund’s work to protect treasured places and wildlife habitat,” said Mark Nelson, co-chair of the Ripton Conservation Commission.

Funding for the acquisition came from the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), which was permanently funded with the passage of the Great American Outdoors Act in 2020. LWCF, established in 1965, reinvests a small percentage of offshore energy revenues — not taxpayer dollars — in conservation and recreation access projects that protect natural resources, wild habitats, historic sites, and working lands. This project was made possible thanks to LWCF funding supported by U.S. Senator Bernie Sanders, U.S. Senator Peter Welch and U.S. Representative Becca Balint.

“The Green Mountain National Forest is one of Vermont’s most precious natural treasures,” said Senator Sanders. “This project is an important step forward in preserving wilderness areas for



future generations of Vermonters, not destroying them for the short-term profits of oligarchs.”

“Vermont’s forests and natural resources are at the heart of our recreational economy. I’m proud to have helped secure funding for this project, which will conserve more than 700 acres of forestland, protect access to public lands, and ensure future generations can enjoy Vermont’s great outdoors,” said Senator Welch, a member of the Senate Agriculture Subcommittee on Conservation, Forestry, Natural Resources and Biotechnology.

“The Green Mountain National Forest belongs to all of us,” said Rep. Becca Balint (VT-At-Large). “As someone who has hiked big sections of the Green Mountain National Forest, I’m thrilled to see this funding secured for a place that means so much to so many Vermonters. I’m proud to have worked alongside Senator Sanders and Senator Welch to protect our wildlife, strengthen forest management, and expand outdoor access. Preserving these public lands is critical to protecting both our environment and our way of life for generations to come.”

By consolidating public ownership and protecting a priority conservation area, the project strengthens wildlife corridors, supports water quality and enhances recreation opportunities for hunters, anglers and outdoor enthusiasts, ensuring long-term benefits for local communities and visitors alike.

About The Conservation Fund

The Conservation Fund protects the land that sustains us all. We are in the business of conservation, creating innovative solutions that drive nature-based action in all 50 states for climate protection, vibrant communities and sustainable economies. We apply effective strategies, efficient financing approaches, and enduring government, community and private partnerships to protect millions of acres of America’s natural land, cultural sites, recreation areas and working forests and farms. To learn more, visit www.conservationfund.org.

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