

Working Lands Enterprise Fund: Investment with Results

Working Lands Enterprise Fund (WLEF) Goal:

To stimulate a concerted economic development effort on behalf of Vermont's agriculture and forest products sectors by systematically advancing entrepreneurship, business development, and job creation.

WLEF Objectives:

- Increase the value of Vermont's raw and value-added products through the development of in-state and export markets.
- Attract a new generation of entrepreneurs to Vermont's farm, food system, forest, and value-added chain by facilitating more affordable access to the working landscape.
- Increase the amount of state investment in working lands enterprises, particularly when it leverages private and philanthropic funds.

The Story of Vermont's Working Landscape:

- Over 97% of Vermonters value the Working Landscape.
- Approximately 20% of Vermont's land is used for agricultural purposes and 75% as forestry.
- The Vermont forest products sector contains approximately 7,000 jobs, and approximately 57,000 jobs are in Vermont's food system.¹
- The average age of Vermont's farmers and loggers is over 55 years and the average age of forestland owners is over 65.²
- In 2000, Vermont forest products businesses processed 927,811 cords of wood; in 2008 they processed 584,150 – a 37% drop in 8 years.³
- Fifty years ago, half of the state's land was in farms. That number has dropped by almost 60% – today, only 1/5 of Vermont's land is being farmed.⁴

Kelt and Kristina Naylor, Sidehill Farm, Brattleboro:

We already hired some people and started cross training them to get ready for this move, and we'll be adding a person or two... in the next year, we are going to hire two additional positions.



The Vermont Working Lands Coalition urges the legislature to support a \$15 million investment in the Working Lands Enterprise Fund over the next several years to spur our Rural Renaissance.

The Working Lands Enterprise Fund:

- Creates *jobs* in working lands enterprises
- Keeps *young entrepreneurs* in Vermont
- Builds *new markets* for value-added products
- Increases *capacity* for in-state production
- Leverages *more investment* for growing enterprises



Chris Brooks and Katie Adams, VT Wood Pellet Company:
So we received \$38,000. That 10% increase has led to increased production... we hired two extra people.

¹ <http://vtworkinglands.org/sites/default/files/library/files/working%20landscape/WLSummaryFINAL.pdf>

² http://vtrural.org/webfm_send/553

³ <http://vtworkinglands.org/sites/default/files/library/files/working%20landscape/WLActionPlan-final-sm.pdf> P. 14

⁴ <http://vtworkinglands.org/sites/default/files/library/files/working%20landscape/WLActionPlan-final-sm.pdf> P. 14

Grants Awarded

In June 2013, the Working Lands Enterprise Board (WLEB) awarded \$988,730 to 36 Vermont Working Lands Enterprise Fund grant recipients from the FY13 appropriation.

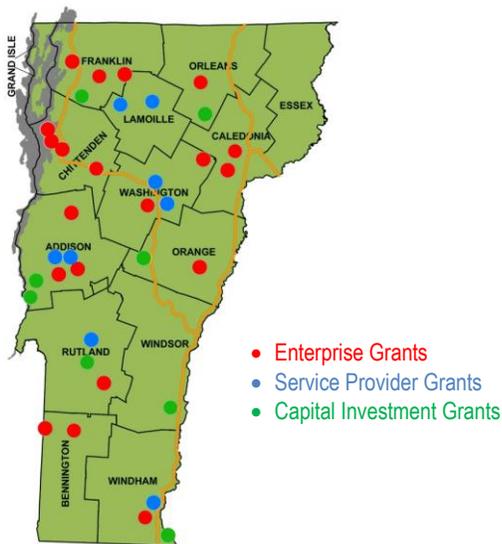
- The *Enterprise Investment Grant Area* included awarded \$204,906 to 20 recipients.
- The *Service Provider Grant Area* awarded \$369,802 to 8 recipients.
- The *Capital and Infrastructure Investment Grant Area* granted \$411,522 to 8 recipients.

Working Lands Enterprise Funds Results:

- The WLEB received 389 applications totaling \$12 million in requested funds, for less than \$1 million of available funding.
- One of WLEF's goals is to "leverage private capital." WLEF's initial \$988,730 in grants leveraged \$1,447,206 in private funding.
- Approximately 45 jobs have been created as a result of WLEF grants.
- The WLEF awards will improve and protect land and environmental health, and the Vermont quality of life.
- Thorough accountability process for grants made have been put in place, including upfront performance measures and expected outcomes, an interim report, and final project report.



Vern Grubinger, UVM Extension Service, Tony Lehouillier, Foote Brook Farm, Jeffersonville, Chris Callahan, UVM Extension Service:
All of the funds from this grant are going to go toward the growers to help them afford to install the equipment they need to really optimize storage conditions for their vegetable farms.



Jean Hamilton, Black River Meats:
We're looking at, as we scale up over the next five years, hoping to bring in about 65-80 new jobs into this facility.

Members of the Working Lands Coalition: The Center for Agricultural Economy • Green Mountain Dairy Farmers Cooperative Association • NOFA Vermont • Preservation Trust of Vermont • Riverledge Foundation • Shelburne Farms • Vermont Association of Planning and Development Agencies • Vermont Council on Rural Development Vermont Farm Bureau • Vermont Land Trust • Vermont Natural Resources Council • The Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund • Vermont Wood Manufacturers Association Vermont Woodlands Association • The Woodstock Foundation

Take a Tour of Vermont's Rural Renaissance: www.vtworkinglands.org/tour