



Vermont Coverts Woodlands for Wildlife

A newsletter of Vermont Coverts: Woodlands for Wildlife, Inc.

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NOTE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Rich Chalmers, *Class of 2005 Spring*



I got a call from a friend the other day who had just shot his first buck. He had arrived at that point through a careful process of introspection and learning. Over time he had come to believe, as a meat eater, he should have a closer relationship to that part of his life, much the same as he did with his garden.

He took his learning seriously, researching what he needed to know, talking with experts, enlisting the help

and experience of his neighbors, honing his skills. I was excited that his experience was so meaningful. And it made me think immediately of Coverts.

This is a story that plays out hundreds of times in the Coverts community. Whatever aspect of conservation you are passionate about, there is information available and people to help. For many of us, just understanding enough to identify what we need to know is quite challenging. It certainly has been for me. It is a journey, and over time our skills and land ethic evolve as our perspective broadens.

It is exactly this process of learning and growth that I find so exciting and rewarding. I am thankful to be surrounded by such amazing people with whom to explore.

The world is changing and, as it does, so will Vermont. We are fortunate that we can influence that change. Let's do what we can to ensure that Vermonters have access to the knowledge and community that shapes the best decisions – exactly what Coverts offers. It's a powerful way to navigate the future.

Your involvement and support make this possible.

Rich Chalmers

Rich Chalmers
President



Nuthatch photo by Tig Tillinghast (2007s)

THANK YOU!

You did it! You helped VT Coverts surpass our annual drive goal and secure the extra \$3000. Vermont Coverts connects people to their land, to wildlife and each other. Thank you for being an active part of this community. This money enables us to provide outreach through online and in-person programming. Visit our calendar at www.vtcoverts.org to see a listing of upcoming programs.



MISSION Enlist Vermont landowners in a long-term commitment to maintain and enhance diverse wildlife habitat and healthy ecosystems.

COOPERATOR SURVEY RESULTS: WHAT WE LEARNED (PART 2)

By: Alicia Carlson

In the summer newsletter, we shared what we learned from our Cooperator survey about how you're managing your land and sharing information with your neighbors and community. This time, we'll share how Cooperators responded to questions about the "Coverts experience." As a reminder, we surveyed 251 Cooperators, representing 31% of people trained by Vermont Coverts since 1985.

We asked folks to share their thoughts about going through the Coverts Training. This was an open response question with very little prompting. Eighty-two people commented to the effect that it was "a great experience" and that they "learned a lot." Eleven people said they hope Vermont Coverts and the Training will continue into the future, and seven people had specific suggestions to incorporate other topics, resources and professionals into the training.

Twenty-five people commented that the value of the program is in creating a community of landowners and allowing them to meet other landowners and professionals. Four people said the training was "life-changing."

A few mentioned that there's a perception the training is directed at large, wealthy landowners. This was an interesting comment as we believe all Vermonters have an opportunity to influence land use in their community. Although many of the programs highlighted in the Training, such as Use Value and NRCS, pertain to larger landowners we often accept participants that own smaller parcels or don't own land at all with the hopes they will influence land use in their community (e.g. through involvement on a planning or conservation commission).

A few also noted that they think Coverts pushes certain perspectives, such as using pesticides for managing invasive plants. This too was an interesting comment as we strive to present options for landowners. For example, at the Training and other Stewardship workshops a variety of methods are discussed for the treatment of invasives. It is up to the landowner to choose the method that best fits their situation.

These kinds of concerns highlight a need to be clear on our goal to instill a sense of belonging for all and that each landowner has choices in how to manage their land.

Another question was designed to elicit how Coverts can help Cooperators more, either with resources, meeting other landowners, offering additional trainings, etc. Again, this was an open response question, and, as you might guess, there were many different answers.

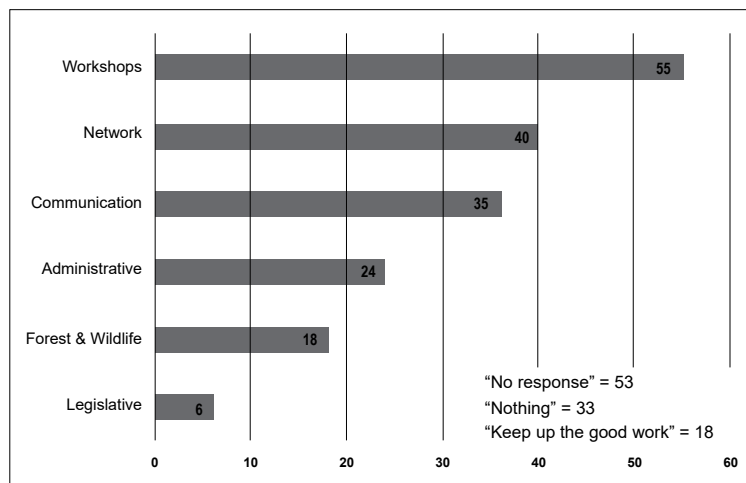


Figure 1. Areas identified where Coverts can support Cooperators

Answers were split into nine topics to make it easier to analyze. Most comments related to three topics in particular: workshops, the Cooperator network, and communication. Fifty-three people didn't respond to this question, 33 didn't need more help or couldn't think of anything, and 18 said, "keep up the good work."

The workshops topic covered a broad range of ideas. Many people asked for more local or online options, a diversity of topics, welcoming diverse presenters (from laypeople to academics), partnering with organizations and local groups, providing support to Cooperators to host workshops, offering reunions and alumni trainings, considering offering a third training per year, and providing topics for smaller landowners. (Webinars were suggested before the pandemic, and people during the pandemic mentioned how useful they were.)

The network topic focused primarily on offering opportunities to meet other Cooperators, but also providing lists, sharing the proposed map of Cooperators, providing a FaceBook group (one exists and if you are on FaceBook please join us), strengthening the Coverts community, and re-energizing the Local Contact Cooperators.

The communication topic included suggestions to announce Council meetings, send postcards to new landowners, engage past Cooperators, design presentations, videos and brochures to inform the public about Coverts, write articles about the forest industry, and provide articles to share in local papers.

Overall, the general consensus was that people enjoyed the experience of the Training and are satisfied with the support provided by the Coverts office. We are excited that many of the suggestions have already been instituted, and others are in the works. Our job now is to make sure you know about them. In the next article, we'll highlight some of the suggestions and the steps we are taking to address them.

We would like to acknowledge Vermont Fish and Wildlife and the Statewide Wildlife Grants for supporting our survey effort.

2022 COOPERATOR OPPORTUNITIES

COOPERATOR ADVANCED TRAINING

Learn more about Vermont's woodlands and wildlife and the best strategies for sharing this knowledge in your communities. Our goal for this training is to help you become a stronger peer-to-peer advocate and feel confident as a Cooperator sharing knowledge about Vermont's forests and wildlife. The program will include four online classes over six weeks, and an in-person session on April 9th. Cooperators who commit to this training will gain knowledge about forest and wildlife issues and skills to help organize one program in their community. This is Coverts at its best, learning and sharing from each other. If you're interested in being part of this pilot program, email Lisa at lisa@vtcoverts.org or Alicia at alicia@vtcoverts.org.

BECOME A COVERTS COOPERATOR MENTOR

Remember what it was like to finish your Training? You were excited but not sure what to do next. But then you called your County Forester, attended a workshop or talked to your neighbor. Now imagine if you had someone to guide you along as you started this journey. That is what a Coverts Mentor is designed to do. You will be paired with a recent graduate of the Training and your role will be to help get them started and connected. We will offer the training for this on March 19th. If you are interested in learning more or becoming a Mentor contact lisa@vtcoverts.org.



CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR 2021 COVERTS AWARD WINNERS

The David Clarkson award for outstanding Cooperator went to Tina Barney of Hartland while the James Engle award for sharing Coverts ideals in the public arena went to Dan Kilborn, a forester with the Vermont Land Trust. To read more about these amazing people visit the stories link on our website.



HEARTWOOD VERMONT PODCAST

Listen to all 5 episodes of Heartwood, a podcast that connects Vermonters to our forests, forest management, and the forest economy. On this podcast, you will hear stories from landowners, forestry professionals, and wood product producers, on a range of topics, including their relationship to the land. Join us as we get to the heart of why Vermont's forests matter. You can find Heartwood Vermont on seven listening platforms, including Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Stitcher, and Google Podcasts! There will be more episodes produced in 2022.



VERMONT COVERTS ON iNATURALIST

We have started an iNaturalist project for Coverts Cooperators to share their observations and grow an online community over the next year. Our goal is to help you get comfortable using iNaturalist so that you can use it to identify and monitor species on your own property. If you're already using iNaturalist, search for our "Vermont Coverts Cooperator Observations" project and join us. If you're not using iNaturalist yet, you can find some resources, plus a recorded webinar and slideshows on our website at <http://vtcoverts.org/inaturalist.html>. If you need help at any time, contact Alicia at alicia@vtcoverts.org or 802-877-2777.

COVERTS ONLINE BOOK GROUP EXPLORES LAND ETHIC

In 2021 Vermont Coverts launched a slow read of Sand County Almanac online over Zoom. A dozen Cooperators joined the book group which met every other month. The slow read provided an opportunity for people to accomplish the readings and really delve into the prose and meaning of Leopold's work. One Cooperator noted, "It was a wonderful way to read this book, focusing on each month and what was happening in Leopold's time and real time in my woods." The group enjoyed this experience so much that it has chosen to meet again in 2022. They have chosen two books to tackle in the coming year, Suzanne Simard's Finding the Mother Tree and The Trees in my Forest by Bernd Heinrich. If you are interested in joining in e-mail lisa@vtcoverts.org. We will be meeting the last Tuesday, every other month starting in January.



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COOPERATOR SIGNS

Join Cooperator Barbara Wallace (2014f) in displaying a Coverts sign. Signs, available to you as a Cooperator, let others know of your involvement in Vermont Coverts. We have a sign for each Cooperator household. If you want more than one sign there is a \$5 fee to cover mailing costs. Request your sign by e-mailing alicia@vtcoverts.org or calling (802) 877-2777. Once you get your sign please send us a picture of you with it.

ARE YOU GETTING OUR EMAILS?

We regularly send out emails to keep you informed of upcoming programs and Coverts news. If you're not seeing them, it could be one of two things: our messages are going into your spam folder (we've heard this from some folks in the past) or you're not signed up to receive our emails! Check your spam folders and if you see one of our emails there, mark it as "not spam." Or, you can sign up through the "Subscribe to E-news" button on our homepage.



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