

# THE TRUST *for* PUBLIC LAND

LAND FOR PEOPLE

Glenn Seward, Selectboard Chair, Town of West Windsor  
February 12, 2015

Joint Meeting of the House General, Housing & Military Affairs Committee  
and the Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing & General Affairs



## Ascutney Mountain, Vermont

### Promoting Recreation and Renewal

The 2010 closure of the Ascutney Mountain Resort dealt a blow to West Windsor, Vermont. Not only was the downhill ski area the primary business in town, but the resort land is also key to the wider recreation-based economy, hosting half of the 30-mile Ascutney Trails network, a popular regional destination for non-motorized recreation, such as mountain biking, running, hiking, snowshoeing, horseback riding, and backcountry skiing.

With the resort land for sale and the trail network in danger of closure, The Trust for Public Land is working with the Town of West Windsor, the Upper Valley Land Trust, and Sport Trails of Ascutney Basin to acquire 469 acres of the former Ascutney Mountain Resort, add it to the 1,112-acre existing West Windsor Town Forest, and protect both properties with a conservation easement that will guarantee public access, protection of

significant ecological values, and the continued support of the region's economy.

West Windsor's selectboard, along with its planning, conservation, and town forest commissions, all strongly support this effort as a way to renew the town's economy, protect a biodiversity hotspot, and maintain a high quality of life as a recreation and tourism community. Local recreation groups, schools and businesses, property-owners associations, and the VT Dept. of Tourism & Marketing, and Dept. of Forests, Parks, and Recreation also have lined up in support of this much-needed conservation project.

In addition to protecting recreation, the project will conserve significant wildlife habitat, protect public drinking water sources, and provide opportunities for forest restoration. But if a conservation outcome fails, all these benefits will be lost.

## Many Reasons for Conservation

Acquiring the former Ascutney Mountain Resort for protection as part of the West Windsor Town Forest would protect and enhance:

- recreation and economic development – guaranteeing public access to the mountain and preserving the popular trail network at the heart of the local tourist economy
- public health and fitness – promoting outdoor exercise for all Upper Valley residents
- wildlife habitat – in a hotspot for biodiversity, with vernal pools and rare communities of plants and animals.
- drinking water quality – by protecting a water supply serving 750 people
- the regional environment – by connecting to a nearly 5,000-acre block of conservation land and protecting views of the mountain from I-91 and the Connecticut River Scenic Byway.

The land will be owned by West Windsor as part of its Town Forest, protected by an easement held by the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board and the Upper Valley Land Trust, and managed to balance its many benefits. Half of the upper slopes of the former ski area will be encouraged to regenerate, with the lower ski slopes left open to provide an area for backcountry skiing or a potential non-profit community ski area.

## Proposed Funding

The Trust for Public Land plans to raise most of the project funding from two public sources: the federal Community Forest Program and the Vermont Housing

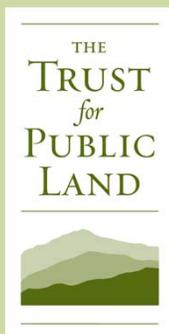
and Conservation Board. The Town of West Windsor has committed \$105,000, and we are working to raise \$135,000 from private sources to complete the project by July 2015.

## The Trust for Public Land

Over the past four decades, The Trust for Public Land has conserved more than 3.2 million acres—including 54,000 acres in Vermont to protect recreational access, water quality, wildlife habitat, and the landscapes that support our forest and recreation economies and high quality of life.

## Upper Valley Land Trust

Founded in 1985, UVLT is an accredited land conservancy protecting farmland, forests, habitat and scenic landscapes in the Upper Connecticut River Valley. UVLT holds conservation easements protecting over 460 properties, 45,000 acres, and more than 50 trails and campsites.



*The Trust for Public Land creates parks and protects land for people, ensuring healthy, livable communities for generations to come.*

[tpl.org](http://tpl.org)

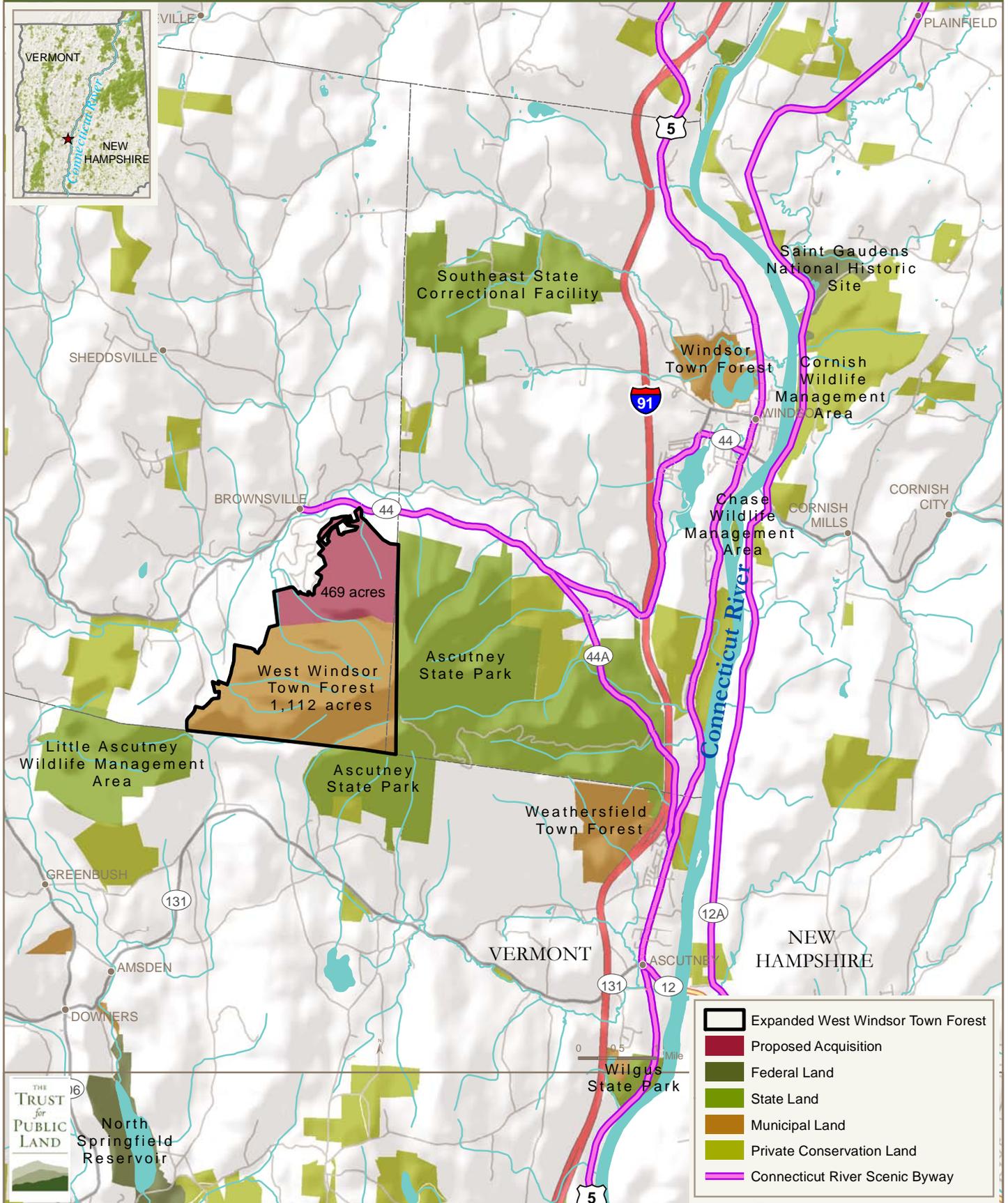
For more information:

Kate Wanner  
Project Manager  
3 Shipman Place  
Montpelier, VT 05602  
802.223.1373, ext. 27  
[kate.wanner@tpl.org](mailto:kate.wanner@tpl.org)

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