



# SOUTH HERO LAND TRUST

*Newsletter*

*Summer 2023*



## *From the Bedrock to the Blue: Mapping the Places that Matter to You*

If you've been following the news in South Hero, you may know that South Hero has a new Town Conservation Commission. The Commission is made up of South Hero residents who deeply care about the natural world and local farms, and want to find ways to steward them and connect people with them—just like we do at South Hero Land Trust. One of the first projects of the new Commission was a partnership effort with South Hero Land Trust and the Vermont Department of Fish & Wildlife: developing a series of Community Values Maps.

### **What Do You Love About South Hero?**

As a community based conservation organization, South Hero Land Trust is guided by our connection and commitment to the land and people of South Hero. Knowing what you value most about our Island home is vital as we develop projects and programs.

Together with the Conservation Commission, we reached out to South Hero residents and landowners of all ages, and asked them two questions: What places do you love in South Hero? And why? We hosted two

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*South Hero residents gather at the Worthen Library to map the places they love.*

# SOUTH HERO



# LAND TRUST

A nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting the farmland, woodland, natural and recreational areas, and open spaces which give South Hero its distinctive quality of life

PO Box 455  
South Hero, VT 05486  
tel: (802) 372-3786  
www.shlt.org

email: info@shlt.org  
emily@shlt.org  
guy@shlt.org  
jenna@shlt.org

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*Jenna O'Donnell*  
Development &  
Communications Director

*Anna Johnson*  
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## Introducing Our Newest Team Member

Hello!

*My name is Jenna O'Donnell, and I am thrilled and honored to be joining the team at South Hero Land Trust. As the organization's Development and Communications Director, I'll be helping to show off all the amazing work being done by my colleagues, connect with our existing and new supporters, and build the support needed to continue and expand the Land Trust's programs and impacts in our community.*



*Prior to joining SHLT, I worked at Hunger Free Vermont for seven years, where I helped to establish and build the Hunger Councils of Vermont network. I've long been interested in local and sustainable food systems, and spent most of my early career involved in food production and advocacy - a passion that brought me from AmeriCorps in Delaware to internships in Washington D.C., to working at a small diversified farm in Washington State. In 2013, I moved "temporarily" to Vermont, in order to combine all of my work experiences into a larger framework through a masters degree in Community Development and Applied Economics at UVM. At the time, I thought I'd be moving immediately back to D.C. after completing my degree... but I ended up falling in love with Vermont (and with the person who's now my husband). Now a decade later, I am grateful to have found a home and community that shares my love of the outdoors, vibrant food systems, and connections with each other.*

*Outside of work, you'll probably find me playing with my two young children, gardening, or working towards my goal of someday running the Vermont City Marathon. I also volunteer at a number of different organizations, and am looking forward to getting to know the South Hero and Grand Isle County community.*

*I look forward to connecting with you!*

*Cheers,*

*Jenna O'Donnell*  
Development and Communications Director

community gatherings, (one in person and one online) and invited attendees to circle the places in South Hero they value, and explain why those places matter to them.

### **This Island is Our Home**

It was a powerful experience to be at the table during these gatherings, hearing each person share why they love this place. There were many common themes, like valuing South Hero’s recreational trails and access to Lake Champlain (also called “The Blue Stuff”). And there were unique perspectives too, like appreciation for the bedrock geology of the Islands or the history of the Island Line railroad. There was no question that everyone in the room felt a deep sense of homecoming when crossing the Sandbar onto the Island.



*Evening light shines on the entrance to the Landon Community Trail.*

### **Mapping our Values**

Our colleagues at the Department of Fish & Wildlife used the data gathered to develop a series of maps of South Hero. These maps will help South Hero Land Trust and the Conservation Commission understand what land is most important to the community for recreation, farms, community

gatherings, and other purposes. The final maps are under development, but soon we will be able to see which farm fields are vital to vibrant farm operations in South Hero and feed our community. We will see the walking routes and views of the lake that bring joy to our daily excursions. And we will see the places that are worthy of protection because they bring us a sense of peace and connection to the natural world.

At South Hero Land Trust, we plan to use the maps to guide our strategic conservation planning. What places in South Hero still need to be protected? Where should we focus on building trails or other public access areas? Do farms have access to the land base they need to be successful? Are there needs in the community that are not being met? How can land conservation help?

We look forward to engaging more with you and the entire South Hero community as we enter this planning phase. The final report from the Department of Fish & Wildlife will be posted on the SHLT website later this summer. If you have any questions or would like to learn more, please reach out to Emily at [Emily@shlt.org](mailto:Emily@shlt.org)



*Sheep on pasture at Lemon Lily Farm, conserved in 2017 by Lake Champlain Land Trust and South Hero Land Trust, along with the Tracy Woods*

## Filling their Plates with a "Fresh Rainbow" from the Folsom Food Forest



Programs Director Guy Maguire, showing students how to plant.

This May, SHLT staff met local 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade students in the Folsom Learning Garden and finally let them do the one thing they always ask to do: get some shovels and dig a bunch of holes. While fun is always a goal in the garden, we dug these holes for good reason: to assess the soil in different parts of the garden and determine the best spot for the **Folsom Food Forest**.

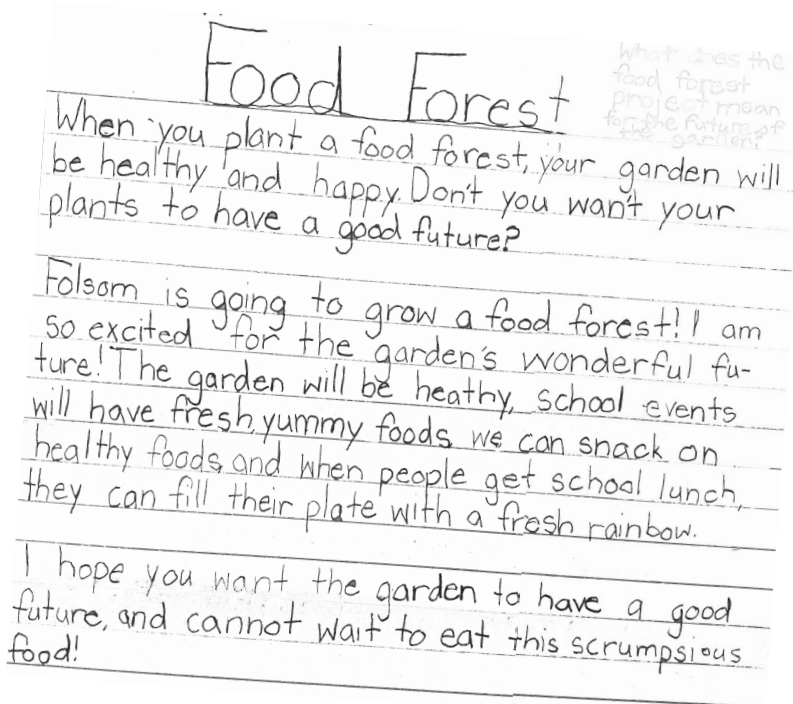
Last winter, SHLT staff worked with Folsom teachers Dani Holm and Megan Branon to apply for the Vermont Garden Network's Fruit and Nut Tree Grant.

*"Over the past few years our collaborative work with the SHLT has empowered the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> graders to take on leadership roles in Folsom's Learning Garden. The interdisciplinary nature of working in the garden has allowed students' learning to come to life. Students are able to witness first hand, the cyclical patterns of seasons, plants, and animals that we speak so much of in science class. They seamlessly integrate their math skills as they calculate spacing for native plants. They consider the history of the land on which they've been called to steward and pour over research to determine which plants will thrive best. These students are already thick as thieves with this little diversified slice of land so being deeply involved in the design and implementation of expanding the gardens to include a food forest has been very exciting work for all of us."*

- Dani Holm, Folsom 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> teacher

We envisioned a collaborative project in which students would be involved in the creation of a multi-level edible landscape in the garden, complete with dwarf fruit trees, berry bushes, grape vines, a shady seating area, and strawberries underneath - in other words, a food forest! We were thrilled to be awarded the grant by the Vermont Garden Network, and soon got to work preparing for the spring project.

After assessing the site conditions, students worked in groups to select species to plant, decide where they should go in the garden, think about how to keep them safe from deer, and perhaps most importantly, what should happen to the (literal) fruits of their labor!



Then the groups presented their plans, debated the various aspects of each, and voted on their favorite elements to create an overall plan for the site.

Finally, the students joined us for two work parties in the garden, to “dig a bunch of holes” and plant the berry bushes, vines, and fruit trees. We can’t wait to see how their forest grows!

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## *Innovations in Forest Stewardship Bring Hope for our Islands Ecosystems*

Since the last ice age, South Hero’s landscapes have changed quite a lot. The land where we live now was once a seabed; then forests and meadows stewarded by indigenous Peoples; then cleared for sheep and dairy farms by settlers. Most recently, some of the forests have grown back, alongside the development of new houses and roads. And now, with the arrival of the invasive emerald ash borer, our landscape is poised to change dramatically again.

Ash trees make up an estimated 40-60% of all the trees in Grand Isle County, a higher percentage than any other county in Vermont. With 95-99% of all ash expected to succumb to this invasive insect, we are poised to lose half our County’s mature forests in the next 10-15 years. This will be a “landscape level ecological upheaval,” according to Nancy Patch, Grand Isle County Forester. It will also have a devastating cultural impact for the Abenaki people, whose lives have been entwined with the ash beginning with their creation story. **But there is much we can do to save our forests and the ash trees within them.**

South Hero Land Trust is working on an experimental “pre-forestation” project at the South Hero Recreation Park. By removing invasive plants and planting climate-forward tree species that can thrive in the shade and wet conditions in the understory, we are hoping to protect the future of this forest for future generations. If all goes to plan, the tree plantings will fill the gaps left behind by dying ash trees. This proactive approach allows us to maintain a healthy forest ecosystem in the face of climate change and the invasive emerald ash borer, protecting the homes of many species of wild plants and animal life



*SHLT AmeriCorps member Anna Johnson, pulling invasive honeysuckle.*

which call the Recreation Park home. It will also preserve the habitat of the ash trees, so that resistant varieties can be protected and one day re-planted.

With funding from the Vermont Urban and Community Forestry Program and the South Hero Congregational Church, we hope this project can not only save the future of this public forest, but also act as a demonstration site and catalyst for inspiring forest landowners across the Islands to take up similar efforts.

Many other experimental projects like ours are being carried out across Vermont and the Northeast. Whether or not they are successful remains to be seen. But we can learn from them and work together to make sure our forests thrive and continue to provide benefits like biodiversity, clean air, clean water, carbon sequestration, and natural beauty.

If you want to learn more about pre-forestation, or funding opportunities and support available to forest landowners, email Guy at [Guy@shlt.org](mailto:Guy@shlt.org)

## *Celebrating Community Partners: Snow Farm Winery and Wally's Place Give Back*

We'd like to say a big "thank you" to two amazing partners in the South Hero community!

### **Wally's Place**

For the past 15 years, Wally's Place has been a staple of the South Hero community. The Bartle family, founding owners of Wally's Place, have demonstrated their commitment to the land, farms, and community of South Hero in so many ways: buying local ingredients, promoting local farmers, creating a gathering space for locals, and making South Hero Land Trust the recipient of their annual birthday celebration fundraiser. We can't think of a better partner, and we are truly grateful for all the times you've stepped up for the landscapes and people of South Hero. The news this year about changes at Wally's Place has been bittersweet: we will miss seeing Matt and Kristen's smiling faces while stopping by for lunch, but are excited that the business will continue under new ownership. It is a great time to say thank you, and share our gratitude and appreciation for the longtime support of this local business.



*Nick Lane of Fox Hill Maple, demonstrating to children how taps work during Maple Open House*

### **Snow Farm Winery and Fox Hill Maple**

We'd also like to thank Fox Hill Maple at Crescent Bay Farm and the Lane family for their collaboration and support during this year's Maple Open House Weekend! We had so much fun teaming up with them for a sugarbush tour, games (like a sap jug relay race), and a special taste of fresh maple syrup from the day's boil at the sugarhouse. Later in the day, the Lanes hosted a pancake dinner at Snow Farm Vineyard and generously donated the proceeds to South Hero Land Trust! We are so thankful for their careful stewardship of the land, vibrant farm businesses, and care for our special Island community.

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## *Learning about Food & Farming Brings Us Together*

We explored local food and farming with the Worthen Library, Healthy Roots Collaborative, and community members through our Winter Wednesday series this year. It was so much fun to learn about agriculture in our region and

then make some delicious food and drinks together! Here are a couple of photos from the series:

*Left: Craft Cocktail Night with local mixologist Matt Farkas*  
*Right: Kimchi-making with Julia Irish of Pitchfork Pickle*



# South Hero Land Trust Summer Events

## Here's what's going on in our community:

SHLT's Annual Celebration:

July 30 at Snow Farm Winery (*more details soon*)

Nature Rambles:

- July 27 (Round Pond State Park)
- August 24 (Tracy Woods)
- September 14 (Round Pond Connector)

Inclusive Kayaking Outing (a pilot project with Northeast Disabled Athletic Association & North Branch Nature Center):

September 11 (Lake Arrowhead, Milton)

The Champlain Islands Farmers' Market is every Wednesday from 3-6 PM at St. Rose of Lima Church in South Hero, and every Saturday from 10 AM-2 PM at St. Joseph's Church in Grand Isle.

*More events will be added soon.*

*Check out [SHLT.org/events](http://SHLT.org/events) or email [info@shlt.org](mailto:info@shlt.org) to join our email list and never miss an event!*



*Volunteer work day at the South Hero Rec Park.*

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## SHLT Volunteer Corner

Summer is here, and South Hero Land Trust's volunteer program has many ways you can get outside and give back to the community. Help us:

- grow food for the Champlain Islands Food Shelf,
- maintain trails for public access,
- remove invasive species, plant trees, and more!

Volunteer Work Parties:

- Gleaning Garden: August 2 and September 21
- Folsom Learning Garden: August 10
- Trails: July 20 (Round Pond State Park), August 17 (Tracy Woods)

We are looking for ongoing volunteers to help out in both the Gleaning Garden and the Folsom Learning Garden. You will receive training and orientation with a Land Trust staff (possibly during a work party, but this could be scheduled individually as well), and then be able to volunteer on your own schedule. Email Guy at [Guy@shlt.org](mailto:Guy@shlt.org) to learn more and sign up.



# SUMMER 2023 NEWSLETTER



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## Save the Date!

South Hero Land Trust's Annual Celebration  
at Snow Farm Winery  
the afternoon of July 30, 2023

*Invitations coming soon...*

