



Vinalhaven Land Trust

CONSERVING THE NATURE OF VINALHAVEN

NEWSLETTER

Fall 2011 • Vol. 24, No. II

25 Years of Vinalhaven Land Trust

Consider the quiet beauty of Perry's Creek, Seal Bay, or the Basin, and imagine what we might see instead if concerned residents of Vinalhaven had not begun to work together years ago to conserve and protect the natural character of those extraordinary places.

In 2011, Vinalhaven Land Trust (VLT) celebrates 25 years of successful preservation and stewardship that began with the extraordinary initiative, leadership, and generosity of a few individuals and families, and has now grown to include an enthusiastic constituency of seasonal and year round residents.

A vision for conserving special places on Vinalhaven dates back to the 1960s with a campaign to save Lane's Island, a concerted effort that drew together both seasonal and year round residents to protect the special places of Vinalhaven. In 1984, Maine Coast Heritage Trust (MCHT) bought what is now the largest VLT-owned parcel in the Perry Creek Conservation area with the understanding that if Vinalhaven formed a conservation trust to assume local leadership within 18 months, MCHT would transfer the parcel to the newly fledged organization. In the fall of 1985, with MCHT as a facilitator, the fundamentals of creating an organization to be dedicated to the holding of conservation easements and of owning land for the public benefit were explained in a public meeting at the Washington School. At the end a show of hands was requested: "Are you Vinalhavers ready for such an organization?" The vote carried.

On May 6, 1986, three well known islanders and three longtime summer residents signed the Articles of Incorporation of Vinalhaven Land Trust. From the outset, VLT was committed to serving both year-round and seasonal residents. Interestingly, it was a man "from away," married to a Vinalhaven native, who was the first person to pay his dues. His note

read, "Please enroll me as a member. I've always been in favor of keeping Vinalhaven as it was. I wish you every success."

In its first year, VLT secured a strip of land of just under six acres on the east side of Armbrust Hill. When this piece initially came on the market, complete with utility easements that would allow for a (grandfathered) residence, it gave the young trust an opportunity to protect open space in town that residents of all ages enjoyed year round. When the fund raising began, retired teacher Gertrude Vinal Trefrey, born and raised on Vinalhaven, responded right away, saying she planned to write her schoolmates asking for their donations. Her letter to VLT included this description: "I grew up on School Street in Vinalhaven, and Armbrust Hill was 'our place.' We galloped up and down the rugged paths on our make-believe horses. I had named one place the Castle and another, more graceful formation, the Palace. We picnicked there in the summer, slid down the hill in winter. I love every rock, granite ledge, and pond there." VLT deeded the land with protective restrictions to the Town of Vinalhaven for all to enjoy.

Those critical initial efforts received rapidly growing support. By the end of 1987, there were 100 members; two years later, over 400 people had joined. In its first four years, VLT became responsible for four properties totaling 248 acres and 11 conservation easements, protecting a total of 325 acres on the Basin, Perry's Creek and Seal Bay, to name a few.

Within a decade, VLT had created the Fox Rocks trail, begun its first seabird nesting island conservation with the purchase of Roberts Island, and opened the Eleanor L. Campbell Preserve at Polly Cove. As

of the year 2000, Vinalhaven Land Trust owned and managed 569 acres on 15 properties and held 957 acres in 25 conservation easements. This robust growth was possible due to the leadership, guidance and effective work of Lucy McCarthy and Linnell Mather; and fortunately, their support of and commitment to VLT continues to this day.

One of our founders recalled that, from the outset, VLT was to be led by a board composed of one-half year round and one-half seasonal residents. He said, "The year-round residents courageously provided a reality check for the rest of us, helping us understand that community attitudes and opinions, whether VLT shared them or not, were not something to be overridden for the sake of some higher ideal or purpose. Conservation efforts would not succeed except in a manner accommodating the island's human inhabitants. We had to work with the community, find common ground, in everything we did."

Those lessons still guide our actions and our relationships in the community. Educational outreach is a critical component of our presence on the island. It includes the teaching of environmental appreciation in the school, field trips for students—on and off the island—and the very popular Walks and Talks program attended by over 800 people this year. When conservation initiatives reduce real estate taxes that the town would otherwise receive, VLT makes a voluntary contribution in lieu of taxes. In 2000, the community began work on a comprehensive plan and VLT created and donated GIS (Geographic Information System) maps depicting natural resource information used to develop that plan, such as the geology and water resources on the island.

continued on next page

VLT Turns 25 (continued from front page)

In 2006, we developed a strategic plan, following national standards and practices as established and outlined by the Land Trust Alliance, and we have completed our 2-volume application for accreditation by that national organization. Accreditation provides third-party verification that the organization is operated according to the highest professional and ethical standards, assurance of increasing importance to supporters, funders, and landowners. Our new executive director, Tuck Godfrey, oversaw the final accreditation submission and a myriad of other tasks from the renovated VLT office in Skoog Park, land donated by a loyal friend of VLT.

With the addition of the Watershed Preserve, Starboard Rock Sanctuary, Whitmore Pond Preserve, Heller Meadow, Lower Mill River Preserve, and several additional properties, VLT now owns and manages 750 acres on 25 properties and holds and

monitors 1,217 acres in 35 conservation easements. All of this activity is made possible by the financial support of over 800 members.

There is a natural limit to how much land we can or should protect as the needs of the island community must always come first. As our population expands, the solitude and beauty of our conserved properties will become all the more important—small refuges on an ever-changing island. Seeing the changes in the island and its economy over the past 25 years only confirms the wisdom of VLT's founders and supporters. The trail networks, conserved habitats, and protected views we enjoy today are the legacy we offer for generations to come.

Year by year, acre by acre, the founding vision of Vinalhaven Land Trust—to preserve natural habitats, water resources and traditional uses of land for the island community—continues to be realized.

The steady growth of the organization is proof that these initial objectives are more important than ever. And yet, as a result of that growth, there is a need to recognize we must also broaden our activity and adjust our priorities. For while in our first 25 years we focused primarily on conservation, the next 25 years for VLT is likely to be defined by stewardship. That is the means by which we protect the property in our care and manage public access, both for land owned in fee by VLT and sometimes on those properties for which VLT holds conservation easements. Stewardship is the responsibility we accept when we accept a property or property right. Thoughtful stewardship, in the interests of all, is the most lasting legacy we can achieve.

-Susie Lawrence, President, and Elizabeth Swain, Vice President

What a Summer!

This past spring and summer, the Walks and Talks programs offered by Vinalhaven Land Trust welcomed 893 participants. Members, non-members, and newly recruited members enjoyed twelve walks, five evening talks and eight bird walks. We eradicated invasive plants, learned about the oyster farm on North Haven and explored the problem of blow downs. We loaded 165 enthusiastic participants onto boats and went over to tour Hurricane Island. A good time was had by all!

For a sampling of photos and more in-depth reports on some of this season's walks, please click on the "Goings On" link at www.vinalhavenlandtrust.org. We are already planning next season's Walks and Talks and look forward to having you join us.

-Jim Boone, Chair of Walks Committee

And There Was Cake!

On a weathery afternoon in July, Susie Lawrence, President of VLT, welcomed eighty-plus members to the annual meeting and the celebration of VLT's 25th anniversary. These first two and a half decades have been dedicated to conservation, she noted; our future will be dedicated to stewardship.

As Susie and Executive Director Tuck Godfrey both emphasized, VLT recognizes its responsibility, not only to the 2,000 acres of the island owned or held in easement by VLT, but to the economic and civic needs of Vinalhaven's human community, as well. To this end, VLT's Board of Directors is composed of roughly half seasonal and half year-round residents: many voices are heard by this Board.

Five Board members were stepping down from their fulfilled terms, and were recognized and thanked, each for his or her particular contribution to the health and ongoing work of the organization.

The meeting's guest speaker was Tim Glidden, the new President of Maine Coast Heritage Trust, a well-respected conservation trust celebrating its own 40th anniversary, and a longtime supporter and adviser to our own land trust. He spoke of the many challenges facing a conservation organization: challenges for the global community, for Mainers, for islanders. He spoke of concerns to be met regarding such issues as climate change, public funding, near-at-hand food production, and the quality of life for the communities every conservation trust serves.

Then, wine, beer, fizzy water, dips, chips, deviled eggs, all sorts of good things were served, and everyone had a fine time. The celebration was capped by Susie and Tuck cutting the big cake congratulating Vinalhaven Land Trust on its 25th birthday.

-Sylvia Reiss

Celebrating Our Volunteers

VLT thanks all the wonderful people who have given their time and skills over the past year to help us accomplish our mission. Among them are the following:

Mailings: Jennifer Clements, Stevie Kaimmer, Carol Petillo, Margaret Qualey, and Mia Mather

Thank You Notes: Laura Hamilton

Grant Research: Arlene Rodenbeck

Annual Meeting: A special thank you to Sue L'Africain for organizing this meeting and keeping us all on track, to Josef L'Africain for our wonderful "Celebrating 25 years" logo, Alex Day for helping with chairs, and to the ARC for the loan of chairs.

Development: Holly Campbell Ambler, The Hon. Levin Campbell, Lee Campbell, Jr., Barton & Gingold, Bill Jaques, Jaques & Company, Pat Lundholm, Caroline and Charlie Pardoe, Didi Stockly, and Sandy Warner

Easements & Acquisitions Committee: Elin Eliason, Lucy McCarthy, and Didi Stockly

Environmental Education: Gid and Sally Lor-

ing, Kris Osgood, Amy Palmer, and Jud Raven

Finance Committee: Dick Byrd, Charles Lowrey, and Hugh Martin

Kintner Marsh Clean-Up: Merry Boone, Phil Crossman, Pam Johnson, Stevie Kaimmer, Carol and Skip Thompson, Ken White, and Yankee.

Management Plan Committee: Javier Peñalosa for resource inventories on Little White and Stoddard Islands as well as his assistance in developing an Invasive Species Policy.

Merlin: Many thanks to Elsa and Tom Menaker for donating this lovely sailboat to VLT to be resold.

Monitoring: Alex Day, John Drury, Charlie and Jamie Lowrey and Susie Rodriguez, Javier Peñalosa.

Newsletter Proofreading: Stevie Kaimmer, Mia Mather, and Gabriel Peter-Harp

Skog Park: Merry Boone, Gillian Creelman, Stevie Kaimmer, David Lawrence, Deborah Pixley, and Jud, Susan and Isa Raven all lent a hand on Weeding Day.

A "warm" thank you to Karol Kucinski and Del Webster of the Vinalhaven Energy Club (VEC), who donated two custom built storm windows. Come see them in situ and learn more about the work of VEC.

Thanks to Susie and David Lawrence for the lovely Christmas wreath and the wonderful smell of fir it brings with it.

Technical Support: Nevins Bartolomeo and Pat Lundholm

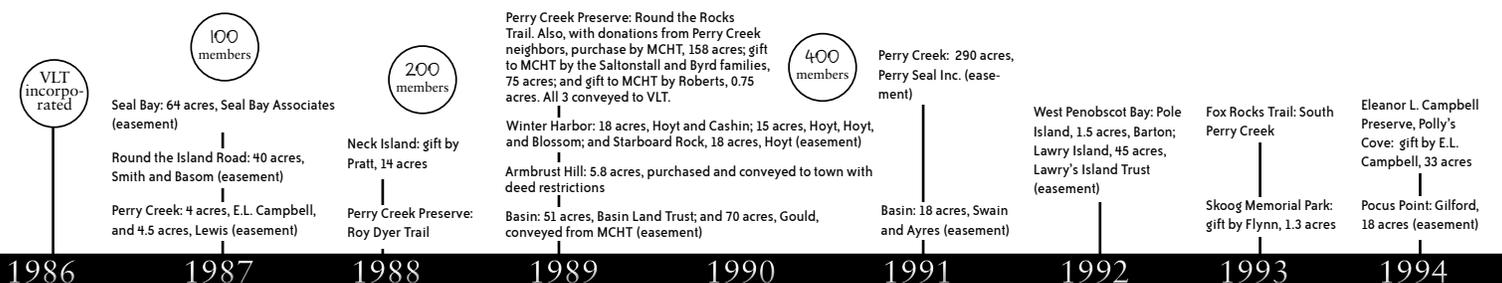
Walks: Merry Boone, David Chambers, Priscilla Cobb, Phil Crossman, Tina Cohen, John Dietter, Joe Ewing, Alan Farago, George Fosque, Kirk Gentalen, Stevie Kaimmer, Tristan Jackson, David Lawrence, Pat Lundholm, Gabe McPhail, Caroline Macomber, Hugh and Sue Martin, Javier Peñalosa, Jud Raven, Ken and Sylvia Reiss, Stephen Sontheimer, Carol Thompson, Nora Updegrove, David Wylie, and Christine and Len Yannielli

A special thank you goes to VLT's board of directors. None of this would happen without their hard work and generosity. VLT is lucky to have such dedicated and involved people on our team.

THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING OUR WORK

This summer's wonderful series of Walks and Talks programs, enjoyed by close to 900 attendees, helped people connect to Vinalhaven: its history, fauna and flora, including invasives, the flora we'd rather not have, and the many ways we interact with our natural world. Through our active environmental education program, VLT teaches the next generation to become better stewards of the place we love. Our ongoing conservation efforts strive to protect those significant plant and wildlife habitats, water resources, and scenic spaces that nourish our lives and our souls.

To sustain our education and conservation efforts, we depend on steadfast support from our members. Please give as generously as you can to VLT's year end appeal: take a moment today to send in your contribution. Thank you!



A Record of Conservation

Vinalhaven Land Trust (VLT) concludes its 25th year, rightfully proud of an amazing record of conservation. This small organization of hard working, forward thinking, generous, and passionate supporters of Vinalhaven has painstakingly achieved thoughtful, whole place conservation in many of the most environmentally sensitive and important places on the islands. While accomplishing the “big picture” one piece at a time, VLT has also protected access to the special places of the island, held dear to generations of Vinalhaveners, and protected habitat for avian and other wildlife who stop at these remote islands for rest and rejuvenation.

You can follow our timeline of conservation on the pages of this newsletter. Items with “preserve” in their description indicate places that are open to the public. You can get a feel for the steady persistence it sometimes took to establish a preserve, such as North Perry Creek Preserve, by seeing how many parcels compose it, and the many years it took to acquire them.

Properties with “easement” in their description indicate properties for which landowners have given VLT a conservation easement, giving

away some rights for some uses of their property while they or their successors own it. When you see these areas on the timeline, it will help you know why some parts of Vinalhaven remain and will remain so pristine and exquisitely beautiful—the forward thinking and generous owners of those properties sought to preserve their beauty for future generations to enjoy.

Trail openings are also indicated on the timeline, and trail maps are available in our kiosk, located at Skoog Park, just west of the ferry terminal.

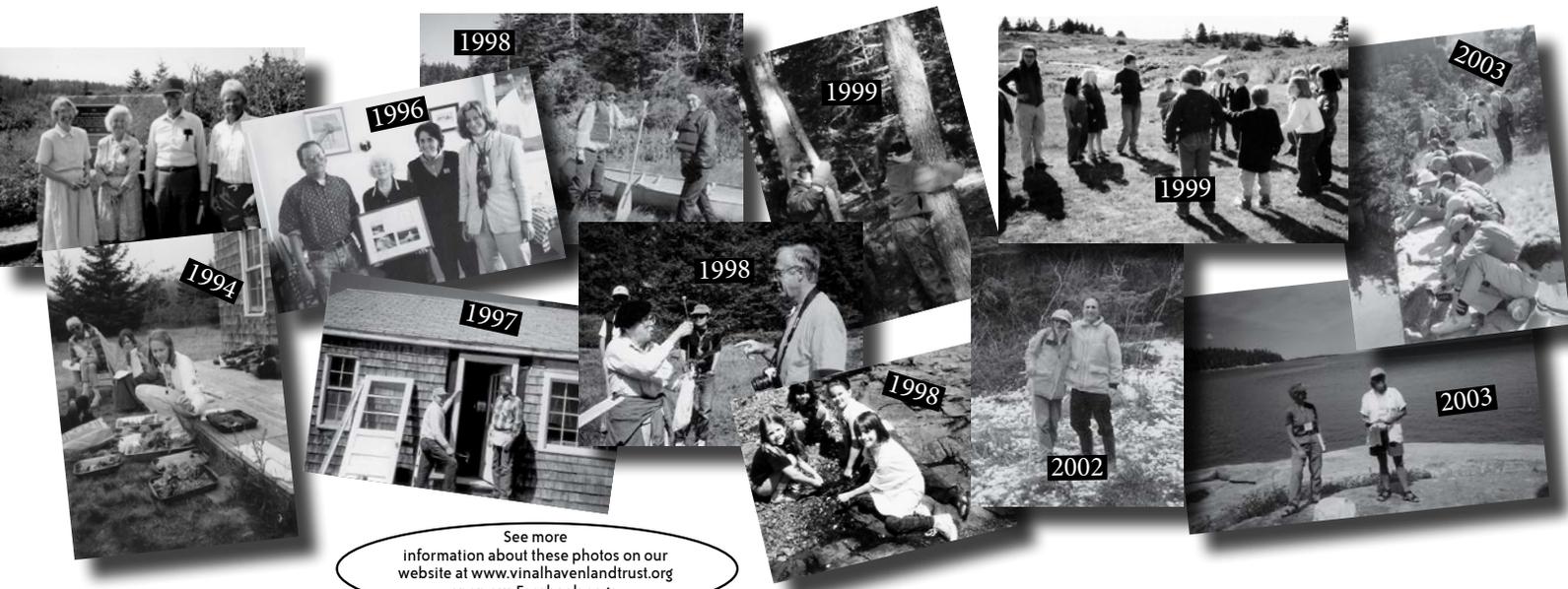
While land conservation may be our motivation, our history has other important items of note, including:

- 1986: Year of incorporation and receiving of 501(c)3 status
- 1987: First newsletter (produced on a mimeograph machine!)
- 1988: Island wide natural resource inventory funded in support of the first comprehensive plan
- 1991: First payment made in lieu of taxes (VLT’s properties are exempt from property taxes, but

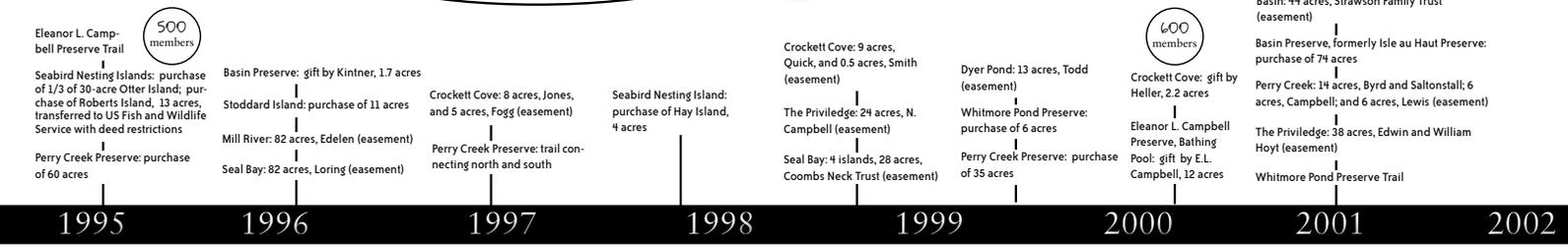
we nevertheless make a payment “in lieu of taxes,” to support the town.)

- 1994: Environmental Education program started in school; work of VLT enough to hire first paid employees (Lucy McCarthy in administration, Linnell Mather in bookkeeping)
- 1995: Past President Linda Labaree wins Land Heritage Award
- 1997: Office open year round, Anchor Fund established
- 1999: Endowment for Skoog Park established
- 2004: Office goes solar
- 2006: Outdoor Explorers after school program started
- 2007: Relocation and expansion of office building completed
- 2009: Executive Director Lucy McCarthy wins 2008 Espy Land Heritage Award
- 2011: Lucy McCarthy retires and Tuck Godfrey joins the team

Enjoy the celebration! We all— members, donors, board, staff, volunteers, contributors— made this happen.



See more information about these photos on our website at www.vinalhavenlandtrust.org or on our Facebook page.



For Future Generations

I recently stumbled on a book called *Sea Room**, in which the author shares his love of a group of small islands in Scotland (the Shiants.) He does so in words that reminded me powerfully of things I have felt, and that I have heard expressed by other VLT members, about our own island:

At times these islands have been the most important thing in my life. They are a kind of heartland for me, a core place. My father gave them to me because he had felt enlarged and excited by an engagement with nature so unadorned, and with a sea- and land-scape so huge, that it allowed escape into what felt like another dimension. He wanted to give that same enlargement to me, that wonderful sea room, the surge of freedom which a moated island provides.

I have derived more richness from my islands than from anywhere else on earth. I have felt utterly sustained for years at a time by this wild and magnificent place. Land—particularly land that is out on the edge of things, and particularly land that is a rich concentration of the marvels of the natural world—is to be shared. “Everyone has a right to the earth and its fullness.” The gift I received is the gift I want to make.

The last sentence is occasioned by his intention to pass on legal ownership of the islands to

his son, but of course, the true gift is one he has already made: the love of that wild place that he has taught his child to feel, just as his father taught it to him.

Inheritance is a complicated emotional space, where hope and regret dance their eternal tango with special intensity.

VLT’s silver anniversary coincides with a time when many of us are wrestling with these feelings, as we think about how best to ensure the survival of all those “qualities of the isle” that have nourished us here. We are in the middle of a generational turnover, when many of those who discovered Vinalhaven before coastal property became something everybody had to have are thinking about their options.

The Maine State Planning Office tells us we are not alone with our concerns**:

Maine’s landscape is undergoing changes that will redefine its scenic character... views and landscapes that have defined communities for decades are being threatened and lost. Some of these views and landscapes are well-known to tourists and visitors while others are hidden away, known only to the “locals,” maybe even only to the landowners or immediate neighbors.

Yet many of us feel that islands are a special case. On the one hand, their isolation should bring their partisans closer together and provide protection from casual exploitation. On the other, their limited access to outside resources, while promoting social toughness and resilience, also makes it harder to protect against or manage outside pressures.

On Vinalhaven, the landscape still reflects the evolution of its economy over the generations, with vestiges of its reliance at different times on farming, fishing, quarrying, and lobstering.

These artifacts make up the face of the community’s history and contribute to its sense of self, but underneath them lurk reminders of the island’s prehistoric wildness, and this it is VLT’s special duty to preserve.

With the current effort under way to update the Town of Vinalhaven’s Comprehensive Plan, many islanders are thinking hard about what the next phase of the Vinalhaven economy will look like: Will tourism play a bigger role? Will lobstering always be the backbone of island life? What else do we have that the rest of the world wants? How do we keep up with life ashore without giving up what we like about life out here in the middle of the bay?

As we who are members of VLT believe that protecting the natural environment is essential, not only to our current appreciation of our island time, but also to the island’s long term environmental and economic health, then we are privileged to serve together as steward of some of the island’s most loved, and yet most vulnerable, places.

The tagline the Chamber of Commerce is promoting for the new comprehensive plan is “Preserving island life for another generation.” Sound familiar? VLT’s mission statement ends “...to preserve the traditional character of the community for generations to come.” There is a convergence of purpose here that will inform our work for the next 25 years. For Vinalhaven, economy and ecology are but two sides of the same reality.

-Tuck Godfrey, Executive Director

*Adam Nicolson: *Sea Room*, North Point Press, New York, 2001; pp. 2-12 (redacted)

** Maine State Planning Office: *Protecting Local Scenic Resources*, 2007



In this time of joy and renewal, all of us on the board and staff wish you
A Happy Holiday Season and a Prosperous New Year



Support Vinalhaven Land Trust

Please join us in protecting Vinalhaven's natural beauty. To become a member, complete this coupon and return it to the address below or drop by our office in the cottage at Skoog Park. Annual dues (for each calendar year) are \$10 per person.

I would like to make an additional contribution to Vinalhaven Land Trust of:

\$100 \$50 \$25 Other \$ _____

Check enclosed.

Please charge my Visa or Mastercard # _____

Signature _____ exp. _____

Name _____

Address _____

Town/City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

All donations are tax deductible. Any donation will ensure that you receive VLT's newsletter and notice of special events. Contributions of all levels are greatly appreciated.

Questions? Please call us at (207) 863-2543. Thank you! www.vinalhavenlandtrust.org
Please mail to: Vinalhaven Land Trust • PO Box 268 • Vinalhaven, Maine • 04863

Vinalhaven Land Trust promotes the conservation of our island's significant plant and wildlife habitat, our water resources, and scenic or historic spaces in order to preserve the traditional character of the community for generations to come.

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Volunteers are the key to many of VLT's accomplishments. From helping with a mailing (pictured) to adopting a trail or monitoring a property, there are many roles for volunteers at VLT.



Conserving the Nature of Vinalhaven

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