

RURAL VERMONT 2023 IMPACT REPORT

www.ruralvermont.org | 802-223-7222 | 46 East State St, Montpelier, VT

RURAL VERMONT ORGANIZES, EDUCATES AND ADVOCATES IN COLLABORATION WITH LOCAL AND GLOBAL MOVEMENTS TO STRENGTHEN THE SOCIAL, ECOLOGICAL AND ECONOMIC HEALTH OF THE AGRARIAN COMMUNITIES THAT CONNECT US ALL.

The 2023 floods brought hardship directly to many farms and communities across Vermont - compounding the existing complex economic and natural adversities agrarian communities face each day. Rural Vermont continues its work and responsibility to bring these realities to the State House, state agencies, and beyond, to support the vibrancy and resiliency of our working lands, and to stand in solidarity with local and global food sovereignty efforts and movements.

We had an active presence in the Vermont State House for the first half of the year, where we watchdogged 15+ bills and celebrated multiple wins. We offered a robust and diverse schedule of 30+ workshops and events, and participated in dozens of additional actions and gatherings; overall directly touching more than a thousand people. We cultivated and supported a growing number of activists and leaders, and amplified their stories and needs, everywhere from Vermont communities to the State House to Capitol Hill. We prioritized solidarity with our allies both at home and beyond - highlighting the power of exchange and the interconnectedness between the local and the global; between agriculture here in our state and agriculture around the world. We celebrated the formation of the Agroecology School Collective, now an incubator project of Rural Vermont, which facilitated and participated in farmer-to-farmer exchanges and trainings in Vermont, Mexico, Cuba, and Colombia.

In our ~40 year history, Rural Vermont has acted as a consistent and uncompromising voice for equity in the agrarian community. We're in it for the long haul - and we thank you for coming along and guiding this work.



"YOU GUYS ARE AWESOME AND HAVE CONTINUOUSLY AND FEARLESSLY STOOD STRONG ON PRINCIPLES AND FOR THE PEOPLE HERE IN VERMONT, AND WE APPRECIATE THAT." - MALCOLM AND JESSE AT LUKAS GREENE FARM



2023 BOARD

Top Row (from left): Emily Reiss (as of 11/2023), Jake Kornfeld (as of 11/2023), Stephen Leslie, Julie Wolcott, John Cleary, Marya Merriam, Ryan Yoder, Earl Hatley

Bottom Row (from left): Evan Reiss (as of 11/2023), Rose Thackeray & Em Virzi (as of 11/2023), Jeannie Bartlett, Nour El-Naboulsi

Not pictured: Silene DeCiucies, Cory Froning, Amanda Andrews



2023 STAFF

Directors (from left): Shelby Girard (Development), Caroline Gordon (Legislative), Shannon Varley (Operations), Mollie Wills (Grassroots Organizing), Graham Unangst-Rufenacht (Policy)

THANKS TO OUR 2023 INTERN! EVAN HOYT



POLICY AND ADVOCACY HIGHLIGHTS

We tracked and engaged with 15+ bills in 2023 - we continue to find that our education and organizing work on the ground, including our workshop series and Small Farm Action days, are some of the most effective conduits for engaging our members and community in advocacy and policy work.

Our on-farm (OFS) slaughter campaign continued to build momentum throughout 2023 - with notable milestones including lobbying on Capitol Hill, the publication of a Vermont Law & Graduate School legal research paper confirming that OFS is legal, gaining the support of the Vermont Agency of Agriculture Food and Markets, increased collaboration with organizations across the country, and progress to secure a Congressional champion and Farm Bill provision!



MARY LAKE & CAROLINE ON CAPITOL HILL IN FEBRUARY '23



OUR FIRST PIG ON-FARM SLAUGHTER WORKSHOP AT MERCK FOREST & FARMLAND CENTER IN NOVEMBER '23

**ON-FARM
SLAUGHTER
PROGRESS!**

**CANNABIS
GROWERS
ARE FARMERS!**



SUCCESS: PASSAGE OF ACT 65!

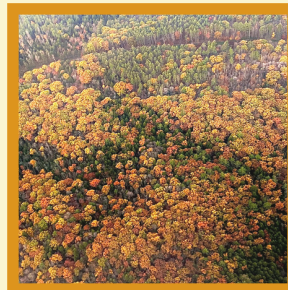


WE OFFERED OUR FIRST CANNABIS WORKSHOP IN OCTOBER '23

One of the most substantial and consequential wins within the 2023 legislative session was that, as part of the VT Cannabis Equity Coalition, we successfully lobbied for improvements to the cannabis law so that small-scale outdoor growers are now provided the same benefits as agricultural producers!

**EXPOSING & OPPOSING
THE FINANCIALIZATION
OF NATURE!**

We spoke out against greenwashing and false solutions to climate change at every opportunity, including through testimony, rallies, and a virtual series "Food & Climate: Beyond Carbon Markets."



As part of the Protect Our Soils Coalition, we advocated for and drafted recommendations for regulating de-packaging facilities to limit microplastics and PFAS from compost streams destined for agriculture use.

**KEEPING PLASTICS
OUT OF SOILS!**

POLICY EVENTS & SUPPORT



- Published a legislative guide and co-hosted 3 Small Farm Action Days to build policy literacy, advocacy skills, and leadership in the ag community. Testimony topics included Financialization of Nature; Youth, Land Access & Housing; and other issues raised by farmers.
- Hosted 10 policy-oriented, peer-to-peer learning workshops throughout the state. These included several new issues and farm hosts: cannabis as well as on-farm slaughter of rabbit, poultry, pig, and lamb. Over 150 people participated and almost all sold out.
- Hosted Quarterly Forums for members to ask questions about policy priorities, share insight based on their experiences, and generally help guide our work.

Watchdogged, supported, and influenced many additional pieces of legislation, including healthcare, childcare, a new grant program for small farmers, a community resilience & biodiversity protection program, organic dairy relief, right to repair, right to farm, universal school meals, and much more.



MOLLIE AT PRESS CONFERENCE FOR H.145 FEBRUARY 2023

Rural Vermont's Vice Chair **Nour El-Naboulsi** attended National Family Farm Coalition's Summer Retreat to represent Rural Vermont in discussing policy priorities and strategies.



NFFC ANNUAL GATHERING IN DES MOINES, IOWA - AUGUST 2023

COMMUNITY AND GRASSROOTS ORGANIZING



**UVM AGROECOLOGY SUMMIT
SEPTEMBER 2023**

Served as fiscal sponsor, core collective member, and incubating organization for the emerging Agroecology School Collective. The school, with the support of La Via Campesina North America, the National Family Farm Coalition, and local partners has brought together leaders, farmers, and organizers from Vermont and across the world to share and learn from each others' expertise and experience. Further, these exchanges have been an opportunity for Vermont leaders to learn about global agrarian struggle and how agroecology schools are used as a social movement building tool to foster food sovereignty and grassroots power.

AGROECOLOGY SCHOOL COLLECTIVE



**FARMER DINNER & OPEN MIC NIGHT
OCTOBER 2023**



**RAW DAIRY WORKSHOP
CATE HILL FARM - AUGUST 2023**

- In February 2023, Yorlis Gabriel Luna and Nils McCune came from Nicaragua for a month long Agroecology and Food Sovereignty Tour, and again in summer 2023, along with Cecilia Castro Romero, Freddy Congo Suarez and Cristina Alonso from Mexico
- Participated in and supported farm(work)er delegations to Agroecology Schools in Mexico and a farmer-to-farmer training in Cuba; with the National Family Farm Coalition, attended the 8th International Conference of La Via Campesina in Colombia as an official representative of North America
- Participated in UVM Institute for Agroecology Retreat, and co-led numerous VT based Agroecology Formation trainings & retreats



**RAW DAIRY WORKSHOP
REBOP FARM - MAY 2023**



**VERMONT WILD KITCHEN
CEDAR CIRCLE FARM - AUGUST 2023**

ON-FARM EVENTS & GATHERINGS

- Co-hosted Vermont Wild Kitchen at Cedar Circle Farm in E. Thetford with 20 folks of all ages who learned to fish, made arepas with Nando Jaramillo of Moon & Stars, and enjoyed a shared meal
- Offered 3 raw dairy processing classes in southern and northern VT for over three dozen dairy enthusiasts who learned to make simple cheeses with farmers
- Co-hosted a Farmer Dinner and visioning conversation for 40+ agrarians in the Northeast Kingdom in July
- In October, we co-hosted "Music from the Land", a Farmer Open Mic Night, in the Northeast Kingdom with a local meal and community performances



**THE CHELSEA FARMERS MARKET
SEPTEMBER 2023**



**AGROECOLOGY SCHOOL FARMER
EXCHANGE - MEXICO 2023**

- Exhibited at Northeast Animal Power Field Days, VT Veg & Berry Conference, NOFA-VT's Winter Conference, Farm to Film Fest, & more..
- Supported Migrant Justice's Milk with Dignity campaign by hosting numerous solidarity actions at Hannaford
- Served as panelist at US Farm Households' Social & Economic Needs & the Future of Ag Conference
- Participated in PFAS & Ag Maine Regional Meeting, compost workshop at Tamarlane Farm, and Farm to Plate Gathering

ADDITIONAL OUTREACH & EVENTS



**FARMER-TO-FARMER TRAINING
CUBA 2023**

Rural Vermont's 2023 Annual Meeting brought us to southern VT for a joyous evening with our dear members and friends, delicious food, conversation and connection, old-time music, and even a sing-along about pollinators!



**ANNUAL MEETING IN NEWFANE!
OCTOBER 2023**



**SUMMERVALE AT INTERVALE!
AUGUST 2023**



**8TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
OF LA VIA CAMPESINA - COLOMBIA 2023**

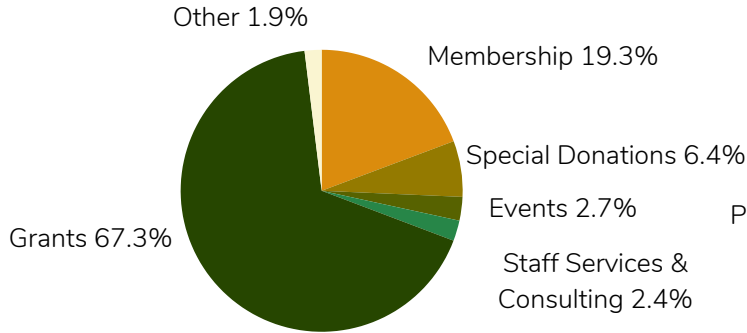
Enjoyed growing our partnerships with the Center for an Agricultural Economy, the Caribbean Agroecology Institute, Northeast Kingdom Organizing, UVM Institute for Agroecology, VT Dept. of Fish & Wildlife, & more!

2023 FINANCIAL REPORT

Starting Balance 2023: \$190,142.49
Ending Balance 2023: \$358,535.63

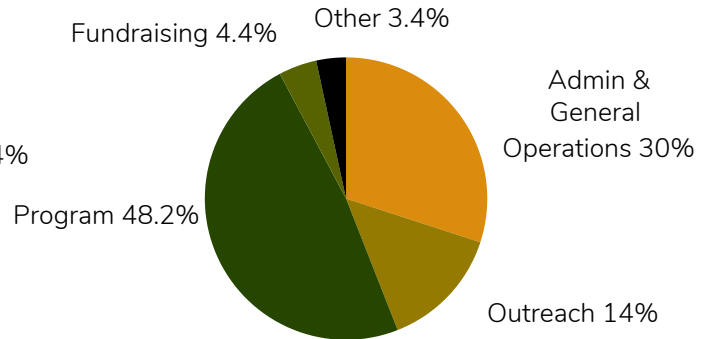
2023 INCOME

Total: \$ 429,172.90



2023 EXPENSES

Total: \$ 289,421.07



FISCAL NOTES:

- Rural Vermont served as fiscal sponsor to the Agroecology School Collective (ASC). The numbers below are reflected in the totals and balance above:
 - ASC Income = \$113,682.07
 - ASC Expenses = \$27,258.23
 - ASC Net income = \$86,423.84
- In addition to income noted above, Rural Vermont received an Employee Retention Tax Credit in the amount of \$28,306.60.
- Rural Vermont received \$21,929 in in-kind goods, services, and donations.
- These numbers are not audited.
- Form 990s available upon request.

JOIN US!

“RURAL VERMONT'S POLICY WORK IS VITAL TO EVERYTHING I BELIEVE IN--AS A FARMER, CITIZEN, EDUCATOR, FATHER, AND CONSERVATIONIST. WE WOULDN'T BE WHERE WE ARE NOW WITH REGARD TO FOOD AND AG POLICY IN VERMONT WITHOUT RURAL VERMONT, AND WE CAN'T GET TO WHERE WE NEED TO BE WITHOUT THIS ONGOING ADVOCACY WORK.”

--PHILIP ACKERMAN-LEIST, RURAL VERMONT MEMBER

Join hundreds of members from every corner of Vermont and beyond in co-creating a just and equitable world rooted in reverence for the earth and dignity for all.

Please donate or become a member today.
Dues are sliding scale and start at \$35/year or \$5/month.

MAKE YOUR DONATION TODAY AT [RURALVERMONT.ORG/DONATE!](https://ruralvermont.org/donate)

Interested in giving time instead of cash? Working Memberships are available! Contact Shelby@ruralvermont.org for more info.



RABBIT BUTCHERY WORKSHOP
SUNSTONE ORCHARD AND RABBITRY - MAY 2023



POULTRY PROCESSING WORKSHOP
UNION BROOK FARM - OCTOBER 2023



RURAL VERMONT BOARD RETREAT
COBB HILL FARM - JUNE 2023



FARMER DINNER
ALBANY - JULY 2023