



Vermont Community Resilience and Biodiversity Protection Act

The "Community Resilience and Biodiversity Protection Act" (CRBPA or Act 59), was passed by the Vermont legislature in July 2023. This legislative act focused on improving Vermont's conservation and environmental resilience. This is a summary, [you can view the full Act here.](#)

Background and Overview. The act recognizes the critical state of biodiversity loss and the need for immediate action to combat climate change. The act emphasizes the importance of protecting natural habitats and biodiversity for future generations. The act sets ambitious targets to conserve 30% of the state's land by 2030 and 50% by 2050. These goals are aligned with global conservation efforts and build on past efforts, such as the Vermont Fish and Wildlife and Agency of Natural Resource's *Vermont Conservation Design* framework.

Conservation is defined as an area with permanent protection from conversion, and the act defines three categories of conservation:

1. **Ecological Reserve Area:** An area protected permanently from conversion, managed to maintain a natural state. This includes allowing natural ecological processes and disturbance events to proceed with minimal interference.
2. **Biodiversity Conservation Area:** An area with permanent protection from conversion for most of its part, managed primarily to sustain species or habitats. These areas may require active interventions for specific species needs or habitat maintenance/restoration.
3. **Natural Resource Management Area:** An area mostly protected from conversion but subject to long-term, sustainable land management practices.

There are two milestones in this work, both led by VHCB in consultation with ANR. The first is the Conservation Inventory Report and the second is the Conservation Plan. Both the conservation inventory and conservation plan will be developed in consultation with range of stakeholders, including: private owners of forestlands and agricultural lands, land trusts, conservation organizations, environmental organizations, working lands enterprises, outdoor recreation groups and businesses, watershed groups, municipalities, regional planning commissions, conservation commissions, and relevant State and federal agencies. The plan will be updated biennially to track progress.



Conservation Inventory. The act requires the creation of an inventory of conserved lands. The inventory will take stock of existing conservation practices, public and professional perspectives, conservation data, and potential avenues for future conservation. The Inventory will be presented to the legislature by July 1st, 2024. There are ten topics the legislature has asked to be covered in the inventory:

1. **Land categories.** What categories of land should qualify as counting towards the conservation goals? Develop criteria to determine the types of agricultural lands that will qualify as supporting and restoring biodiversity.
2. **Land inventory.** What land is currently conserved and what category do they fall into?
3. **Aquatic conservation.** How are aquatic systems conserved? Is land conservation sufficient to maintain aquatic system functions and services?
4. **Conservation practices.** What are the conservation practices on these lands (what they are, what do they do, how they contribute, and what metrics are available)?
5. **Conservation programs.** What are the existing and potential new programs serving conservation?
6. **Conservation equity.** How equitable are existing land protection and conservation strategies and programs? How do we make them more equitable or what are potentially new and more equitable strategies and programs?
7. **Implementation methods.** What implementation methods are available to achieve 30x30 and 50x50?
8. **Funding sources.** What are existing and potential funding sources for 30x30 and 50x50?
9. **State lands.** How will state lands be used to increase ecological reserve areas?
10. **Land Transfers.** What are our intergenerational land transfer opportunities?

Comprehensive Conservation Plan. The act outlines a state-wide conservation plan that includes strategies for land management, and biodiversity protection. The plan will be presented to the legislature by December 31st, 2025. The plan will include:

1. A comprehensive strategy for achieving conservation goals of 30x30 and 50x50
2. Implementation methods for achieving the vision and goals
3. Recommendations to provide and increase equitable access to protected and conserved lands, including recreational access
4. Recommendations for how to implement conservation goals while enhancing current state investments and commitments