

## **Middlebury Conservation Planning Initiative**

The Middlebury Conservation Planning Initiative, a project of the Middlebury Area Land Trust (MALT), seeks to identify and prioritize the valuable land, water, and recreation assets present in the town of Middlebury, Vermont. By completing this project in cooperation with the Town, subject matter experts, private citizens, and other local partners, MALT intends to provide a foundation for the preservation of Middlebury's quality of life through the conservation and enhancement of its unique natural and cultural resources.

We will locate, evaluate, and map resources such as trail and wildlife corridors, scenic viewsheds, important agricultural lands and soils, historic resources, lands of exceptional ecological value, and public recreation amenities. We will compile existing data, perform new research and field checks, and create a useful, accessible product that will help guide the Town and MALT in our decision-making about conservation priorities and land use planning.

The project will be scientifically rigorous, providing expert evaluation and analysis of the conservation resources present throughout Middlebury. The process will also be public, featuring a series of events designed to engage the community and tap their knowledge of important lands.

The Conservation Planning Initiative will be a vital tool to guide Middlebury's conservation priorities. While data is available that quantifies diverse resource types, a comprehensive and rigorous evaluation has not been performed since the late 1980s. New technologies, a broader understanding of what is environmentally significant, and new means of conveying land use and natural resource information in an accessible way will make the new study more useful to planners and citizens alike.

This project is critical to the transition from reactive conservation activities to proactive, carefully planned conservation work. MALT and the Town require data that are both accurate and thorough to set justifiable and predictable priorities. A greater understanding of Middlebury's resources will benefit both the resources themselves and the town alike.

The planning process will be completed in one year from its commencement. It will create a replicable model that can be exported to surrounding communities with a strong commitment to conservation, benefiting all of Addison County and recognizing the interconnectedness of natural and cultural resources across town boundaries. With the support of the community, this initiative will provide crucial information for informed decision-making for years to come.