

Vermont's outdoor passion: How generations have prioritized conservation in Franklin County

by Bridget Higdon Boudreau, Aug 7, 2026 (Edited for accuracy August 10, 2026 by Hazen's Notch Association)



The High Ponds Farm Nature Preserve in Montgomery is one of three properties purchased by the Anderson family in the 1990s. The parcels help create continuous forest in Hazen's Notch and provide recreation opportunities to the local community.

Photo: D. Benjamin for Hazen's Notch Association

Conserving Hazen's trails

Back in the 1980s, 100 acres of Montgomery's Hazen's Notch were set to be developed, cutting off access to several miles of Vermont's famous Long Trail. (1)

Hearing the news, local residents Rolf and Sharon Anderson sprang into action and reached an agreement with the developer to purchase the land.

Long story short, that is the origin of Hazen's Notch Association, which today manages a network of trails for hiking, cross-country skiing and snowshoeing across three nature preserves: Bear Pond (2), High Ponds Farm and Burnt Mountain. HNA has also organized a summer camp on the property every year since 1994.

When the Andersons bought the first parcel in 1990, much of the property was former farmland. With financial assistance from the Farm Service Agency, they slowly reforested, planting the deciduous and evergreen woods hikers enjoy today. (3)

As longtime outdoor adventure guides, the Andersons were motivated to protect Hazen's Notch so its beauty could be enjoyed by future generations.

"Maintaining the trails for hiking in the summer was something that I thought would be important," Rolf said. "That has turned out to be a very appreciated and well-utilized aspect of the area."

The summer camp, now 33 years strong, inspires kids to love the outdoors. About 100 area youth attend each year, and they spend their days learning to kayak, studying ecology, hiking Burnt Mountain, gardening and swimming.

“We thought we might be able to influence some people to pursue careers in environmental science or education, and conservation,” Rolf said.

That dream has since become a reality, with campers growing up to work environmental jobs or serve on their local conservation commission.

“We have many campers whose parents were campers,” Rolf said. “That’s been very satisfying.”

Later this year, the Andersons will convey a conservation easement for Bear Paw Pond Conservation Area to the Hazen’s Notch Conservation Trust. The area is currently privately-owned by the Andersons, but they open it seasonally to public use. (4)

“That will forever prevent subdivision and development of the property, and it will also ensure the property will be open to the public,” Rolf said.

Burnt Mountain was permanently conserved in 2023.

Note: There are several errors in the article as originally published.

(1) The 100-acre property purchased by the Andersons included some of the trails popular with cross-country skiers. The Long Trail crosses Hazen’s Notch three miles to the east and has never been part of the property the Andersons purchased.

(2) Bear Paw Pond, not Bear Pond

(3) All three properties were forested with the exception of an apple orchard and a hayfield. The Farm Services Agency provided cost-sharing funds to support wood road restoration and renewal of the apple orchard. The Andersons did not plant trees.

(4) The trails are open to the public year-round for walking and hiking in spring, summer and fall; and snow shoeing and cross country skiing in winter.