



# Conservation Workforce Development Program

A Conservation Career Development &  
Locally-led Train-the-Trainer Program



Prepared by:

Jennifer Byrne  
White River NRCD  
Vermont



Diana Collingwood  
VIWIAA & USVI Dept. of Ag.  
Virgin Islands

# A Note from the Authors:

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## PROJECT PROPOSAL

This collaborative partnership was birthed at the 2022 NACD Summer Meeting in San Juan, Puerto Rico. The authors of this proposal met at an Envirothon workshop at the conference, and recognized they were both looking for ways to meet the training needs of their staff and the communities they serve. Below is a record of key meetings where Diana Collingwood (DC) or Jennifer Byrne (JB) have presented or discussed versions of this proposal with partners between July 2022 and December 2023.

NOVEMBER 22, 2022

Meeting at the NRCS Caribbean Area State Office in San Juan, Puerto Rico, to discuss common needs in New England and the Caribbean area. Notes from the meeting can be found [at this link](#).

FEBRUARY 14, 2023

DC gave presentation titled "Strategies to Engage, Educate, Recruit & Retain Next-Gen Conservationists" at the 2023 NACD Annual Meeting in New Orleans, Louisiana.

DECEMBER 12, 2023

JB presented draft proposal at the Vermont National Conservation Planning Partnership (NCP) statewide meeting. Obtained support for seeking funds for this proposal from the VT Agency of Agriculture.

DECEMBER 14, 2023

DC presented draft proposal to representatives from the University of the Virgin Islands, the Caribbean Area NRCS, and the Commissioner of the Virgin Islands Department of Agriculture.

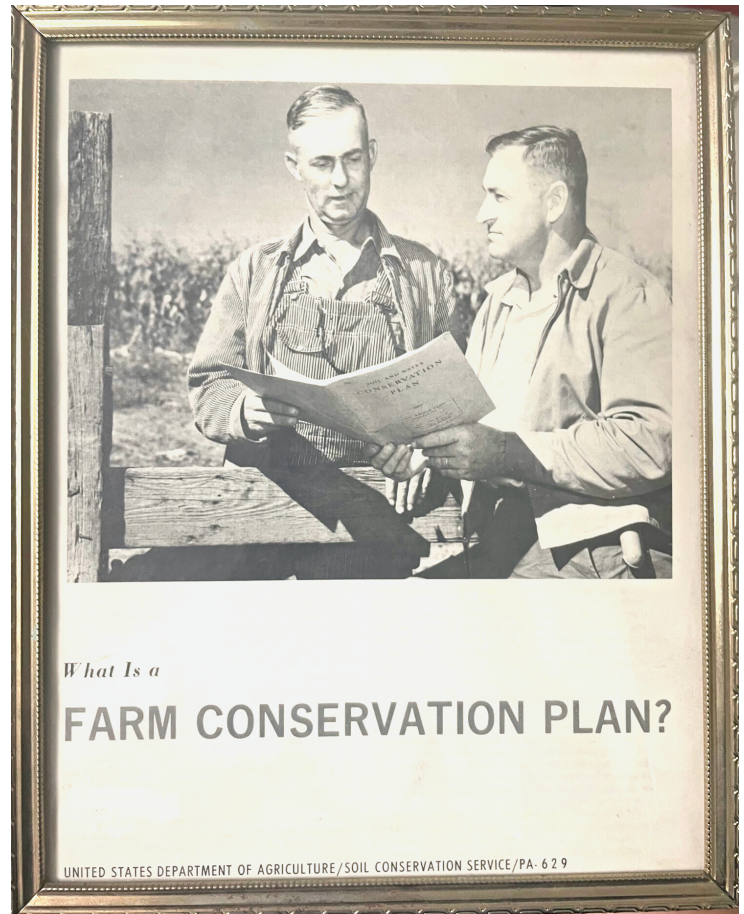
DECEMBER 15, 2023

JB presented draft proposal at the American Farmland Trust (AFT) RCPP TA Providers meeting and invited participation from AFT conservation planners who are outside of NCP.

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# Proposal Overview

## PROJECT PROPOSAL

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Over the next four years, an unprecedented influx of funding will be channeled through the United States' locally-led conservation delivery system to implement climate smart, sustainable, regenerative conservation agriculture practices on private and public lands across the country. For farmers and land stewards to access this financial assistance, they need plans and designs created by registered technical service providers (TSPs), Qualified Individuals (QIs) and Certified Conservation Planners (CCPs).

Though different in climate, Vermont and the U.S. Virgin Islands share similar challenges and opportunities in terms of local food system security and disaster resiliency in the face of climate change. To address bottlenecks and barriers in our conservation delivery system in VT and USVI, our communities need to develop a local workforce of qualified individuals to provide technical assistance at the scale necessary to meet current and future demands.

The primary goal of this project is to recruit and prepare individuals seeking conservation careers by connecting them to training in conservation planning, regenerative agriculture, soil health, water quantity and quality, grazing systems, agroforestry design, and agricultural engineering. We will convene at least 20 paid trainees annually for a year-long, ten hour per month online training program and two, week-long, in-person “mini conservation boot-camps”, resulting in development and retention of qualified, certified, and registered Technical Service Providers to meet the needs of our communities.

This innovative workforce development program will not only develop certified conservation professionals in VT and USVI, it will also help to expand the number of individuals with transferable skills to meet the needs of farmers and land stewards across the country. We will help to develop the next generation of conservation professionals, poised to promote food-secure and disaster-resilient communities to lead us and feed us well into the future.



VIRGIN ISLANDS

SENEPOL



VERMONT

HOLSTEIN



# Mission and Vision

## Mission

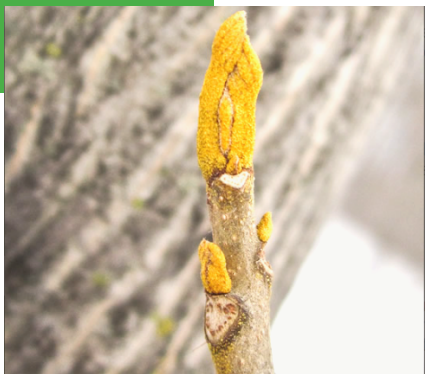
We increase access to Conservation Careers by piloting a holistic, year round workforce development program for aspiring conservation professionals in Vermont and the Virgin Islands.

## Vision

We address the bottlenecks in our conservation delivery system by deploying a new generation of Conservation Planners, Technical Service Providers (TSP), and Qualified Individuals (QI) to build secure, resilient, locally-led food systems and communities.



Saman Tree Blossom: USVI



Yellowbud Hickory: VT



Saman Tree



Yellowbud Hickory Tree

# Goals for the year (Jan-Dec 2024)

## PROJECT PROPOSAL

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This year, we will deploy a 3 part training program to develop our capacity.



### Online Course Work

Metric: 20 individuals have IDP in Aglearn, attend monthly virtual classes  
Estimated time commitment:  
~10hrs/month

Two cohorts of Trainees will be set up with an IDP (Individual Development Plan) in USDA's Aglearn platform to complete Conservation Planner training. Trainees will complete 2-3 online courses each month, and will attend one virtual class to review the coursework, ask questions, and go over supplemental materials.



### Train-the-Trainer

Metric: 20 experienced community members from VT & USVI are engaged in knowledge sharing

Qualified trainers from the public and government entities will cross-collaborate to produce and deliver a series of knowledge sharing opportunities in the field of regenerative agriculture, grazing systems, agroforestry, local food systems, soil health, and conservation.

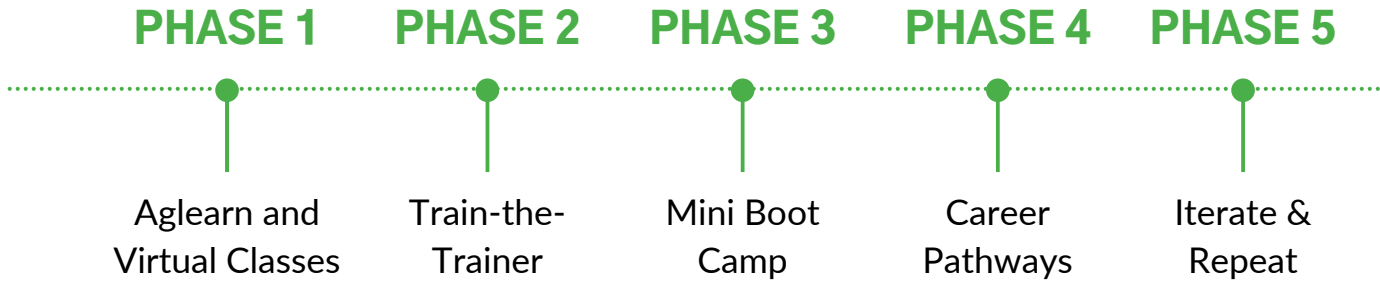


### Mini-Boot Camp

Metric: Host at least 2 in-person week long intensives in the VI and VT that combine NRCS training and community-led experiential learning in regenerative agriculture.

Trainees and Trainers will come together in person for experiential learning intensives throughout the year, aka "mini conservation boot camps". Trainings will cover: engineering and design for community-scale agriculture projects, grazing systems, agroforestry, soil health, conducting Conservation Evaluation & Monitoring Activities (CEMAs), water management, and comprehensive conservation planning.

# Proposed Timeline - Cohort 1 & 2



## January 2024

- Launch online certification program for Cohort 1 Trainees
- Two online courses and one virtual class per month

## February 13-21, 2024

- VT trainers conduct clinics at the VI AgriFest Feb 17-19
- Information & resource sharing on soil health, water, local food
  - Group planning on in-person train-the-trainer
- Engage in Agriscience Career Fair and Local Food Summit
  - Sign up recruits for Cohort 2 Trainees

## Summer 2024

- Cohort 2 begins
- Host mini conservation boot camps in VT and USVI
  - In-Person train-the-trainer opportunities

## October 2024

- Host USVI partners in Vermont for in person train-the-trainer workshops



# TRAINING TOPICS:

**ENGINEERING BASICS**

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**SOIL HEALTH**

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**WATER QUANTITY & QUALITY**

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**COMMUNITY SCALE FOOD PRODUCTION**

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**AGROFORESTRY DESIGN**

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**GRAZING SYSTEMS**

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# TRAINEES WILL BE EXPOSED TO CPAs, DIAs, and CEMAs:

Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan - CPA 102

Conservation Plan - CPA 199

Conservation Plan Supporting Organic Transition - CPA 138

Forest Management Plan - CPA 106

Grazing Management Plan - CPA 110

Soil Health Management Plan - CPA 116

Agricultural Energy Design - DIA 120

Forest Management Practice Design - DIA 165

Grazing Management Design - DIA 159

Irrigation Water Management Design - DIA 163

Nutrient Management Design and Implementation Activity - DIA 157

Pest Management Conservation System Design - DIA 161

Pollinator Habitat Design - DIA 148

Prescribed Burning Design - DIA 160

Soil Health Management System Design - DIA 162

Transition to Organic Design - DIA 140

Agricultural Energy Assessment - CEMA 228

Aquifer Flow Test - CEMA 224

Carbon Sequestration and Greenhouse Gas Mitigation Assessment - CEMA 218

Feed and Forage Analysis - CEMA 206

Feral Swine Damage Assessment - CEMA 297

Forest Management Assessment - CEMA 223

Indigenous Stewardship Methods Evaluation - CEMA 222

PFAS Testing in Water or Soil - CEMA 209

Prescribed Grazing Conservation Evaluation and Monitoring - CEMA 219

Site Assessment and Soil Testing for Contaminants Activity - CEMA 207

Site Suitability and Feasibility for Waste Storage Facility - CEMA 226

Soil and Source Testing for Nutrient Management - CEMA 217

Soil Health Testing - CEMA 216

Soil Organic Carbon Stock Monitoring-CEMA 221

# Project Partners

PROJECT PROPOSAL

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**WHITE RIVER NRCD &  
BENNINGTON COUNTY NRCD**

Coordination of certification program, coursework, lead monthly calls. Recruit participants. Offer virtual “Conservation Agriculture Policy 101” course.

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**VIRGIN ISLANDS WOMEN IN  
AGRICULTURE ASSOCIATION, INC  
& WE GROW FOOD, INC**

Develop “train-the-trainer” opportunities for VT and USVI partners. Host educational conservation workshops and trainings for local producers and stakeholders.

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**U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS  
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**

Develop and promote educational resources, connect producers to financial and technical resources, recruit participants and connect local employees to training & certification opportunities, and grant funded workforce development opportunities.

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**USDA-NRCS VERMONT &  
CARRIBBEAN AREA**

Share open training schedule and provide support for AgLearn access. New NRCS staff are welcome to join in the learning cohorts of trainees as approved.

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**CEDAR CIRCLE FARM &  
EDUCATION CENTER, VT**

Host trainees for on-farm soil health and regenerative agriculture training. Provide supplemental workforce development opportunities.

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**REGENERATION CORPS  
& USVI ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY**

Coordinate connection of high schools to workforce development programs. Supplement training with regenerative educational content. Develop Regeneration Corps programming for VI high schools.

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**VT RELEAF COLLECTIVE**

Outreach to BIPOC community members in Vermont to recruit for certification program. Provide additional educational content.

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**BENNINGTON COLLEGE,  
VT TECHNICAL COLLEGE &  
UVI SCHOOL OF AGRICULTURE  
EXTENSION SERVICE**

Supplemental education. Pursue optional college credit for participation in certification program. Access to soil coursework.

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# Our Team

PROJECT PROPOSAL

## Project Directors:

**Jennifer Byrne**  
 Director, White River Natural  
 Resources Conservation District

**Diana Collingwood**  
 President, VIWIAA  
 Assistant Commissioner, VIDA

## Key Project Team Members: Vermont

<b>Bruce Howlett</b> Conservation Planner, White River NRCD	<b>Airon Shaw</b> Community Engagement Specialist, VT POC Network	<b>Willie Gibson</b> Agronomist, White River NRCD	<b>Lisa Niccolai</b> Conservation Specialist/Forester, White River NRCD	<b>Stacy Cooper</b> Cedar Circle Farm & Education Center	<b>Kelsey Head</b> Cedar Circle Farm & Education Center
<b>John Boger</b> U.S. Marine Veteran	<b>Amber Reed</b> Grazing Specialist, White River NRCD	<b>Michael Fernandez</b> Bennington County NRCD	<b>Niko Horster</b> Supervisor, White River NRCD	<b>Jesse Marksohn</b> Agroforestry Consultant, Yellowbud Farm	<b>Eric Cornell</b> Agroforestry Consultant, Yellowbud Farm
<b>Jake Jacobs</b> Risk Management Specialist, White River NRCD	<b>Michael Loots</b> Montshire Museum of Science	<b>Henry Harris</b> Regeneration Corps	<b>Cat Buxton</b> Regeneration Corps	<b>Karen Ganey</b> Regeneration Corps	<b>Abe Collins</b> Agronomy Specialist, Land Care Cooperative
<b>Conicia Jackson</b> Community Engagement Specialist	<b>Jaiel Pulskamp</b> Community Information Officer, White River NRCD	<b>Jennifer Morton</b> VT RELEAF Collective	<b>Mike Snow</b> Director, CT River Watershed Farmers Alliance	<b>Simone Whitecloud</b> Ecologist, Army Corps of Engineers	<b>Earl Hatley</b> Native Environmental Educator

## Key Project Team Members: Virgin Islands

<b>Xavier Smith</b> Welder/Agriculture, VIDA	<b>Akil Andrews</b> Urban & Community Forestry Program Coordinator, VIDA	<b>Mathilde Wilson</b> Forest Stewardship & Legacy Program Coordinator, VIDA	<b>Preston Brooks</b> Urban & Community Forestry Program Contractor, VIDA	<b>Ayana Simon</b> Veterinary Services Office Manager/Field Support, VIDA	<b>Troy King</b> Laborer/Greenhouse Manager, VIDA
<b>Gracia Lettsome</b> NACD Technical Assistance Coordinator, VIDA	<b>Stafford Crossman</b> Associate Director & Extension Asst Professor CES, UVI SOA	<b>Michael Morgan</b> Soil Scientist, USDA NRCS  <b>Rudy O'Reilly</b> District Conservationist, USDA NRCS	<b>Olasee Davis</b> Natural Resources Extension Assistant Professor, UVI SOA	<b>Samuel Joseph</b> Biotechnology Research Program Coordinator, UVI SOA	<b>Denise Lake</b> Recruitment Specialist, UVI SOA

# Proposed Budget for 2024

PROJECT PROPOSAL

Expense	Rate	Unit	Number	Match/In-Kind	Funding Needed	Project Costs
<b>Project Directors</b>	20% Current Salary	--	2	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$40,000
<b>Trainers</b>	\$75/hour	1,050 hrs	20	\$20,000	\$155,000	\$175,000
<b>Trainees</b>	\$20/hour	4,000 hrs	20	\$44,000	\$80,000	\$124,000
<b>Trainings</b>	\$10,000 each	--	2	\$6,000	\$20,000	\$26,000
<b>Travel</b>	\$1,500 each	--	20	\$8,000	\$30,000	\$38,000
<b>Total</b>				\$98,000	<b>\$305,000</b>	\$403,000

# Budget Narrative for 2024

PROJECT PROPOSAL

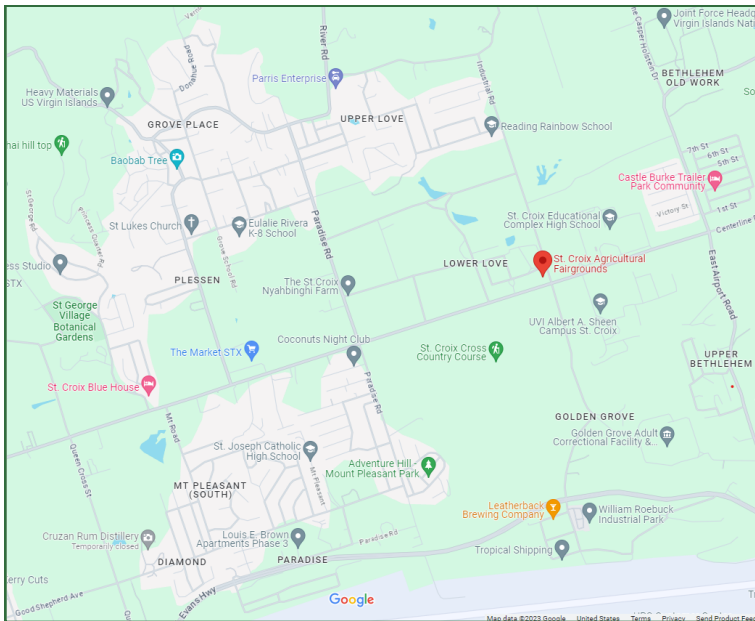
Expense	Narrative	Match	Funding Needed
<b>Project Directors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Diana Collingwood (USVI) and Jennifer Byrne (VT) provide program oversight, facilitation of online trainings, coordination of in person trainings,</li> <li>Match: Estimated 10% of annual salary</li> </ul>	\$20,000	\$20,000
<b>Trainers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5 Trainers will provide 10 hours of specialty training and will receive stipends at \$100/hour (50 hours*\$100=\$5,000)</li> <li>20 Trainers will provide up to 100 hours of training at in-person boot camps and during online seminars. (100 hrs*20*\$75=\$150,000)</li> <li>Match: NRCS and other staff provides 50 hours of seminar support, NRCD staff provide training support</li> </ul>	\$20,000	\$155,000
<b>Trainees</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Online Coursework: 20 Trainees * 10hrs/month * 12 months = 2,400 hrs</li> <li>In Person Training: 20 trainees attend 2 weeklong Boot Camps: 80 hours * 20 = 1,600 hours</li> <li>2,400 + 1,600 = 4,000 * \$20/hr = \$80,000</li> <li>Match: 10 Currently employed trainees participate (NRCS, NRCD, other staff)</li> </ul>	\$44,000	\$80,000
<b>Trainings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2 in person week long trainings aka boot camps @ \$10,000</li> <li>Match: \$6,000 of local support services (locations and transportation)</li> </ul>	\$6,000	\$20,000
<b>Travel</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>20 VI trainees and trainers travel to Vermont (\$1,500 travel stipend * 20 = \$24,000)</li> <li>Match: \$8,000 organizational travel support</li> </ul>	\$8,000	\$30,000
<b>Total</b>		\$98,000	\$305,000



# Contact Us



**White River  
Natural  
Resources  
Conservation  
District**



**US Virgin Islands Department of Agriculture**  
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**White River Natural Resources Conservation District**  
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[www.whiterivernrcd.org](http://www.whiterivernrcd.org)  
802-369-3167

**VIWIAA Virgin Islands  
Women in Agriculture  
Association, Inc**

an Affiliate of NWIAA



**National  
Women in  
Agriculture  
Association**

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