American Farmland Trust

Saving America's Working Lands

April 24, 2025: 3:30 – 5:00 PM

Evolving Conditions and Landscapes:
Strategies for Land and Water Adaptation

Vermont Farmland Retirement Program

Vermont Housing & Conservation Board

Stacy Cibula
Agricultural Program Director

Defreest Farm, Waitsfield

Vermont Housing & Conservation Board

Statutory Purpose

"the dual goals of creating affordable housing for Vermonters, and conserving and protecting Vermont's agricultural land, forestland, historic properties, important natural areas, and recreational lands of primary importance to the economic vitality and quality of life of the State."

10 V.S.A.15 §302

Lake Paran Village, Shaftsbury

Newport Waterfront Recreation Path

Sunday Bell Farm, Danville

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Agricultural Program

Badger Brook Meats, Danville
photo credit Badger Brook Meats

- **Purchase of Development Rights**
  - Funder and easement co-holder
  - Conserved 822 Farms, 176k acres
  - Match $: NRCS ACEP-ALE
- **Farmland Access & Affordability**
  - Option to Purchase at Agricultural Value (OPAV)
  - Farm Viability
- **Water Resource Protection**
  - Special easement protections
  - Water Quality Grants
  - Farmland Retirement

Vermont Housing & Conservation Board

Farmland Retirement Program

Maidstone Bends, Upper Connecticut River
photo credit Darrell Bodnar

- **Background**
  - Began in 2017
  - Retired 1,100 acres (5 farms)
  - Partners: TNC, VLT, VT Fish & Wildlife Department, VT Agency of Ag
- **Program Goals**
  - Improve water quality
  - Enhance climate resiliency
  - Restore habitat
  - Improve ag sustainability and viability
- **Funding**
  - Sources
  - Uses
  - Amount

Vermont Housing & Conservation Board

Farmland Retirement Program

Fitzgerald Farm, Colchester
photo credit St. Albans Messenger

- **Minimum Eligibility Criteria**
  - Nonprofits, state, municipalities
  - All or portion of land
  - Demonstrate high degree of readiness
- **Secondary Criteria**
  - Habitat restoration
  - Enhance resources for wildlife
  - Climate resiliency
  - Public access
  - Support VHCB dual-goal mission
- **Funding Priorities**
  - Location
  - Leverage

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Case Study: Farrow Farm

- 163-acre dairy farm in Morgan, VT
- Partners: The Nature Conservancy, VT Fish & Wildlife, VT Agency of Ag
- 7,500’ stream frontage – high priority fisheries habitat in impaired watershed.
- Funds from VHCB, Great Lakes Fisheries Commission, VT Agency of Ag.
- Total budget: $486,500 (VHCB funds $250,000, leverage $236,500)
- Recreation components

Culvert outlet for stream piped under barn

Outlet of trib
culverted
under barn

Valley Brook is just behind
round bales.

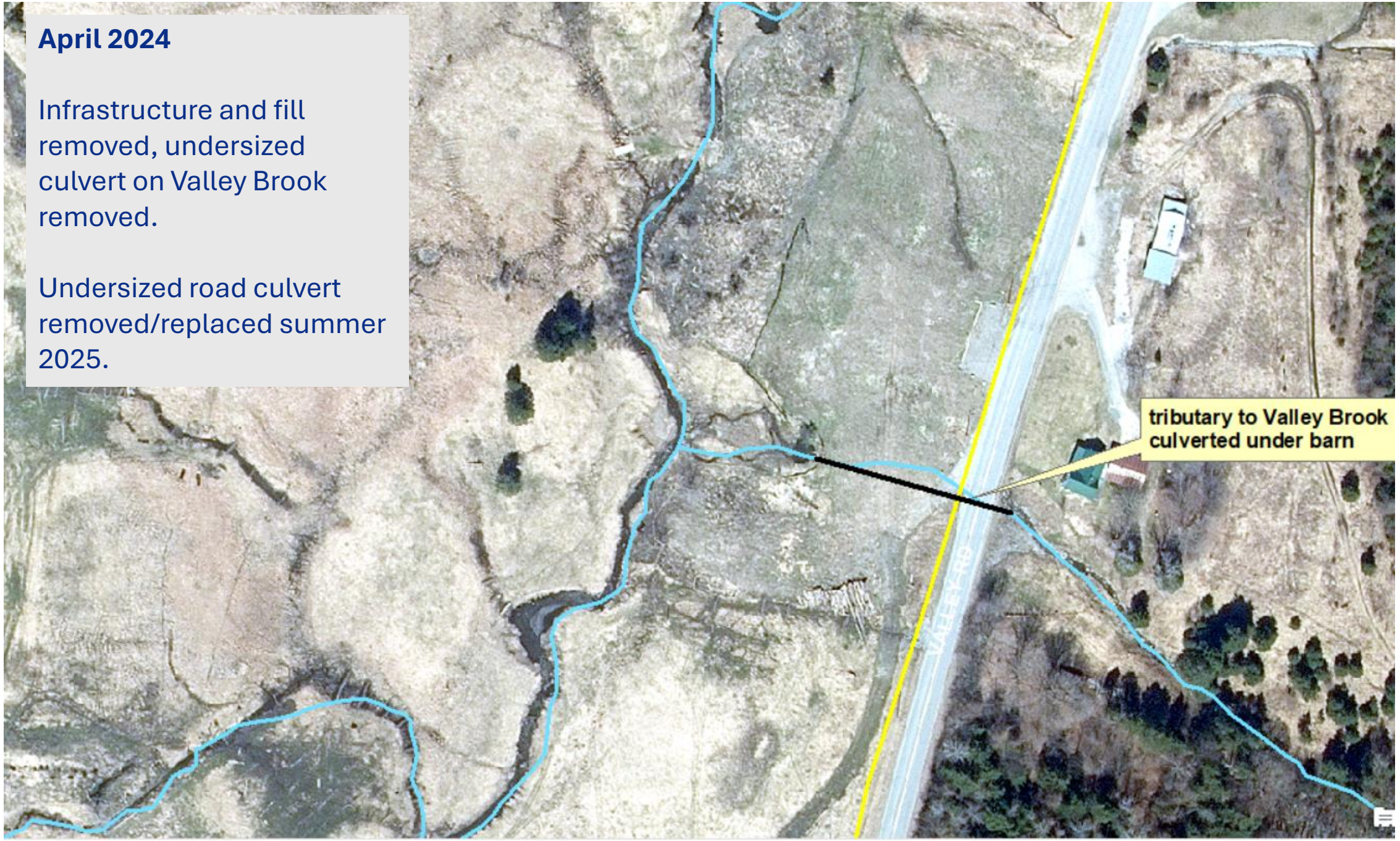
July 17, 2023, just before deconstruction began, a 100-year storm hit this part of Morgan/Holland. Trib that is piped under barn overtopped road, washed out farm road, water in barn.

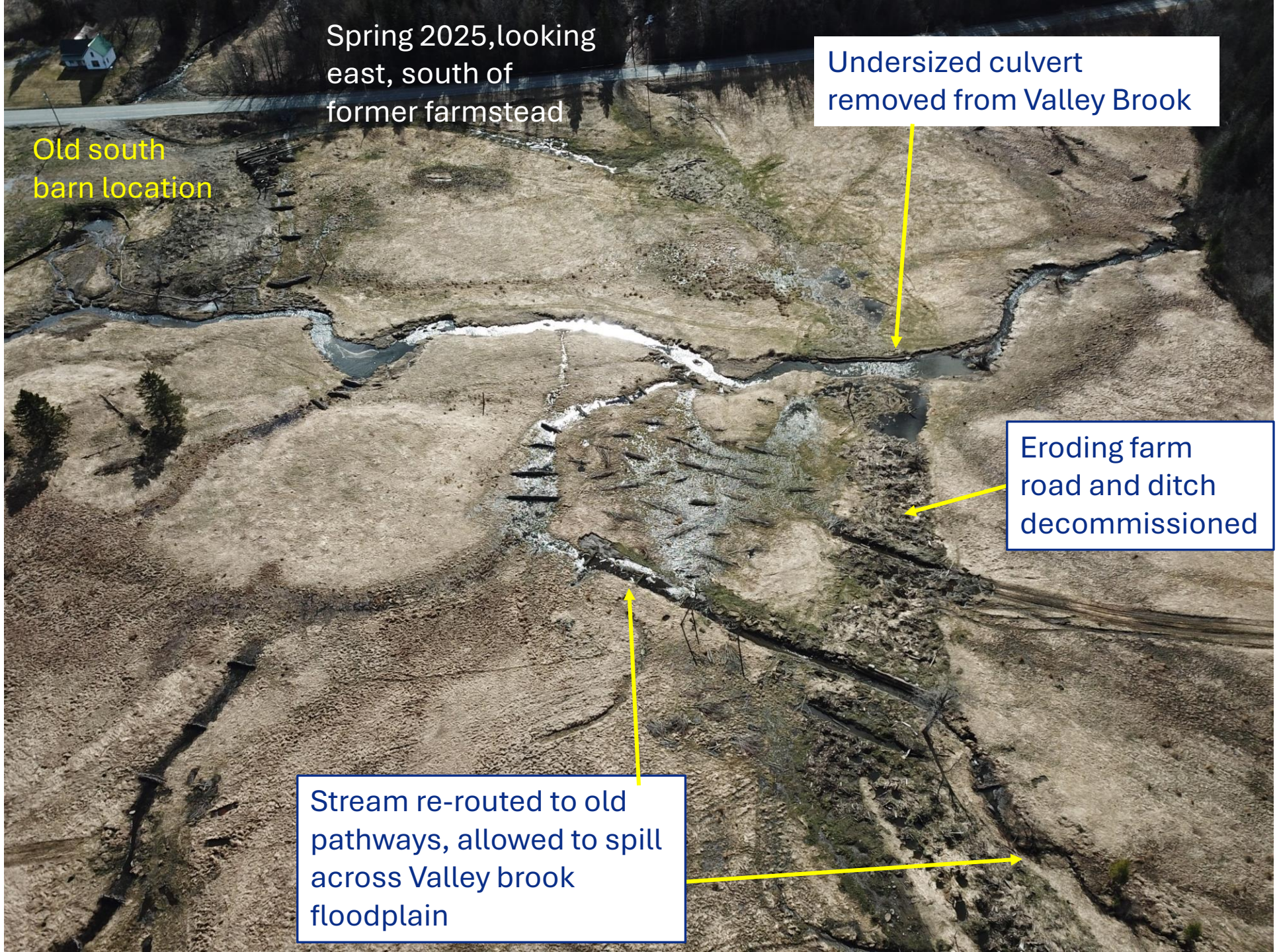
View from north same day in July 2023

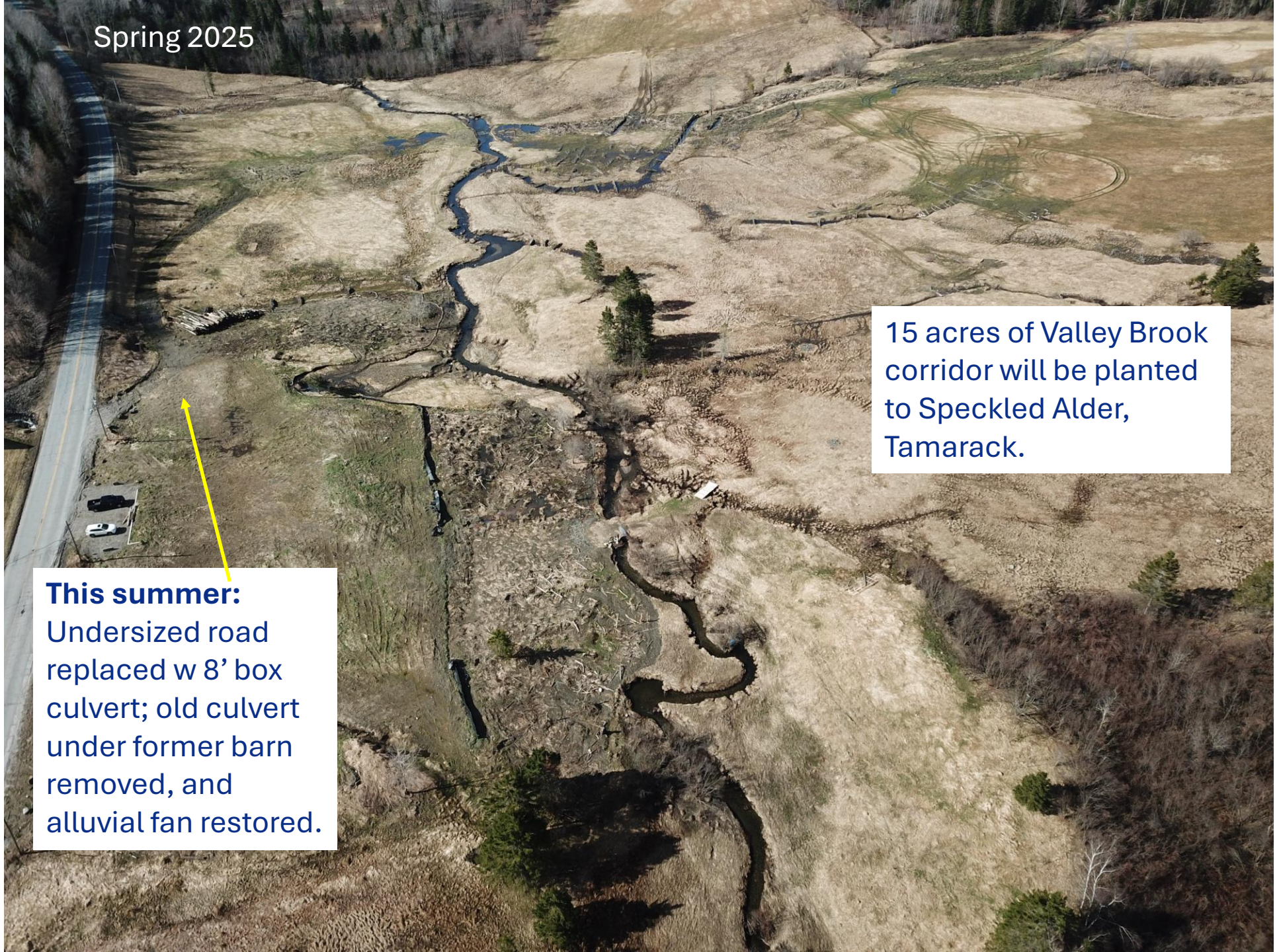
April 2024

Infrastructure and fill removed, undersized culvert on Valley Brook removed.

Undersized road culvert removed/replaced summer 2025.




Spring 2025,looking east, south of former farmstead
Old south barn location
Undersized culvert removed from Valley Brook
Eroding farm road and ditch decommissioned
Stream re-routed to old pathways, allowed to spill across Valley brook floodplain


Spring 2025
15 acres of Valley Brook corridor will be planted to Speckled Alder, Tamarack.
This summer: Undersized road replaced w 8’ box culvert; old culvert under former barn removed, and alluvial fan restored.

Thank you!

Stacy Cibula
Agricultural Director
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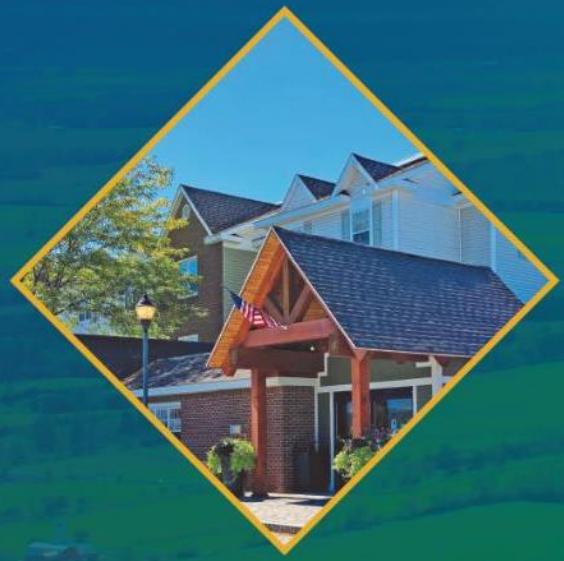

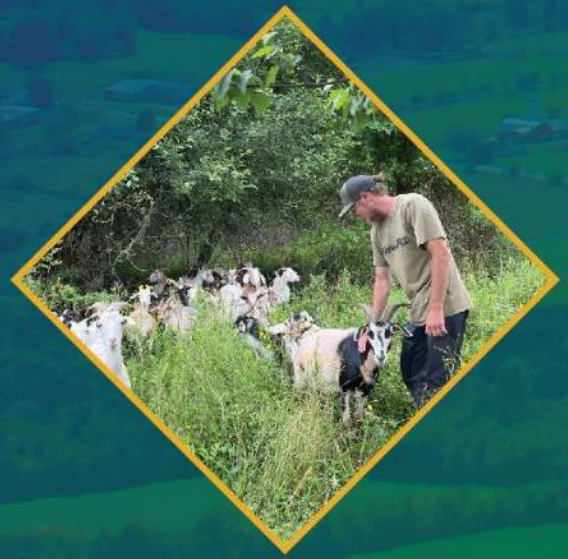

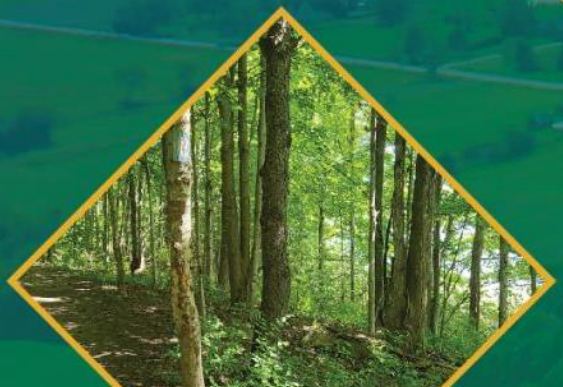

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