

The Rock Point and Arms Forest Coalition

Honorary Co-Chairs: Jane and John Ewing

Partnership Organizations



The Parks Foundation of Burlington

The Parks Foundation of Burlington is an independent, 501(c)3 nonprofit organization formed in 2013 with the purpose to seek opportunities to enhance park assets and recreation programs in Burlington, Vermont through specific initiatives. The Foundation's signature project—a full renovation of the eight mile-long Burlington Bike Path—is well underway and completed sections are receiving rave reviews from path users.



Friends of Rock Point and the Episcopal Diocese of Vermont

Since 1855, Rock Point has served as a unique center of the Episcopal Church in Vermont, welcoming friends and neighbors attracted to its natural beauty and its peaceful, quiet, and social embrace. The mission of the Rock Point Center is to be a welcoming sanctuary of spirituality, creativity, community, education, training, and environmental stewardship. Friends of Rock Point is a 501 (c)3 organization formed to support the conservation and enhancement of Rock Point.



Lake Champlain Land Trust

The Lake Champlain Land Trust is a member-supported, 501 (c)3 non-profit organization working with the community since 1978 to save land, conserve places to hike and paddle, and protect Lake Champlain's water quality. The Lake Champlain Land Trust has conserved over 6,500 acres, 17 islands, and 19 miles of lake and river shoreline in the Champlain Valley—including more than 25 public access areas. The Lake Champlain Land Trust will hold the conservation easements and forever monitor and enforce the protections to the land.



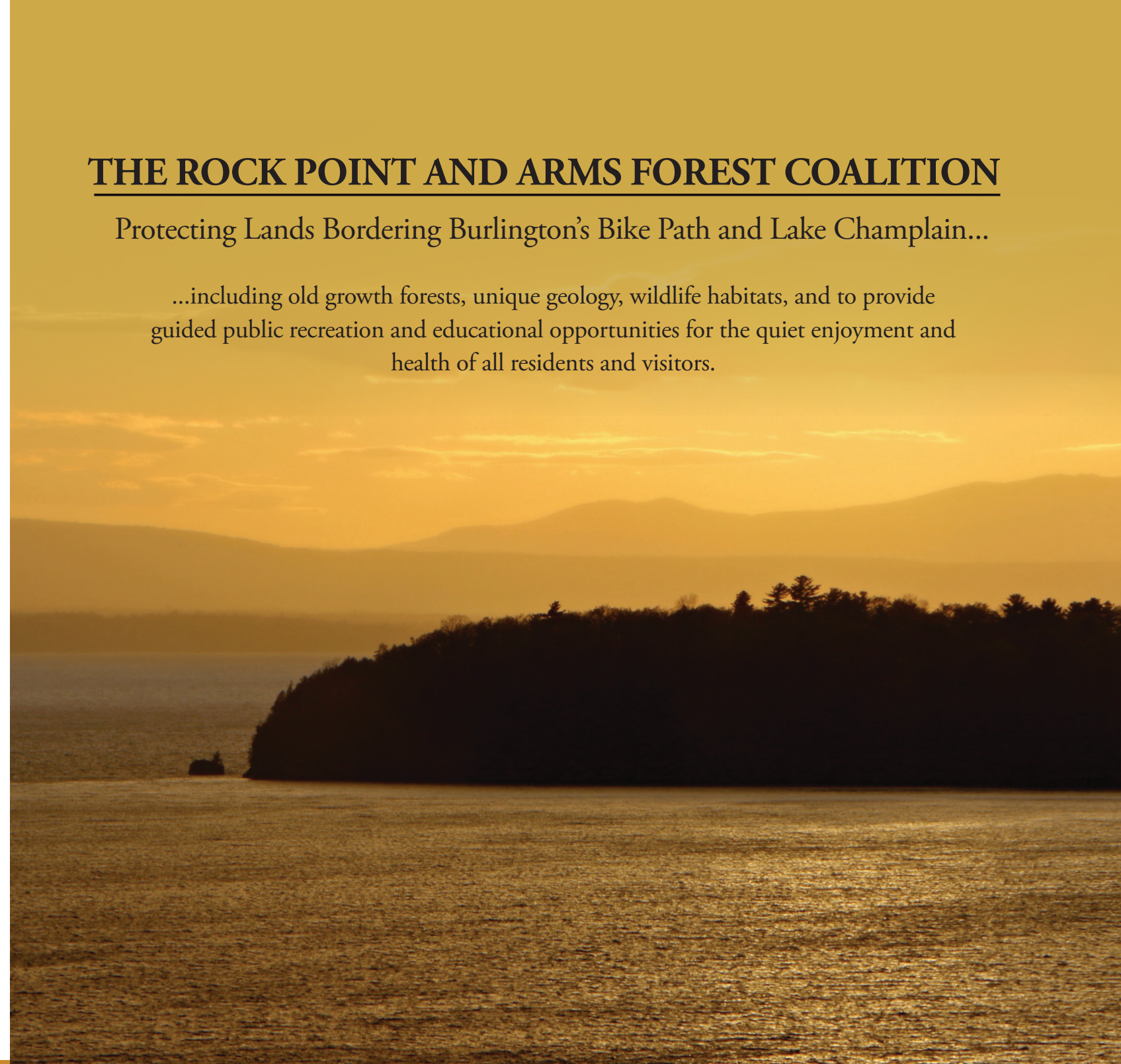
Burlington Parks, Recreation and Waterfront Department

The Department of Parks, Recreation and Waterfront oversees all of Burlington's 35+ Parks and Recreation Programs covering 550+ Acres of Open Space, four public beaches, street trees and Greenways, Community Gardens, North Beach Campground, the Community Boathouse Marina, and other lands and facilities.

THE ROCK POINT AND ARMS FOREST COALITION

Protecting Lands Bordering Burlington's Bike Path and Lake Champlain...

...including old growth forests, unique geology, wildlife habitats, and to provide guided public recreation and educational opportunities for the quiet enjoyment and health of all residents and visitors.



Affiliated Organizations

Burlington Conservation Board
Fellowship of the Wheel
Killarney Drive Neighborhood Association
North Avenue Alliance Church



WHAT WE ARE SAVING

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Rock Point Peninsula from Battery Park

One of the most spectacular forests in the State of Vermont lies within walking distance of downtown Burlington, visible for anyone viewing a sunset over the Lake from the waterfront. The lands of the Episcopal Diocese of Vermont, known as Rock Point, and the City of Burlington's Arms Forest, comprise 180 acres of beautiful forests, trails, meadows, and forested cliffs overhanging Lake Champlain.

A coalition of partners came together to permanently protect this unique area, create safe access points from the Burlington Bike Path and local neighborhoods, ensure that the area will remain accessible to the public forever, and improve the worn-down trails of this heavily-used urban natural area.

The Coalition is a convergence of multiple efforts to protect this land: the Parks Foundation's transformational work to rehabilitate the Bike Path; the City's progressive efforts to actively manage their lands; and the Episcopal Diocese's visionary work to partner with the Lake Champlain Land Trust on permanent land conservation and public access.

The permanent conservation of these lands will enable and encourage public and private investments in land stewardship, the conservation of the ecological treasures within the properties, forest protection, and trail improvements. The capital campaign goal to achieve this vision is \$367,400.

THE NEED

The Coalition sees the two-step approach outlined in these pages—conservation of the land and restoration of the trails—as essential to ensuring guided public use of this significant urban wild area.

This is an opportunity that must not be missed. We must capitalize on the momentum generated by the Coalition, area residents, businesses, nonprofits, and other user groups to complete this once-in-a-lifetime project.



"The need is clear. The time to act is now. Together, we can protect, restore, and maintain these well-loved trails."

- John Ewing (Honorary Co-Chair)



MATURE FORESTS

Trail users heading north along the Burlington Bike Path pass through the Rock Point–Arms Forest—Burlington's largest urban wild area. These shaded woodlands provide an important block of habitat for wildlife and serve as a major water quality buffer, filtering and slowing the flow of water entering Lake Champlain.

UNIQUE GEOLOGY

Geologists from around the world travel to Rock Point to view the Champlain Thrust Fault, which is the largest and most visible exposure of an ancient, Dolomite thrust fault in North America. The area's dramatic limestone bluffs support unique plants and provide clifftop perches for rare birds, including peregrine falcons.



RARE PLANTS

With its varied topography and geology, the Rock Point–Arms Forest is home to an unusually diverse array of plants, including populations of the state-threatened Harsh Sunflower, Sweet Joe-Pye Weed, and Squarrose Goldenrod. Ecologists have also identified a state-significant Mesic Maple-Ash-Hickory-Oak Forest on the Peninsula.

SCENIC VISTAS

Spectacular views abound at the Rock Point–Arms Forest lands. Hikers can enjoy panoramic vistas of Lake Champlain, the Green Mountains and Adirondacks, and the City of Burlington from multiple vantage points. These dramatic views have inspired generations of residents and visitors.





THE VISION



To **protect** Burlington's urban wilds areas and shoreline so the public can visit these conserved woodlands and pathways.



To **educate** citizens about the unique features of the land, including rare plant and animal species, special geology, and scenic views of Lake Champlain.



To **guide** visitors to enter these conserved lands from safe, designated access points on the Bike Path, North Avenue, and Rock Point and to travel on well-identified and marked trails.



To **create** a sustainable stewardship plan to improve, maintain, and monitor trails and wooded pathways throughout the entire natural area.



To **connect** these areas to the larger network of trails and natural areas in the greater Burlington area.

CONNECTING TRAILS

Many people find these treasured lands from the Burlington Bike Path. The current Bike Path rehabilitation project, funded through a private campaign led by the Parks Foundation of Burlington, has joined with the City of Burlington to completely transform the Bike Path into a renowned recreation destination. The total rehabilitation of the Bike Path, from the Waterfront to the Winooski River, is now underway and will be completed by Fall 2018.

Hikers heading off the Bike Path and onto the trails of Rock Point West will enjoy deep forests and cliff-top views. Mountain bikers and hikers heading onto the Rock Point East trails will find gentle shared-use trails suitable for all skill levels. Permanent protection of this amazing trail system will:

- Insure that access to this forest is open to the public forever.
- Protect the home course of the Burlington High School cross-country and Nordic ski teams.
- Offer a variety of terrain and difficulty, allowing users of any fitness level and ability to enjoy their experience.
- Represent a major step towards achieving the vision of Burlington's recent Trails and Natural Lands Conservation Initiative, which aims to create an integrated trail system across Burlington.



Rock Point Peninsula and Downtown Burlington



View of the Rock Point Peninsula and Lake Champlain



Deep woods trail through mature hemlock forest

CONSERVING THE LAND

Together, the Rock Point and Arms Forests comprise one of the largest and most cohesive natural areas remaining in Burlington. They offer visitors a remote and restful experience, are home to an array of rare plant species, and provide critical habitat for local wildlife.

Despite these amazing attributes, much of the area lacks permanent protection, and public access to portions of this community treasure could be lost in the future. Conserving the Rock Point and Arms Forests would forever protect:

- Stunning panoramic views of Lake Champlain, downtown Burlington, the Green Mountains and the Adirondacks from several lookouts.
- The iconic Rock Point peninsula, which is highly visible from numerous vantage points, including the Burlington Waterfront boardwalk, North Beach, Battery Park, and the Bike Path.
- Over a mile of dramatic, cliff-walled shoreline that provides paddlers and boaters with rare views of what the earliest travelers spotted from the Lake.
- Exceptional biological diversity, including 20 rare and endangered plant species, as well as a state-significant Limestone Bluff Cedar-Pine Forest.
- A large block of urban forestland and wetlands that serves as an important water quality buffer for Lake Champlain by absorbing and filtering water flowing off the land.

“I strongly support the Coalition’s vision of conserving and creating guided access to 180 acres of woodlands and shoreline within minutes of our downtown for future generations of residents and visitors to enjoy.”

- Burlington Mayor Miro Weinberger

ENSURING PUBLIC ACCESS FOR ALL

The Rock Point and Arms Forest Coalition seeks to encourage appropriate public access onto these lands, particularly on the trails throughout the Arms Forest and along the shoreline of the Rock Point Peninsula. However, the trails will need to be relocated, repaired, properly constructed, and designed for long-term use and maintenance.

This campaign will enable the partners to actively manage and improve the area’s well-used trails and create one coherent trail network. The campaign will:

- Ensure permanent public access to an improved and ecologically-sensitive trail system. Hikers, cross-country runners, and skiers will be directed to specific, reinforced trails. Mountain bikers will be allowed on designated trails east of the bike path.
- Enable the construction of professionally designed kiosks and wayfinding signs that will clearly direct trail users to different recreation opportunities in a way that best protects the integrity of the trail system, the area’s natural resources, and those who enjoy them.

“Rock Point is the last, largely undeveloped land on Lake Champlain in the City. We intend for it to be a welcoming sanctuary in the heart of Burlington.”

- Bishop Thomas Ely

