



Middlebury
College

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STARS Innovation Credits: Middlebury College permanent conservation of 2,100 acres of forest lands

Dear STARS,

I am writing to support the inclusion of Middlebury College's recent permanent conservation of 2,100 acres of forest land surrounding its Bread Loaf Campus in Ripton, Vermont for ecological, educational and recreational as well as for the public benefit.

The College established the Bread Loaf Preservation Fund, which will preserve and maintain the Bread Loaf campus and the surrounding forests and fields while also supporting educational programming and recreational activities. Much of the 2,100 acres will be protected through a conservation easement held by the Vermont Land Trust working in partnership with The Nature Conservancy. These lands will be forever maintained as forests and will provide numerous benefits to the public including habitat and biodiversity conservation, wilderness, recreational access, flood protection, carbon sequestration and climate resilience. The perpetual protection of these lands and continuance of the above mentioned "values" were made possible by a gift from a donor that was matched by the Board of Trustees.

It is very unusual for higher education institutions to voluntarily put a significant portion of their privately held forest lands into permanent conservation and I believe that Middlebury's project qualifies for innovation credit in the STARS rating system. It is noteworthy as well that this action provided an opportunity for the College to begin the process of quantifying and registering the carbon sequestration on these lands as a piece of its recent achievement of carbon neutrality.

I would encourage that AASHE and its STARS committee consider the development of a standing credit for conservation of lands by higher education institutions to help encourage consideration of such actions. Middlebury is a member of a consortium of institutions working to promote land conservation in higher education known as Academics for Land Protection in New England (ALPINE), a program of Harvard University's Harvard Forest and I serve on ALPINE's steering committee. Colleges and Universities can be leaders in fulfilling their fiduciary responsibility, protecting important lands for multiple values and now also sequestering carbon to mitigate and protect from climate change.

Sincerely,

Nan Jenks Jay
Dean of Environmental Affairs